



Critical Evaluation of the Impact of Training and Development Programs on the Performance of Employees in the UK Food Retail Sector

Ntow, Rebecca Yirenkyiwaa ^{a*}, Igwe, Chijioke Paul ^{a*},
Omagbemi Toritsemotse Enonuya ^a
and Igwe, Ejikeme Peter ^b

^a *Ulster University Business School London, UK.*

^b *Department of Professional writing, University of Westminster London, UK.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This research is a quantitative evaluation of the impact of training and development programs on the performance of employees in the UK food retail industry. The study assesses the impact of various training programs in the UK food retail businesses on the performance of employees. In essence, the study evaluated the context of the training programs, the most effective training programs, the environmental specific factors that influence training, and the impact these training programs have

*Corresponding author: E-mail: yaabecky12@gmail.com; chijiokepauligwe@gmail.com;

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on the performance of employees. The study utilized the simple random sampling method under probability sampling in order to give a chance to all persons in the target population. As such a questionnaire was designed with a five-point Likert scale and 384 participants responded to these questions which were administered online with Google forms. In analyzing the data, the descriptive analysis was done using the SPSS, and a PLS-SEM analysis was made using SmartPLS. The findings of the study revealed that coaching and mentoring have no statistically significant relationship with employee performance, contrary to initial hypotheses. However, E-training has a significant positive relationship with employee performance, aligning with existing literature. Conversely, on-the-job training showed a significant negative relationship with employee performance, suggesting potential issues with its effectiveness or perception among employees. The study also revealed that environmental specific factors like political stability, sustainability, technological advancement, legal compliance, social trends and economic fluctuations influences training programs which in turn affects performance of employees. The results of this study provide valuable knowledge to managements of food retail businesses in the United Kingdom, it also in practice identifies the various training programs effective for performance in the food retail sector.

Keywords: Employee performance; training; development programs; food; retail sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study aimed at evaluating the relationship between training and development programs on employee performance in the UK food retail sector in order to evaluate the effectiveness of various training and skill development programs on performance. As the initial chapter, it presents the background of the study, the problem statement, rationale, research aim, specific research questions, research objectives, scope of the study, deliverables, justification, the chapter disposition and an overview of the research methodology. Generally, the food retail sector is made up of businesses that venture into the sale of fresh produce from the farm, fast food, grocery items. The food and grocery retail sector is fast changing and this emanates from the quick transformation of economies to suit the digital age, consumer tastes and preferences among other factors (Lagorio and Pinto, 2021).

1.1 Background of Study

The UK retail sector, encompassing food, groceries, clothing, footwear, home appliances, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals, has become a crucial player in the global business industry due to evolving consumer preferences and economic uncertainties in recent times (IBIS WORLD, 2024). This critical sector employs a very large number of skilled and unskilled workers. The UK Retail Job report published by the BRC workforce survey has it that "There were 2.943 million jobs in retail in Q2 2022, a loss of 63,000 jobs (or A decline of 2.1%) compared to a year ago and a loss of 119,000 compared to three years ago (-3.9%)" (BRC, 2022). Regardless of

some setbacks and decline, the report further explains that job vacancies in the sector increased to a need of about 100000 more people from May to August 2022 (BRC,2022). In the same report, we come to also identify that "Retail labor productivity fell in Q2 2022. Compared to Q1 2022, retail labour productivity decreased by 0.4% but is 4.8% higher than in Q4 2019. UK productivity was flat on the quarter, with productivity now 1.9% higher than in Q4 2019". Effective labour and labour productivity are quite dependent on training and skills development. Prada et. al (2019) clearly explain a causal relationship between effective training programs, skills and productivity. Higón et. al (2010) also establishes a direct link between productivity and learning or training programs. This is no different from Rexworthy (2020) who associates training, productivity and performance. Training is crucial for global competitiveness in business. Training and development programs have been the cornerstone of appreciable performance in retail businesses especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. These skills development and training programs enhance employees competencies, knowledge, and job performance, preventing businesses from lagging and reducing productivity (Dubelaar et.al, 2002; Siebert et.al, 2006; Fisher et.al, 2021; Cox et.al, 2016; Verga et. al,2020). The significance of understanding the impact of training programs on employee performance in the UK retail sector goes beyond its local implications. The research in this field offers further insights into how they can optimize their human resource strategies for success. In assessing the effectiveness of training and development programs, this study provides

international retail companies with rich information on how they can tailor their approaches to suit the demands of the UK market and then strengthen their global operations. One major analysis that can be made from the UK retail Job report is that the reduced productivity that was seen in 2022 was actually due to the inadequacy of training and skills development programs. Research on the retail sector, primarily focused on productivity and performance, is limited. Most studies have been conducted in the Americas, while little research exists in the UK on the impact of training and skills development programs on employee performance.

1.2 Problem Statement

The retail sector in the United Kingdom has in recent times encountered substantial increase in market growth. According to Global Data (2023), The food and groceries section of retail business in the UK has been attached to far-reaching growing prospects from 2020 up until 2027 and beyond. The only thing that stands in the way of continuous market growth in the food and groceries retail sector in the UK is the evolving consumer preferences, sustainability, technology, customer loyalty, and price hikes (Global data, 2023). The food businesses in UK and across the globe have their performance and growth often associated with the efforts of their employees, as a matter of fact, as the world progresses, businesses are evolving in their relations with customers with various businesses coming out with extraordinary approaches. Innumerable literatures have shown clearly how training and skill development programs affect the performance of businesses (Laing, 2021; Lok et al., 2021; Niati et al., 2021; Sugiarti, 2022). As the UK food retail sector grows in market size, employment has also risen shown by Statista to about 1.13 million, followed by increasing revenue, a CAGR 3.2% and an estimated £229.8 billion in 2024 (IBIS WORLD, 2024) Most of the rising food retail businesses have been noticed to have implemented a number of training programs especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, inferences made is that the impact of training led to the growth of the businesses through high performance of employees. Most of the researches made in the regards of training programs in the UK food retail sector have rather focused on the impact of training and development programs on employee retention, management and food safety, link between food retailers and manufacturers, and training in retail

trade in general (Omoikhudu, 2017; Seaman and Eves, 2006; King and Kruse, 1996; Toye, 1993). Few or no studies have explored the impact of training and development programs on the performance of employees in the UK food retail sector. In view of this, the researcher seeks to assess the relationship between training and development programs on the performance of employees in the food retail sector.'

1.3 Rationale

The UK food retail sector stands as a cornerstone of the economy, this sector employs a significant portion of the entire labour force of the UK contributing substantially to the GDP (Dunne, 2023). In recent times, the UK food retail sector has undergone significant training programs to enhance employee performance, as Youssef et al., (2022) and Focacci and Perea (2022) have highlighted the importance of these initiatives in boosting the economy. As a matter of fact, the food and groceries market in the UK is rising with £171.9 billion market size in 2023 and a forecast of an increasing Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3% to 2027. The UK food retail sector, training and development programs need comprehensive assessment to understand their specific impact on employee performance, as current studies only focus on performance outcomes (Omoikhudu, 2017; Karim et al. 2012) but fewer studies have explored the impact of training and development programs in the UK food retail sector. This Research evaluates the impact of training programs on employee outcomes in the UK food retail sector, addressing the lack of specific research.

1.4 Research Aim

The aim of this research is to assess the impact of training and development programs on the performance of employees in the UK food retail sector.

Specific Research Questions:

- What are the concepts and context of training and development programs?
- To what extent do training and development programs affect the performance of employees in the various UK retail sector?
- What are the most effective training programs that increase employee performance?

- Are there specific factors within the retail sector that influence the effectiveness of training and development programs?
- What are the relevant models and theories that can be applied in training and development programs in the UK food retail businesses?

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective of the research will seek to assess the relationship between training and development programs on employee performance in the UK food retail sector. The specific objectives will be:

- 1: To explore the concept and context of training and development programs
- 2: To identify the most effective training methods in the UK food retail sector.
- 3: To explore Environmental-specific factors that influence the impact of training and development programs
- 4: To assess the perceived impact of training and development programs in the UK food retail sector on employee
- 5: To apply relevant training and development models / theories to explain the concept, effectiveness, environmental specific factors and impact of training and development programs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept and Context of Training and Development Programs

The idea of providing training and development programs for employees is obviously to improve their competencies and performance at work. According to Jehanzeb and Bashir (2013), training for organizations, is a way of giving added advantage to employees amidst competitors. To many organizations, employees are valued resources, development programs offered to them is a way to enhance their abilities, knowledge and expertise (Tannenbaum and Yukl, 1992; Lloyd, 2002; Brown and Sitzmann, 2011; Koval, 2015; Karim et al., (2019).

The Cambridge Dictionary defines Training as “the process of learning the skills you need to do a particular job or activity” (2023). This implies the way of learning any form of skill. The definition here is simply supported by Goldstein (1980) who says Training is “the acquisition of

skills, concepts, or attitudes that results in improved performance in an on-the-job environment”. Clearly, in any endeavor of acquiring skills and experiences about something it could be described as Training although it could be in various forms. Martin et. al (2014) has identified are thirteen of these forms of training viz; “case study, games-based training, internship, job rotation, job shadowing, lecture, mentoring and apprenticeship, programmed instruction, role-modelling, role play, simulation, stimulus-based training, and team-training”. These forms of learning a skill for a job has been very relevant to the field of Business. McGehee and Thayer (1961) emphasize that the role of training is a tool of management along with other techniques such as accounting. In an in-depth review of these training methods, Martin et.al (2014) conclude that the thirteen listed are mostly not interactive and quiet off the job, they reveal this by analyzing the relationship between the various forms of training following criteria like learning modality, learning environment, interaction levels, proximity and more. All these training methods have been expanded through technological advancement without doubt. Neupane and Khanal (2022) have also identified only three types of training including on-the-job training, off-the-job and online training. They do not in any way imply that they are the only forms of training but come to reason that these three types of training are those relevant in any job or business establishment. Burhan et.al 2021 makes mention of just what they term as the general forms of training, in-service or off-the-job training. Their idea is that Training implies just a two-way skill acquisition and learning. It is either you are trained on the job as an employee or you are trained to establish yourself away from the job, both with the aim of achieving better performance. Training and development involves acquiring and transferring necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities to perform specific tasks, aiming to address current and future organizational challenges (Milhem et.al, 2014).

In our ever changing and advancing world, the twenty first century employee is expected to match up with progress. At the workplace, at home, school and everywhere, things are changing. The competition that clads companies require insistent and consistent upgrades. Upgrades in skill, knowledge and expertise. Ilgen and Pulakos (1999) state emphatically that the changing world requires organizations to invest in their employees for higher effectiveness, as such training is best for performance.

2.2 Discussions around Training and Development programs

In the 2022 Harvard Business review, a particular mention of effective employee development is mentioned (Chopra-McGowan, 2022). The claim is that it often starts with managers. Most of the assertions made about effectiveness of employees is linked with training and development programs. As per a LinkedIn survey in 2019, 94% of employees requested development programs be put in place by their employers. (Chopra-McGowan, 2022). Employees require their managers or employers to invest in them.

The debate around training and development programs often revolves around ideas of how effective the training could be, how cost effective the training and development program would be, how relevant the training would be to the organization, which particular training programs are required. The argument further goes into the exact benefits that accrue to training programs, whether it be for performance of employees, employee retention, entire organizational success and more.

2.3 Effectiveness of Training

As to how effective an activity is, depends on what grounds and with what yardstick it is measured with. Numerous bodies of researches have probed similar questions (Blanchard and Thacker, 2023) about what training and development programs are effective? whether the effect that is supposed to be glimpsed is in the type of training or on the organization. The effect of the adopted training program, models used to assess effectiveness of training, organizational effectiveness on training and behavioral implications on the effectiveness of training (Rama Devi and Shaik, 2012; Borate et al., 2014; Ganesh and Indra Devi, 2015; Burhan Ismael et al., 2021). Ganesh and Indra Devi (2015) from their research concluded that training programs are effective not only on performance but also as an effective investment of any company, they argue that effectiveness of training is more felt when the training programs are suited to the unique challenges of the business the company is involved in. Similarly, Bartlett (2001) has stated that there is a positive correlation between training and effectiveness of any organization. Many other researches that support the idea that training programs are effective includes (Bertel, 2000; Barber, 2004,

Rama Devi and Shaik, 2012; Arthur et al., 2003). Although Arthur et al. (2003) finds a positive correlation between training and effectiveness of organization and further asserts that training is effective, the exception they find that should determine effectiveness are the size of effect, skills, and choice of evaluation of effectiveness. The debate around the effectiveness of training programs persists with lower levels of doubts about how effective training is. This is grounded by the assertion of Karim et al. (2019) about the invaluable effectiveness of training on staff without any doubt.

2.4 Relevance of Training programs to Organizations

Training and development are widely the best-driven form of organizational mechanisms towards performance (Elnaga and Imran, 2013). This implies that for any organization to perform well, there should be a constant form of learning, skill training and development. Businesses endeavor to train their employees mainly to increase their competencies at work, however the truth is simply that, training has a significant impact on the development of organizations (Neupane and Khanal, 2022). Countless number of literatures including (McGill and Slocum, 1993; Ulrich et al., 1993; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; DiBella et al., 1996) reveal the extent to which training programs are relevant to organizations. Training and skill development in business impacts job satisfaction, capacity to adopt new technologies, efficiencies, and morale. Again, the relevance of training is said plainly to improve the capacity of job retention as Tahir, et al., 2014 clearly argues.

2.5 Employee Performance and Satisfaction

Elnaga and Imran (2013) state emphatically that employees are said to be the bloodstream of any business. For a business to thrive, the human resource which is the employee is an inevitable factor. Training programs are therefore also needed to improve the dexterity of human capital of any organization. For Elnaga and Imran, it is imperative to invest in employee training and development if a business wants to grow (2013) Research has provided evidence of the enormous effect of training on performance, this research affirms the positive relationship between training and employee performance (Colarelli & Montei, 1996; Becker, 1993). Employee performance significantly impacts an

organizations bottom line, necessitating employers to invest in training and development to enhance morale, security, engagement, and job competencies” (Rodriguez and Walters, 2017). Meyerson and Dewettinck (2012) maintain that employee empowerment is a larger contributor to effectiveness and excellent outcomes. As a way of empowering employees, much research has shown that training and skills development programs are the most effective (Nassazi, 2013; Diamantidis and Chatzoglou., 2014; Brown and Sitzmann, 2011, Halawi and Haydar, 2018).

Brown and Sitzmann (2011) have argued out the influences both individuals and organizations derive from training and development programs. Individuals attain more competencies and job satisfaction while Organizations attain productivity and profitability. As employee performance increases, so does their satisfaction and vice versa. It is often argued that “a satisfied worker is a productive worker” Kinicki and Kreitner (2007) observed that happy and satisfied employees have a higher performance, therefore they can attain their targets or the goals of the organization. Indeed, analysis made by Dziuba et al. (2020) provides a positive correlation between job satisfaction and the performance of businesses. No doubt, training is an important managerial function in any organization, training helps to educate/impart knowledge to the employees about their work. (Anitha and Kumar, 2016) and this brings tremendous change in the skill of employees , knowledge and performance. Appian (2010) has confidently argued that “The importance of training can only be appreciated with a clear understanding of its direct impact on employee performance.” The direct impact of training on employee performance is quite evident in various businesses, and myriad studies have proven this (Rouiller and Goldstein, 1993; Mahmood, 2020; Grossman and Salas, 2011).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The study employed a deductive research approach. Deductive strategy requires beginning with theories, models and hypothesis, collecting and analyzing the data to test the hypothesis (Casula et al., 2021). In this study, the hypothesis established for the impact of training and development programs on employee performance is that there is a positive

relationship between training and employee performance. The deductive approach allows systematic testing of the hypothesis using quantitative data collected from a representative sample of employees in the food retail sector. Ethical consideration were followed throughout the research process.

3.2 Research Method

The study adopted the quantitative approach. This was utilized to gather structured data on training programs and their perceived impact on employee performance. This method enhances the use of frequency tables, chi square, test of independence, through the use of SPSS and other tools for statistical analysis like excel were used.

The target population for this research were male and female employees working within the UK retail sector. This included individuals across various roles within retail organizations, including salespersons, managers, customer service representatives, and other staff directly involved in retail operations and customer interactions.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for the quantitative analysis was 384 respondents from the population using the Cochran formula:

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

N= sample size

p= prevalence (0.5)

Z= confidence interval at 95% (1.96)

q=1-p

E= desired margin of error

The chosen sample size of 384 respondents provides a statistically significant representation of the population within the food retail sector. The sample size was calculated using the Cochran formula for calculating sample size, ensuring a high level of confidence in the research findings. With a population size of 1,130,000, (Statista, 2023), the sample size of 384 falls within the recommended range for achieving a margin of error that is both acceptable and feasible.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique adopted for this study is a simple random sampling under probability

sampling methods. This simple random sampling method allows each individual in the study population with the same chance of being represented in the chosen sample size (Mujeres, 2016).

3.5 Data Source

The data obtained for this study are both primary and secondary data. The primary data is obtained through the use of the questionnaire. The secondary data includes books, articles, other literature on the topic in question used the review of literature and also provides a means of comparing the results.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The study employed the use of a structured questionnaire to obtain data from various food retail businesses. The researcher administered the questionnaires personally to selected respondents who easily provided the needed responses to the questions. The questionnaire was administered online and in a Google form. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions. Some of them were in the form of a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". The questions were in two main sections, the demography section and the section that provides queries on training and development programs in orders to achieve the objectives of the study.

3.7 Data Analysis method

The study, by using quantitative research method analyzed data collected by inputting responses to questionnaires in the SPSS and SmarPLS. The data analysis techniques included regression analysis and descriptive analysis. Quantitative data was summarized and presented using tables. Descriptive Analysis, regression and correlational analysis are the major data analysis done in the research.

3.8 Analysis of Findings and Discussion

Descriptive statistics of respondents: Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics of the respondents of the study. The table indicates that the sample is female dominated with 51.0% representing female employees and 49.0%

representing males. The age ranges of the respondents were mostly between 20 to 30 years (56.3%), 31 to 40 years recording 29.9%, 41 to 50 years recording 6.8%, with the remaining 7% aged from 51 years and above. With education qualifications, 9.9 % of the respondents had a diploma, 50.3% had a bachelor's degree, 38.0% had their master's, and only 1.8% had a PhD. The years of experience of Respondents span less than 5 years with 54.7%, 5 to 10 years with 31.8 %, 11 to 15 years having 6.0% and 5.7% having 16 to 20 years of experience. What is worth noting is that with most of the years of experience of employees spanning less than 5 years of experience, it indicates that employees had a shorter experience of the job and are likely to have undergone or continually go under training. This is however also due to a higher percentage coming from completing a bachelor's degree and requiring hands-on learning before getting suitably disposed to work.

Descriptive of construct (Objective One): The study aimed at evaluating the impact of training and development programs on employee performance in the various UK based food retail sector. By so doing, the first objective of this study sought to explore the concept of training and development programs and the particular context of the same. As such, the research assessed the nature of training programs in various food retail shops across the United Kingdom. Across the UK, the food retail sector constantly engage their employees in skill training for proper refinement of newly and already employed workers. The aim is to ensure competitiveness and performance. The main training programs included, coaching and mentoring, E-learning programs and on-the-job. These training programs offered were taken into consideration and scrutinized as well as analyzed using the methodology mentioned earlier in the previous chapter. As such to explore the context of the training programs, analysis was made on effectiveness of training and development programs using the three types of training programs prevalent in the UK food retail sector and analysis were made on the impact also on employee performance. The concept and context of training programs will be highlighted with descriptive of the constructs emerging from the second objective on the most effective training programs.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

	Frequency N=384	Percent 100%
Female	196	51.0
Male	188	49.0
Age		
20-30 years	216	56.3
31-40 years	115	29.9
41-50 years	26	6.8
51-60 years	17	4.4
More than 60 years	10	2.6
Employees' Position		
Employee	316	82.3
Senior Manager	68	17.7
Educational Level		
Bachelors	193	50.3
Diploma	38	9.9
Masters	146	38.0
PHD	7	1.8
Years of Experience		
11-15 years	23	6.0
16-20 years	22	5.7
5-10 years	122	31.8
less than 5 years	210	54.7
More than 20 years	7	1.8

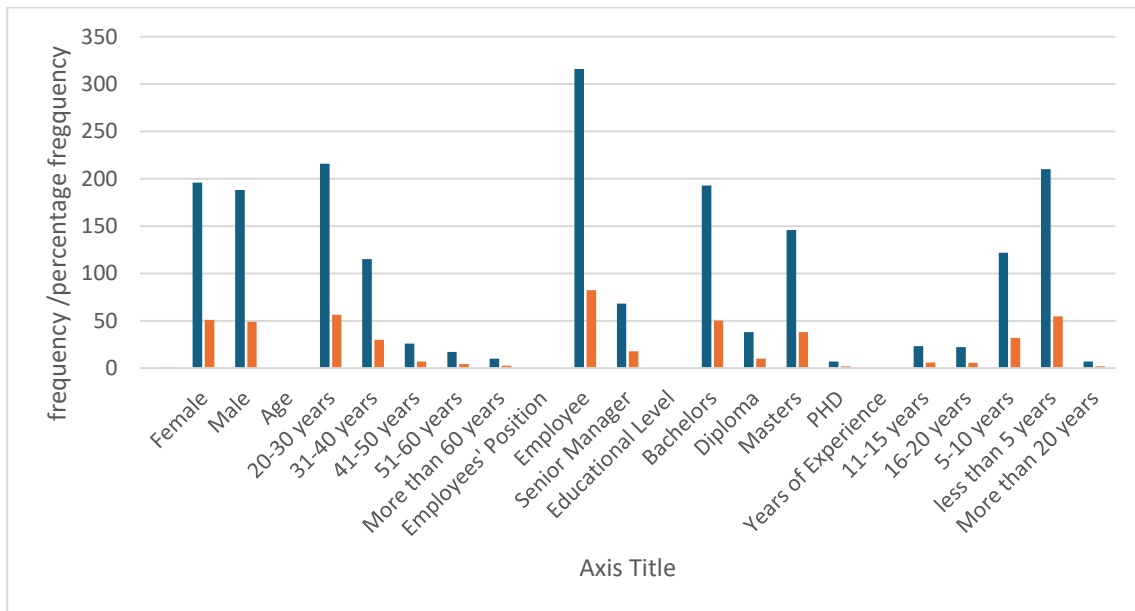


Fig. 1. Bar chart representation of the demographic items

Descriptive of constructs: The research embarked on a critical evaluation of training and development programs in the food retail industry in the UK to assess the most effective training programs and their perceived Impacts on employee performance. The subsequent analysis of mean scores for both dependent variables,

that is the employee performance and independent variables including the coaching and mentoring, E-learning and On-the-job training offers further explanation of the perceived Impacts of the types of training on the performance of employees in the food industry.

Foremost, with the overall mean score of 4.448 for employee performance, the findings suggests that on average employees here perceive their performance to be relatively high. This comes to indicate a good assessment of the roles they play at work, and the positive outcomes of these roles. With this high employee performance, it means employees excel both at individual performance and organizational performance. It indicates job satisfaction and improved competencies, organizational growth and effectiveness.

Based on the overall Mean performance of employees, with a slightly higher mean score (4.448) than that of the overall mean score for coaching and mentoring (4.271), it is assessed that, employees perceived performance levels are slightly higher than their satisfaction for coaching and mentoring in their organizations. This, from the socio demographic analysis may likely reveal that coaching and mentoring requires time and since most of the employees have only worked less than 5 years, it affirms the slightly higher level of satisfaction of employee's performance than the coaching and mentoring.

Also, E-training, with an overall mean score (4.326) slightly below that of employee performance, reveals a wider use of this training method while indicating the adaptability of the food retail businesses to online training and the use of modern electronic training. However, while E-learning is generally perceived positively by employees, the slightly lower mean suggests that other training programs adds up in enhancing performance, and also indicates a need for improvement to match performance.

Finally, the mean score for on-the-job training (4.33) although slightly lower than that of the overall Mean performance of employees (4.448), it appears to be the highest training satisfaction level and it indicates it as the most effective training method. As such it implies that, employees are favorably attached to experimental training and knowledge. The nature of on-the-job training allows for practical insight and adds to a physical and practical skill training at the premises of the job. Employees perceived performance is revealed in this direction but it further reveals that this particular training method requires other training programs to increase its effectiveness or otherwise requires enhancement.

Measurement model assessment: The Partial Least Square (PLS) analysis technique is evaluated based on two criteria. The first criterion is the measurement model assessment, which focuses on the validity and reliability of the measurement model. It is crucial to obtain satisfactory results in the measurement model assessment because without it, the structural model assessment cannot be deemed reliable nor valid. Fig. 3 is an illustration of a direct conceptual framework of the study that was carried out utilizing the PLS-SEM with the assistance of the SmartPLS application (Akter et al., 2017). Moreover, the framework represents visually the direct relationship among the variables by highlighting the main dependent variables of employee performance in the UK food retail industry.

Internal consistency:

Internal consistency reliability evaluates the consistency among the indicators of the study of variables in a model to ensure they measure the same construct consistently (Cheung et al.,2023). This is assessed through Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (PA). Cronbach's alpha represents the lower boundary limit of internal reliability, while composite reliability represents the upper boundary limit (Lai, 2021). Reliability rho (PA) acts as a check between Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. The benchmark for internal consistency reliability is typically above 0.70 but below 0.95. (Evans et al.,2017). In this study, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability fell within the required range (0.728– 0.947), indicating satisfactory internal consistency reliability. The detailed results are provided in Table 3.

Convergent validity: Convergent validity assessment is displayed in Table 3, depicted as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores for each variable. Convergent validity assesses the degree to which indicators of the study variables are correlated with each other, determining whether they truly represent the variable or not. This criterion is evaluated through AVE, with an expected threshold of 0.50 or above. All variables in this study satisfied this criterion, with the lowest AVE value recorded at 0.674, indicating that its indicators account for more than 67% of the variance in the study variables.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of study variables

Coaching and Mentoring	Mean	Standard deviation
My company services, help me do what is right	4.068	1.118
My mentor helps guide my successful behavior	4.331	0.858
I have strong confidence and trust in my mentor	4.302	0.876
My employer recognizes that work has been done well on time	4.341	0.902
Overall Mean	4.271	0.939
I receive on-the-job training from my organization regularly	4.375	0.839
The quality of the on-the-job training provided by my organization is satisfactory.	4.31	0.829
The on-the-job training provided by my organization is up-to-date and relevant to current industry trends.	4.286	0.855
The on-the-job training provided by my organization prepares me to Handle new challenges and responsibilities in my role	4.349	0.802
Overall Mean	4.33	0.831
The e-training provided by my organization is effective in teaching me new skills and knowledge.	4.315	0.858
The e-training provided by my organization is interactive and engaging.	4.289	0.837
The e-training provided by my organization allows me to learn at my Own pace.	4.292	0.847
The e-training provided by my organization is flexible and accessible	4.409	0.772
Overall Mean	4.326	0.829
I am satisfied with the training I received for my current position	4.385	0.792
I have applied the training I have received	4.557	0.635
The training has improved my performance	4.576	0.629
Before this training my performance was not satisfactory	4.479	0.718
I have the opportunity for career development within the company	4.495	0.685
The training was helpful and I would encourage other staff members to take part in it.	4.198	1.062
Overall Mean	4.448	0.754

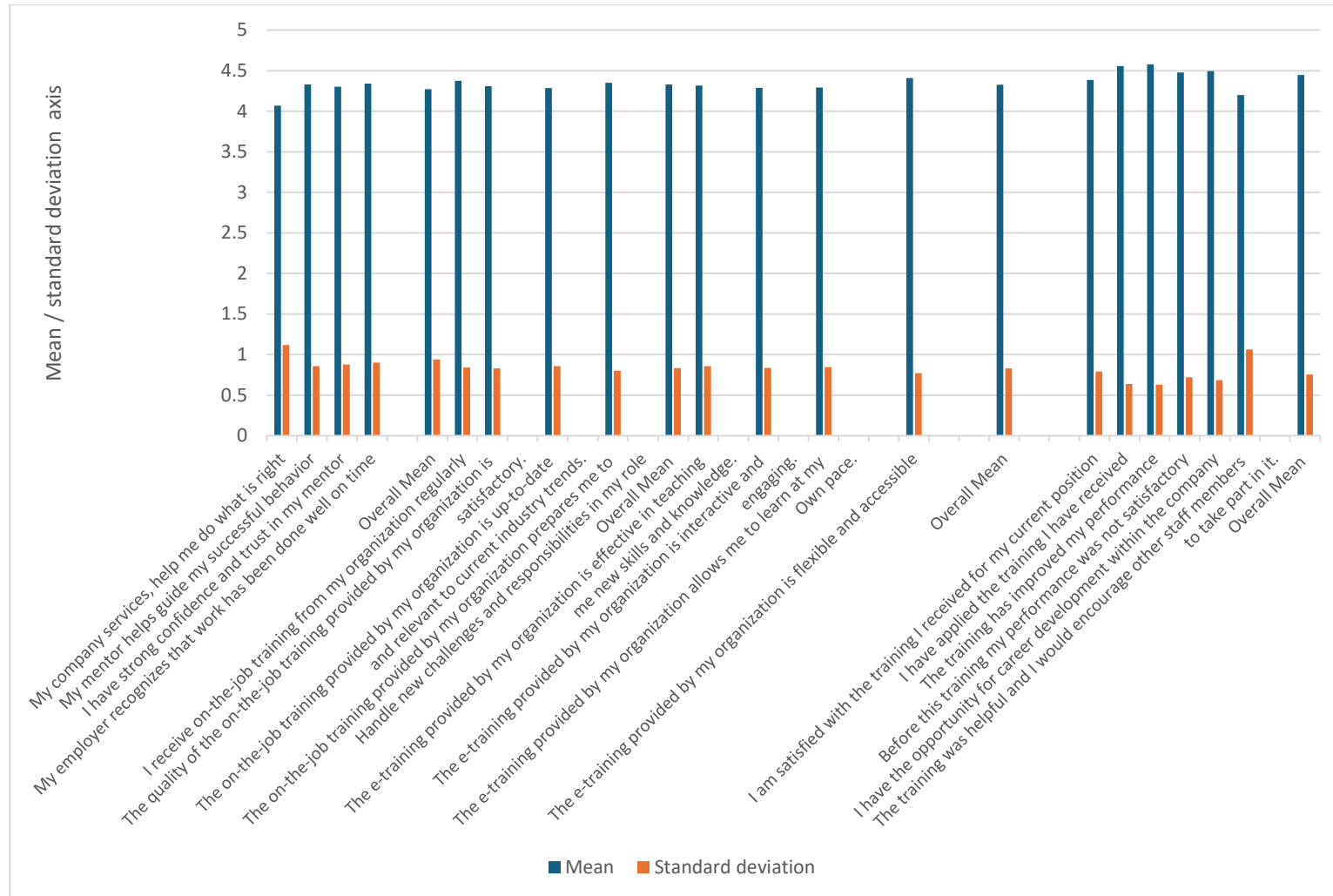


Fig. 2. A Barchart representing a descriptive statistics of study of variables

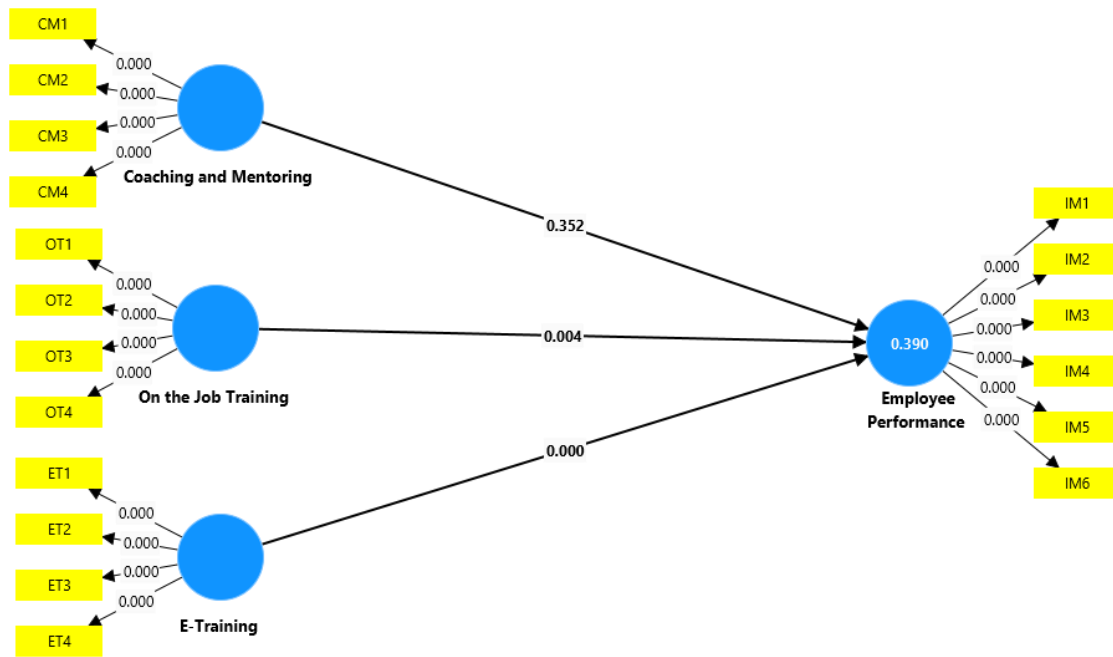


Fig. 3. Conceptual model (Direct Relationships)

Table 3. PLS-SEM assessment results of reflective measurement models

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	(AVE)
Coaching and Mentoring	0.891	0.907	0.753
E-Training	0.943	0.944	0.855
Employee _ Performance	0.900	0.930	0.674
On the Job Training	0.881	0.947	0.728

Table 4. Discriminant validity HTMT values

	CM	ET	EP	OJT
Coaching and Mentoring				
E-Training	0.792			
Employee _ Performance	0.472	0.643		
On the Job Training	0.751	0.846	0.471	

Table 5. Discriminant validity fornell-larcker values

	CM	ET	EP	OJT
Coaching and Mentoring	0.868			
E-Training	0.807	0.925		
Employee _ Performance	0.429	0.605	0.821	
On the Job Training	0.844	0.896	0.474	0.853

Discriminant validity: The discriminant validity of a study model confirms that variables within the model are distinct from one another, ensuring that the indicators of each variable solely measure that specific variable (Cheung et al., 2023). This guarantees empirical differences in scores and measurements among variables. Dirgiatmo (2023) argued that the heterotrait-

monotrait (HTMT) approach is often seen as a more effective method for assessing discriminant validity compared to the Fornell-Larcker criterion and Cross loading. Therefore, it is advised to solely consider the HTMT model or combine. According to the HTMT approach, values below 0.85 are expected, with the upper boundary of the bootstrapping confidence interval exceeding

the HTMT values. In this study, the discriminant validity (HTMT) assessment criteria were satisfied, indicating that the variables are distinct, as outlined in Table 4, also represented in Table 5 is the Fornell-Larcker criterion also satisfied.

Structural model analysis: “After fulfilling all the criteria for assessing the measurement model, the examination of the structural model commenced. This assessment encompasses collinearity checks, exploratory power, predictive power, and path coefficients. Following this, the study’s hypotheses are tested and subsequently presented in the following sections.”

Collinearity: Collinearity check is very important in this study to identify any possible high association among variables and other indicators. In this study, multicollinearity was also checked by assessing the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values in a model for all variables. There was no evidence of mis collinearity in the study after one indicator each was removed from

the performance expectancy, digital innovation and variable compatibility. Besides this, Sabogal-Alfaro et al. (2021) mentions that to be sought out that there is no Collinearity problems, all the indicators should be higher than 0.7. This study, following this satisfied the benchmark.

Explanatory power: The explanatory power of a model quantifies the extent to which the independent variables in a model account for variances in the dependent variable. Using the PLS-SEM analysis technique, a coefficient of determination is produced for each dependent variable within the model. The R-squared value represents the proportion of variance explained in the model by all independent variables linked to the dependent variable. The main dependent variable in the study was employee performance. The R-square value obtained for the dependent variable was 0.390 indicating that 39% of the variables in this study can be attributed to the three independent variables analyzed in the study. Table 7 indicates the explanatory power.

Table 6. Collinearity check

Variable		VIF
Coaching and Mentoring	CM1	1.985
	CM2	3.367
	CM3	3.744
	CM4	2.355
E-Training	ET1	4.009
	ET2	4.762
	ET3	3.869
	ET4	3.783
Employee Performance	IM1	1.724
	IM2	2.786
	IM3	4.097
	IM4	3.782
	IM5	3.433
	IM6	1.656
On the Job Training	OT1	1.826
	OT2	3.456
	OT3	3.046
	OT4	2.971

Table 7. R² values

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Employee _ Performance	0.390	0.386

Table 8. Path coefficients of the structural model and significance testing result

	Coefficient	P values	
Coaching and Mentoring -> Employee Performance	-0.064	0.352	Rejected
E-Training -> Employee Performance	0.931	0.000	Accepted
On the Job Training -> Employee Performance	-0.306	0.004	Accepted

3.9 Path Coefficient

The path coefficients represent the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent variables (coaching and mentoring, E-training, and on-the-job training) and the dependent variable (employee performance). They are two negative paths with one significant and the other not significant, with a coefficient of -0.064 and a P value more than 0.05 (0.352) and -0.306, and a P value of 0.004. There is only one positive path of 0.931 and matched with significant P value of 0.000 shown in Table 8. The analysis of the structural model in the study yielded P-values for the relationships which were important in determining the outcomes of the hypotheses. Referring to Table 8, the path coefficients and their corresponding significance levels (p-values) were used to make conclusions regarding the hypothesis testing results. With reference to Table 8, it was found that all direct hypotheses of the study were accepted, except for those concerning the influence of coaching, and mentoring, thus the social influence which was rejected.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDING

The main objective of this research was to assess the impact of training and development programs on employee performance. In order to do this, three different training methods were evaluated, these included: Coaching and Mentoring, E-Training, and On-Job Training. The coefficients and p-values obtained from the statistical analysis provide a clear understanding of the effect of these training programs on the performance of employees in the UK food retail sector. The path coefficient of Coaching and Mentoring is -0.064, since the p-value is 0.352 which is higher than the significance level of 0.05, the relationship between coaching and mentoring is considered not statistically significant and is rejected. As such, it suggests that there is no significant linear relationship between coaching and mentoring and employee performance in this study. Although it was hypothesized in the literature review that coaching and mentoring which is as part of in-service training programs affects positively the performance of employees in organizations, this study reveals differently. This study does not stand alone on its findings regarding the negative relationship between coaching and mentoring and employee performance, many scholarly researches including that of Brockbank and McGill (2012) and Launer (2013) reveal that coaching and mentoring could affect

performance especially when employees begin to overly rely on their mentors or supervisors to do everything for them. Employee Performance in the regards of over reliance on mentors can therefore affect individual growth or performance as well as affect organizational performance. Again, the quality of coaching and mentorship counts, where mentorship is not done rightly or consistently, it affects performance. Furthermore, time counts in the endeavor of coaching and mentoring, time impacts almost everything, the longer the training, the longer the impact since experience has been revealed as the best trainer itself, about 55% of the employees in this study have worked less than 5 years and this accounts for the less impact of coaching and mentoring.

Also, the positive coefficient of 0.931, accompanied by an impressively low p-value of 0.000, underscores a statistically significant and favorable impact of E-Training on Employee Performance. This relationship is considered statistically significant and accepted. The strong positive coefficient indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between E-training and employee performance. This also aligns well with existing literature that recommends the use of E-Training as the world evolves. Literature that advocates and have studied the significance of E-Training point out how relevant it is at providing extra skills especially with the use of technology, being convenient and allowing for extra revision (Koman et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2022; Navimipour and Zareie, 2015; Paul, 2024). The increase in the use of E-Training can be attributed to its adaptability, accessibility and flexibility. In addition, the E-Training program became popular during the period of COVID-19 and when it was adopted, its effectiveness and efficiency was appreciated and has there become imperative in training. The observed positive relationship of E-Training with employee performance is not lightly but a great deal, this e-training actually serves high benefits to employees.

More so, the path coefficient of on-the-job training is -0.306. Its p-value is 0.004 (less than 0.05), indicating statistical significance and acceptance. The negative coefficient suggests that there is a significant negative relationship between on-the-job training and employee performance. The negative coefficient (-0.306) indicates that as on-the-job training increases, employee performance tends to decrease. This may seem counterintuitive at first, but it could imply various scenarios. For instance, it is possible that ineffective or poorly designed

training programs are negatively impacting employee performance. Alternatively, employees might perceive on-the-job training as a sign of inadequacy or a lack of trust from their employers, which could affect their motivation to work and performance. Although some body of researches have expressed the relevance of experiential learning, including (Tannenbaum et al., 2019; Jacobs & Jones, 2018), the way and manner in which on the job training is carried out could affect performance. There are actually so many reasons that could account for a negative relationship between on-the-job training and employee performance which could also be relative from one context to another. Besides this, On-Job Training, is often regarded as an effective way of training newly employed and also already employed workers because it provides practical training experience which increases employee Competencies (Buonomo et al., 2022; Barnová et al., 2022; Nguyen 2020).

Environmental factors: Training programs in the UK food retail industry is influenced by some environmental specific factors, including both internal and external specific factors. From the construct above, Table 9 presents the mean and standard deviations of the various environmental specific factors that are perceived to influence training and development programs.

With Political factors, a mean of 4.146 and a standard deviation of 0.931 suggests that a stable political environment in the UK positively influences training and development programs. This stability likely brings about an environment conducive enough for long-term planning and

investment in employee development, and training which will consequently enhance performance.

Next, Economic Fluctuations with a mean score of 4.271 indicates that economic instability, such as price hikes, impacts the ability to invest in training programs. During economic downturns or price hikes organizations may prioritize cost-cutting measures, potentially reducing investments in employee training and development programs and subsequently affecting the performance of employees.

Also, Social Trends and Consumer Preferences, with a mean score of 4.318, and Standard deviation of 0.783, it is evident that social trends and consumer preferences directly affects the content and focus of training initiatives. Aligning training programs with evolving societal and market demands is important for ensuring organizational effectiveness and consequently enhancing employee performance. Social trends and the behavior of consumers thus affect the type of training programs provided to employees in order to match the required outcomes.

Moreover, technological Advancements has the highest mean score of 4.464 which suggests that the need for frequent improvement in training programs to suit technological advancements is recognized. Staying abreast of technological changes is essential to maintaining employee skills and performance at optimal levels. So, it is obvious that “Technological advancements necessitate frequent updates to our training program” attained the highest mean score.

Table 9. Internal and external environmental specific factors

	Mean	Standard Deviation
The current political stability in the UK positively influences our training and development programs	4.146	0.913
Economic fluctuations, such as price hikes, have a significant impact on our ability to invest in training programs.	4.271	0.86
Social trends and consumer preferences directly affect the content and focus of our training initiatives.	4.318	0.783
Technological advancements necessitate frequent updates to our training programs	4.464	0.756
Compliance with legal regulations often influences the structure and delivery of our training efforts	4.339	0.851
The availability of internal resources, such as time and budget, adequately supports the implementation of comprehensive training programs	4.37	0.819
The organizational culture within our company promotes a supportive environment for learning and skill development	4.417	0.738
Environmental sustainability concerns impact the emphasis placed on eco-friendly practices in our training modules	4.294	0.732

Again, with legal Compliance, the mean score of 4.339 indicates that compliance with legal regulations influences the structure and delivery of training efforts. Adhering to legal requirements mitigates risks and enhances organizational effectiveness by maintaining employee competence and performance within legal boundaries.

Also, for another external factor, environmental sustainability concerns attained the mean score of 4.294, this also indicates that environmental sustainability including eco-friendly practices in training, integration of best sustainable practices and cooperate social responsibilities are emphasized and this affects training and consequently performance.

With the internal specific factors, two of these are highlighted, with both attaining high mean scores. Availability of Internal Resources with a mean score of 4.37, and organizational culture with 4.417. Internal resources evidently affect training programs. Adequate internal resources support the implementation of comprehensive training programs. Allocating sufficient time and budgetary resources ensures the effectiveness of training initiatives in enhancing employee performance. Furthermore, The high mean score of 4.417 for organizational culture suggests that a supportive organizational culture promotes a conducive environment for learning and skill development, positively impacting employee performance. Cultivating a culture that values continuous learning and development significantly contributes to employee engagement and performance.'

5. LIMITATIONS

Sample Size and Generalizability: The study may have limitations regarding sample size and representativeness, as it focused on a specific sector (UK food retail industry). Generalizing the findings to other industries or regions should be done with caution.

Self-reporting Bias: The reliance on self-reported data for variables such as employee performance and satisfaction with training programs may introduce bias and inaccuracies.

Measurement Limitations: The study relied on mean scores and survey responses, which may not capture the full complexity of factors influencing employee performance and training effectiveness.

External Factors: External factors beyond the scope of the study, such as economic conditions or industry trends, could influence employee performance and training outcomes but were not fully explored.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The UK food retail businesses invest in E-training. By so doing the organization will capitalize on the effectiveness of E-training programs, adopt modern technology to enhance employee skills and performance too.

Food retail businesses should prioritize On-the-Job Training. As this is done, the value of practical, experiential learning through on-the-job training which have shown to be highly effective in improving employee performance will be achieved.

Organizations should be able to align training programs with environmental factors. The retail businesses should adapt training strategies to reflect societal, economic, and technological trends, ensuring programs remain relevant and impactful.

6.1 Areas for Further Research

After this study was carried out these are some areas for future research endeavors. Investigate the role of leadership styles and management practices in shaping the effectiveness of training programs and employee performance.

Explore the integration of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence in training programs and their impact on employee performance.

Investigate the influence of organizational culture on the implementation and effectiveness of training programs in the food retail industry.

7. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that training and development programs impacts on employee performance. This research has clarified the effectiveness of training and development programs in the UK food retail industry and their impact on employee performance. Through an analysis of mean scores and statistical findings understanding of the relationship between training and employee performance has been established; the study has also established the influence of environmental specific factors on

training and development programs. Firstly, while coaching and mentoring programs were not found to have a significant relationship with employee performance among retail businesses, E-training and on-the-job training were identified as highly effective methods for enhancing performance. With environmental influences such as technological advancements and social trends, internal resources and organizational culture, there is also a positive relationship established with training initiatives. More so, the research acknowledges the limitations of human capital theory and underscores the essence of investing in human capital (the employees). Moving forward, organizations in the food retail sector are encouraged to invest in E-training, prioritize on-the-job training, align training programs with environmental factors, address structural barriers, and propel a supportive organizational culture to enhance employee performance and drive organizational success. By heeding this, organizations will be able to optimize their training efforts and equip their employees for organizational competitiveness and consequently required performance outcomes'

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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