

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES



ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING PRACTICES:
THE CASE OF BLESS AGRI-FOOD LABORATORY SERVICES PLC

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FEBRUARY 2022
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF
GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION**

JULY 2021

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
GENERAL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I thank God for guiding me and giving me the courage to successfully complete this study. I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor Dr. Worku Mekonnen for his guidance and continuous assistance considering his busy schedule and commitments he currently has. I am grateful for your valuable comments, suggestions, support, and for the continual encouragement.

I would like to extend my special thanks to my beloved husband Mr. Henok Ashagrie, for sharing ideas and supporting me along the course of my study without hesitation by always taking the time from his very hectic schedule in his PhD study. Know that you mean the world to me.

Last but not list I would like to acknowledge my families and friends for pushing me to finalize this journey and Bless Agri Food Laboratory Services PLC managements, staff and customers for all their inputs, genuine thoughts and support in the filling and collection of the questionnaires for my research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	i
LIST OF FIGURES	ii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Background of the Study	1
1.2. Background of the Organization.....	2
1.3. Statement of the Problem	3
1.4. Research Questions	4
1.5. Objectives of the Study	4
1.5.1. General Objective.....	4
1.5.2. Specific Objectives.....	4
1.6. Significance of the Study.....	4
1.7. Scope of the Study	5
1.8. Organization of the Study.....	5
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	6
2.1. Overview of Training	6
2.2. Benefits of Training	7
2.3. The Training Process	8
2.3.1. The Training Need Assessment	9
2.3.2. Design of Training.....	10
2.3.3. Implementation of Training	10
2.3.4. Monitoring and Evaluation	11
2.4. Methods of Training	11
2.4.1. On-the-Job Training	12
2.4.2. Off-the-Job Training.....	12
2.5. Training Policy and Procedures.....	13
2.6. Training Models	14
2.6.1. Training Evaluation Models.....	14
2.6.2. Training Effectiveness Models	15
2.7. Empirical Literature Review	16
3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	18
3.1. Research Design	18
3.2. Population and Sampling Design	18

3.2.1.	Target Population	18
3.2.2.	Sampling Technique	18
3.2.3.	Sample Size	18
3.3.	Sources of Data	19
3.4.	Data Analysis Methods	19
3.5.	Validity and Reliability Test	20
3.5.1.	Validity	20
3.5.2.	Reliability	20
3.6.	Ethical Considerations	21
4.	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	22
4.1.	Response Rate	22
4.2.	Demographic Profile of Respondents	22
4.3.	Analysis of Responses	23
4.3.1.	Development and Availability of Training Policies and Strategies	23
4.3.2.	Assessment of Training Need Analysis Practices	26
4.3.3.	Training Design	27
4.3.4.	Training Delivery	29
4.3.5.	Training Evaluation	31
4.3.6.	Employee Perception	32
5.	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	35
5.1.	Summary of Major Findings	35
5.2.	Conclusion	36
5.3.	Recommendation	36
	REFERENCES	38
	ANNEX 1	46

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Reliability analysis of the questionnaire designed for employees	20
Table 2.	Demographic profile of employee respondents	22
Table 3.	Evaluation of BAFLS training policies and strategies by employee respondents	24
Table 4.	Evaluation of BAFLS training need assessment practices by employee respondents	26
Table 5.	Evaluation of BAFLS training design practices by employee respondents	28
Table 6.	Evaluation of BAFLS training delivery practices by employee respondents	30
Table 7.	Assessment of respondent's opinion towards training evaluation practices at BAFLS	32
Table 8.	Perception of employees towards training practices at BAFLS	33

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Main steps in the training process	8
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BAFLS	Bless Agri Food Laboratory Services PLC
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KSA	Knowledge, Skills, Abilities
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PLC	Private Limited Company
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

ABSTRACT

Training is highly crucial for an organization's success as it equips employees with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they require to carry out their assigned tasks effectively and efficiently. It is therefore vital for organizations to implement an effective training program based on planned and systematic approaches. The purpose of this study was to assess the training practices at Bless Agri Food Laboratory Services PLC (BAFLS). A descriptive research design was used. Information and data required to conduct this study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data used in this study was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, tailored with the help of available literature. The questionnaire was distributed, and data was collected from 44 randomly selected employees. IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28 software was employed for analyzing the data with descriptive statistical tools. The current study indicated that the training policy and procedure development needs to be participatory, and that sufficient budget should be allocated for training. Moreover, the training design requires improvement to equip employees with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to conduct their job effectively and efficiently. The consistent provision of induction training to all new employees joining the organization requires attention. The training delivery techniques also require investigation to ensure the organization picks the right methods that provide employees with a better knowledge and skills. In addition, majority of the respondents believe that the training needs to follow a systematic and planned approach. However, the employees believe that the training provided indeed improved their performance. Although the overall training practices were promising, the organization should work towards overcoming its shortcomings associated to training practices to better improve employee performance and overall company success.

Keywords: *Training, employee performance, need assessment, training design, training evaluation*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Training is a process by which workers are provided with theoretical and practical lessons that can improve their knowledge, skills, approach, and behavior to help them carry out their tasks in an efficient and effective manner (Bartel, 1994). Training and development refers to the formal systematic processes used to convey knowledge and assist employees to obtain the skills required to continuously perform their job effectively (Armstrong, 2006). Training and development improves work performance; reduces mistakes; improves job satisfaction; reduces employee turnover; improves service quality, and increases productivity (Abdelhamied, 2019; Guest, 2011; Jiang et al., 2012; Nickson, 2013).

In addition, training and development plays a crucial role in the introduction of new processes; decreases supervision requirements; decreases accidents; and arms workers with skills that makes them more valuable to the company (Boadu et al., 2014). It is thus not ideal to think about customer satisfaction without having a well-trained staff with the knowledge, skills, and attitude required to carry out the work and provide the service to customers in a manner that goes beyond their needs and expectations.

Access created for training is the extent to which employees can get training opportunities. In addition to the above-mentioned roles training can help in improving productivity, creating superior products, improving services quality, and maximizing or optimizing resources (Elnaga & Imran, 2013).

For a company to operate successfully its mandatory to satisfy employees since employee satisfaction can lead to the commitment, conscientiousness, and honesty of an employee, which in turn relates to their job performance. In achieving employee satisfaction, the work environment plays a crucial role since it affects the life of individuals, their behavior, perception, and performance (Harter et al., 2002).

How much employees are satisfied with their job is also an important pointer about employee satisfaction. Training is one of the vital human resource management practices that positively affect the quality of the workers knowledge and skills, and this results in higher employee performance on the job (A. Khan et al., 2018).

The past three decades witnessed the emergence or research in the topic of training and development. However, the focus of these researches was oriented to two specific business sectors, i.e. the hospitality industry (Ayele, 2020; Buick & Muthu, 1997; Costen & Salazar, 2011; Hassan et al., 2017; Morsy et al., 2016) and the banking sector (Appiah, 2010; U. R. Khan et al., 2017; Obi-Anike & Ekwe, 2014; Ugbonmhe et al., 2016; Younas et al., 2018). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no documented evidence can be found on the roles training and development play in technical service sectors such as laboratories at the time.

The impact of training is even more dire in the highly specialized technical service sector such as testing laboratories. Staff training and development in service sectors like laboratories are highly crucial considering the nature and diversity of the work and constantly shifting technologies. In Ethiopia, there are only a handful of food and agricultural testing laboratories providing services to government agencies, regulatory authorities, non-governmental organizations, importers, exporters, and producers among others. The services coming out of these laboratories are usually used to making heavy and timely business decisions by the customer, thus making timely service provision and service quality unequivocally critical. This study aims at assessing the training practices at the largest private food and agricultural laboratory in Ethiopia and looking at the possible relation it has with the satisfaction of employees.

1.2. Background of the Organization

Bless Agri Food Laboratory Services PLC (BAFLS) is an ISO 17025:2017 accredited laboratory established as a joint venture between Ethiopian and French investors in 2011 in Legetafo, Oromia, Ethiopia. BAFLS is the largest privately owned food and agricultural laboratory in the country and serves as one of the country's focal conformity assessment bodies specializing in food and agricultural testing, product certification, inspection, and research and development services. BAFLS has been providing food and agricultural testing services to several government agencies, regulatory authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGO), importers, exporters, manufacturers, and researchers. BAFLS currently employs over 60 staff with diverse educational background and expertise. In addition to the main office in Legetafo, BAFLS operates two customer service and sample reception offices; one in Addis Ababa around Gurd Shola and another one in Adama, Oromia, Ethiopia.

Bless envisions to be the regions most trusted partner for the quality assurance of food and agricultural commodities. The company's mission is to exceed customers' expectations

professionally with timely, comprehensive, and reliable services in testing, inspection, certification, and trainings for their operations, supply chain, exports, and imports. Bless has set out to fulfil core objectives including enabling the agrarian and business community in the agro-processing value chain to be a competent dealer; contributing to the wellbeing of consumers at large; and filling the gap for efficient, reliable and quality food testing laboratory needs in Ethiopia as well as in East Africa.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Training is crucial in boosting employee performance and productivity improvement, which are antecedents for overall organizational effectiveness. That is why training should not be considered as a cost or expense, but rather as an investment for a much better outcome (Sheeba & Christopher, 2019). Since employees are the backbones of service providing organizations, it is important for organizations to make sure that they are equipped with the required knowledge and skills to carry out the tasks assigned to them. It is with training and development that employees acquire these skills and knowledge that will allow them to ensure service quality and customer satisfaction which are vital for overall business sustenance.

In highly specialized technical services like laboratory testing; training is of paramount importance to ensure service quality and customer satisfaction. In countries like Ethiopia where the agriculture sector is the pillar of economy, testing laboratories play a vital role in quality assurance and consumer protection. The country's export is also mainly dependent on agricultural commodities and unless we have such laboratories for quality assurance, meeting stringent international quality and safety requirements could be difficult which can put a strain on the country's foreign currency earnings. With the growing interest on food safety and consumer protection, several government authorities such as the Ethiopian Food and Drug Administration and Trade Competition and Consumer Protection Authority are putting a great deal of effort to ensure consumer safety and satisfaction including monitoring of locally produced and imported products through inspection and laboratory testing. Therefore, having a well-trained and competent staff is of a monumental importance for the success of technical service providing companies like BAFLS.

The success of training practices doesn't only depend on the company's unwavering commitment. In addition, the provision of training itself doesn't guarantee an improved employee performance. There are several factors to be considered including the training need assessment, the training technique employed, and the content of the training among others

(Armstrong, 2006). Its success also depends on the systematic and planned implementation of overall training practices. Considering the significant role training plays on employee performance and a company's success, this study aimed at assessing the training practices at BAFLS.

1.4. Research Questions

This research aims at assessing the training practices and employee performance at BAFLS.

- What mechanisms are used for assessing employee training needs?
- What training delivery techniques are used for training employees?
- What are the training evaluation strategies being employed?
- What contributions does the training practice have towards improving employee performance?
- What is the employees' attitude towards the training practices implemented?

1.5. Objectives of the Study

1.5.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study is to assess the training practices and employee performance at BAFLS.

1.5.2. Specific Objectives

- Assessing the training policies at BAFLS.
- Assessing the training need assessment practices at BAFLS.
- Assessing training designs and delivery methods at BAFLS.
- Assessing training evaluation techniques at BAFLS.
- Assessing the contribution of training to the performance of employees at BAFLS.

1.6. Significance of the Study

Employees are the backbones of the service industry. In order to become successful in their business ventures and exceed the needs and expectations of customers, companies must have employees with adequate knowledge, skills, and abilities required to carry out the services at their disposal.

The study will provide current information on the training practices and employee performance at BAFLS. The information unveiled could help the organization/management in evaluating the efficiency of its training practices and redesigning, if necessary, to ensure an optimum

service quality while retaining employees through job satisfaction. The information could also help other highly specialized service companies such as laboratories to revisit their training policies and practices in order to improve service quality, customer satisfaction, and staff retention. The study also helps the researcher acquire knowledge and experience. The study could also contribute to filling the existing literature gap on the training practices and employee performance in the less studied, highly specialized technical service companies such as laboratories.

1.7. Scope of the Study

The study focused on training practices, a critical aspect of human resource management, and job performance. The study addressed training practice areas including policy development, need assessment, training design, delivery, and evaluation. The study was geographically localized to BAFLS whose main branch is located in Lege Tafo, Ethiopia and branch offices in Adama and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

1.8. Organization of the Study

This study is organized in five chapters. The first chapter provides the context of the research by offering an introduction with background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope of the study. The second chapter presents the review of relevant literatures. The third chapter explains the research design and methodology employed. The fourth chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation. And the last chapter summarizes findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Overview of Training

Training, in the most basic sense, is the instruction or development of an individual's understanding, behaviors, and competencies. The objective of training practices is to improve people's power, efficiency, competitiveness, and competence. It is designed to help people improve their professional skills so that they can perform their jobs more efficiently (Nevzorov et al., 2020). (Ngirwa, 2009) describes training practices as a learning process that allows employees to acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to perform their job efficiently, contributing to the achievements of organizational goals. When an individual performs well, the organization performs well too. (Jackson & Schuler, 2003) similarly described training practices as the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable employees to perform their job effectively and efficiently.

Training is a vital human resource management tool as it can develop performance at both individual and organizational levels. Organizations nowadays are facing several competitions by the frequently emerging technological and business environment. Globalization and the growing needs and expectations of customers have also added up more challenges for business organizations. This makes training a very critical element in this competitive business environment as it can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of employees, thereby improving organizational performance. In today's business environment, becoming successful without a skilled and knowledgeable human resource is highly unlikely (Goldstein & Ford, 2002).

Several businesses are now being confronted with a range of issues related to the changing nature of employment and the working climate. To succeed in today's business platform, businesses have gained awareness of the relevance of having an educated, well-trained, competent, and dependable professional workforce in giving companies competitive advantages and achieving their objectives (Petružis, 2018). The focus of managers on human capital is rapidly increasing. Companies are starting to invest more in employees to remain competitive in today's rapidly shifting business environment (Jakubiec, 2020). For example, McDonald's, one of the world's largest fast-food retailers, has established "Hamburger University", a training center where workers expand their skills and get educated, allowing McDonald's to remain competitive and meet its objectives (Kotni, 2015).

Organizations develop and design their own training models based on the needs, expectations, and essence of their respective industries. Certain businesses provide a continuous learning and training program that helps workers transition to the dynamic and complex job world while also improving their employability (Chaubey et al., 2017). Training has been viewed as a catalyst of a business experience and an enhancement of desired results, including customer loyalty. Since the overarching aim of businesses is the satisfaction of their customers, several businesses have developed customer service training systems (Gopi & Samat, 2020).

(Birdi et al., 2008) summarized that training and development are necessary strategic tools for effective individual and organizational performance. Thus, organizations are allocating resources on training with confidence, knowing that will bring them a competitive advantage in the world of business. In today's competitive business environment, adequate and relevant training and development of personnel should be emphasized for any organization to achieve its goals and objectives. Organizations are expected to identify the training needs of their employees and design training programs that will eventually help to optimally utilize their workforce towards the actualization of organization objectives (Kennedy et al., 2014).

2.2. Benefits of Training

Training is very important for organizational success and benefits both employees and employers. (Nassazi, 2013) pointed out several important roles training can play in staff and organizational development, including:

- A-** Allowing companies to adopt with technological changes by equipping employees with the relevant changes in today's rapidly growing technological platforms.
- B-** Improving staff morale and confidence by improving job satisfaction and security. This will also reduce staff turnover and absenteeism.
- C-** Reduces production costs as training will help employees reduce waste.
- D-** Helping minimize supervision by acquainting staff with their job.
- E-** Minimizing workplace accidents by equipping staff with the desired knowledge and skills required to carry out tasks safely.
- F-** Increasing productivity by maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of employees.
- G-** Familiarizing newly hired staff with organizational the rules and regulations of the organization, company goals, vision, and mission, among others.
- H-** Helping refresh the knowledge of existing staff.

(Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013) described the importance of training from both the individual and organizational perspectives. Training and development practices allow employees to learn about the theoretical and practical skills required to efficiently perform their jobs. Training will improve the job satisfaction of employees because it's an investment to their future. Training practices can also improve the loyalty of employees thereby increasing the time and effort invested by them towards organizational success. Training and development practices generally improve the overall performance of employees. Organizationally, training and development practices help companies remain competitive in the business world. Training and development practices will help organizations retain their skillful staff which is vital for organizational effectiveness. Training also allows companies to save resources as training can resolve improper resource utilization, while minimizing workplace accidents.

2.3. The Training Process

Training practices should be carried out in a planned and systematic way (Armstrong, 2006). The training process follows a series of main steps for a successful outcome. These important steps in the training process are training need assessment, designing of the training, implementation of the training, and monitoring and evaluation.

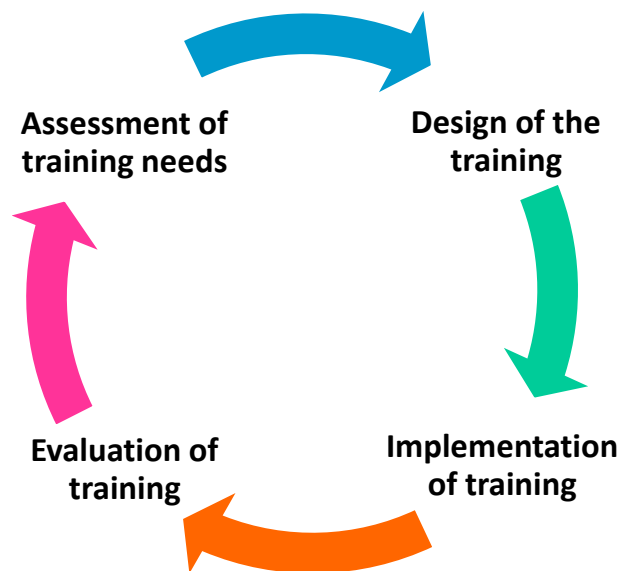


Figure 1. Main steps in the training process (Kulkarni, 2013)

2.3.1. The Training Need Assessment

This is the first vital step in the training process where the need for employee training is assessed. Training needs refer to the identified shortfalls in employee knowledge, skills, and attitudes as compared to what is required by the job. Training needs are the gaps between the actual and desired performance or between current abilities and job requirements that can be bridged through training (Rothwell, 2012).

The method of determining whether the preparation needed is known as needs evaluation/analysis. The assessment of needs takes place on two levels: group and individual. When a person's performance falls short of expectations, or when there is a performance deficit, he or she clearly requires preparation (Sadik, 2016). The diagnostic process of a work schedule is assessing organizational training requirements. To see how preparation will help, this appraisal looks at the employee and organizational success. A needs appraisal evaluates a company's, a group's, or an individual's abilities in relation to what is needed. It is necessary to find out what is happening and what should be happening before deciding if training will help and what kind is needed (Altarawneh & Aseery, 2016). Organizational analysis, individual analysis, and role/task analysis are all common components of a need's evaluation (Hepzibha et al., 2017). This analysis will provide vital information about where the training is needed, who needs the training, and what the employee needs to be trained with to carry out their job effectively.

Organizational consequences and potential organizational needs should be used to diagnose training requirements. Organizational measurement is based on a variety of institutional success metrics. Low churn, consumer dissatisfaction, high dispute rates, high absenteeism, poor efficiency, and other flaws should be identified. If preparation is a cure, training goals should be established after those challenges are identified. A focus group of managers may be used during organizational research to assess changes and results that could entail preparation (Hepzibha et al., 2017).

After training criteria have been determined by needs assessments, a "gap analysis" will be used to determine training objectives and priorities. A gap analysis shows the gap between where a company is now and where it needs to be in terms of employee skills and needs (Marsh, 2018). Once the needs are identified, the objectives of the training will be devised. This objective is the outcome that the training is planned to achieve outlining the knowledge, skills, and abilities the employee is supposed to acquire at the end of the training.

2.3.2. Design of Training

Training design refers to the method of designing a schedule of instruction for each training program to be offered to achieve the training goal. A structured approach to designing training plans is referred to as the training design method. The method of designing training should be rigorous but versatile enough to respond to changing market needs (Keebler et al., 2017).

Training must be tailored to the individual objectives, whether it is job-specific or more general. The aim of the training is to close the gap. Training quality can be calculated in terms of the goals that have been set. Measurable goals are useful. Effective training design considers the learner characteristics, instructional strategies, and how best to get the training from class to the job (training transfer) in order to produce learning (Galanis & Sottolare, 2017).

Once the training is designed, the next big decision would be to choose the right mode of delivering the training. The teaching method's instructional events should correspond to the perceptual, physical, or psychomotor processes that contribute to mastery. The learner should be encouraged to successfully produce the capability. Feedback should come from all available sources, and it should be reliable, authoritative, timely, and positive. The instructional processes should enhance trainee self-efficacy and expectations that the training will be successful and will lead to valued outcomes. Training methods should be adapted to differences in trainee aptitudes and prior knowledge (Sari et al., 2021). Regardless of the training method picked, ensuring the effectiveness of the training is the main goal. It can sometimes be necessary to integrate different training methods within one design (Decenzo & Robbins, 2010).

2.3.3. Implementation of Training

The third step is the actual step where the training is given. By availing the necessary resources and arranging favorable environment to conduct the designed training, the training will be conducted. Since training strategies differ widely, it's critical to find the best mix to achieve the highest possible levels of learning and, as a result, a high return on investment. Organizations can determine the right teaching strategy for their workers' learning patterns, be versatile enough to accommodate improvements if appropriate, and ensure that the training can be applied to daily work skills (Vasanthi & Basariya, 2019b).

The primary objective, regardless of the approach used, is to ensure that preparation is successful. HRM must decide which training strategies are best suited to the talent and the individual. It could be appropriate to employ a combination of approaches. Depending on the kind of training that needs to be delivered, you'll probably need a different delivery mode (Mehmood & Rauf, 2018).

When selecting a distribution mode, the target demographic and budget constraints should be kept in mind. The most successful strategies are determined by the learner and the ability to be acquired. On-the-job training and off-the-job training approaches are the two types of training methods that can be employed. Each method has its own set of benefits and drawbacks (Hall et al., 2021). It is the responsibility of the human resource managers, in coordination with the functional manager(s), to choose the right solution from a list of options. Organizations are inspired to use different training approaches for different reasons (Audrey et al., 2020).

2.3.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is a way of determining the success of the training, and whether the desired objects have been met through the gathering of data. It also helps identify the need for improvements (Armstrong, 2003). The process of assessment is critical. It focuses on determining how well the teaching met the expectations of its creators. Even if it has achieved desirable results for other organizations, and similar methods have produced desires for it, once an organization launches a training program, it must measure the program's effectiveness (Masta & Janjhua, 2020).

Evaluation is an attempt to gain guidance on the results of training programs. Its goals include monitoring the quality of training, providing feedback, assessing the general success of the training expenditure, assisting in the implementation of new training approaches, and assisting the instructor in evaluating his or her own learning experience (Srivastava et al., 2019).

2.4. Methods of Training

There are two broad classifications of training methods: on-the-job and off-the-job training methods.

2.4.1. On-the-Job Training

On-the-job training refers to training methods in which a person with job experience and skill guides trainees in practicing job skills at the workplace (Abdul Musid et al., 2020). On-the-job training is the most common approach in which an employer may invest in human capital needed for strategic advantage. Such investments may be made by structuring a job so that employees learn while they work (Preve, 2012). Inexperienced or new employees learn by observing peers or superiors executing the job and act similarly. (Armstrong, 1995) presented that on-the-job training may consist of coaching by more experienced people or trainers at the desk. Some Examples include coaching, job rotation, and induction training. In coaching, newly recruited employees are attached to an experienced coach who could be an immediate manager or another senior manager. This method may sometimes include old employees with the organization. Job rotation, on the other hand, is a way of developing employee skills within an organization through movements of the employee from one official responsibility to another. Induction training is carried out for new entrants on the job to make them familiar with the total corporate requirements like norms, ethics, values, rules, and regulations (Armstrong, 2006).

On-the-job training is planned and structured training that takes place mainly at the normal workstation of the trainee. Although people often associate training with classrooms, much learning occurs while employees are performing their jobs (Huang & Jao, 2016). On-the-job training can range from relatively unsophisticated ‘observe and copy’ methods to highly structured courses built into workshop or office practice. It is a simple and cost-effective training method. It is relatively inexpensive, trainees learn while producing, and there is no need for expensive off-site facilitates learning, since trainees learn by doing and get quick feedback on their performance.

2.4.2. Off-the-Job Training

Off-the-job trainings are carried out away from the actual workplace for a particular period in order to create a stress free environment for the trainee. These methods can be expensive and useful only where a significant number of workers must be educated in a limited amount of time. Examples include simulation, conferences, discussions, case studies, role playing, and group exercise.

In simulation, trainees learn on simulated machine that have a similarity with the actual job. It is a necessity when it is costly or dangerous to train employees on the job. Conferences on the other hand are training methods that involve presentations by one or more person to a wide audience. It is believed to be cost effective as a group of employees are trained on a particular topic all at the same time in large audiences. Simulated training is required when on-the-job training is too expensive or risky (Vasanthi & Basariya, 2019a).

The purpose of discussion is to get audience participate actively in the role and grasp an experience from other participants which will help people to participate and express their thoughts freely at the end the facilitator will try help them reach to a conclusion. Some training models like behavioral modeling, role playing, case study methods, management games, and executive coaches are used by firms as training methods for managers (Dessler & Varkkey, 2009).

Formal lecture courses and workshops are the most popular modes of traditional teaching. This aids in the acquisition of understanding as well as the development of intellectual and analytical skills. Many businesses have these services in-house, by outside contractors, or both (Vasanthi & Basariya, 2019a). The case study approach on the other hand, entails providing a written explanation of an operational challenge to a trainee. In a conversation with other trainees, the participant analyzes the situation, diagnoses the problem, and discusses his or her conclusions and solutions (Vasanthi & Basariya, 2019b). Role playing is the process of creating a practical scenario in which trainees take on the parts (roles) of specific people in the situation (Brockmann et al., 2021).

2.5. Training Policy and Procedures

(Kenney et al., 1992) stated that an organization should consider establishing different training policy and procedure using different methods for different level of employee. The necessity is based on the following reasons.

- A-** To make guidelines for the department that do planning and implementations.
- B-** To determine the resource needed and to avail accordingly.
- C-** To create fair and balanced opportunity within the organization.
- D-** To announce the training and development opportunity for the trainee ahead of time.

They also stated that training policy shall mention the proportion of turnover that should be allocated for the training purpose. They again advocated that a training philosophy is imperative to indicate the degree of importance the organization attaches to training. Notwithstanding the essence and the benefits of training, policy may be a difficult task for directors especially if they are doing it for the first time, or if there is no one for the advice of a training officer with previous experience at the level.

2.6. Training Models

2.6.1. Training Evaluation Models

Training evaluation measures the success or failure of a training program concerning content and design. Among the various training evaluation models, four are discussed below.

The first model is Kirkpatrick's four-dimensional measurement typology (Kirkpatrick & Craig, 1970) which focuses on reactions, learning, behavior, and results. . This method follows the foundation that reactions to training are related to learning, learning is related to behavior, and behavior is related to results. This model is among the simplest and more frequently used models in training evaluation. In this model, learning is evaluated during training and refers to cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal learning. The first step is evaluation of the reactions through evaluation of how well the trainees liked the training program. Then, learning is evaluated through the analysis of the principles and facts the trainees learned from the training. Behavior evaluation is focused on on-the-job performance and assesses what changes in job behavior resulted from the training. Finally, results will be evaluated through the assessment of the tangible outcomes of the training in terms of cost reduction, quality improvement, quantity improvement, etc.

The second model is the extension of Kirkpatrick's model by (Tannenbaum et al., 1993) via the incorporation of post-training attitudes and the segregation of behavior into two separate outcomes as training and transfer performance for evaluation. The model's foundation is the assumption that learning is related to training performance, training performance is related to transfer performance, and transfer performance is related to results. This model focuses on the evaluation of job performance since organizational effectiveness is a function of job performance. Job performance is influenced by a post-training motivation to transfer and organizational characteristics. This model assumes trainees can implement the training on the job if they want to, and if they have access to the necessary resources, and performs evaluation accordingly.

The third model is by (Holton III, 1996) which is based on three evaluation targets (learning, transfer, and results). Unlike the first two models, Holton's model for training evaluation does not incorporate reactions since reactions are not considered as a major outcome of training, but rather a moderating variable between motivation to learn and the actual learning. This model relates learning transfer and transfer to results. Holton's model also outlines the importance of measuring effectiveness while evaluating training outcomes.

The fourth model is by (Kraiger, 2002) and accentuates three training evaluation target areas: training content and design, changes in learners, and organizational payoffs. The training content and design aspect focus on the evaluation of the design, delivery, and validity of the training. The changes in learner's aspect focus on evaluating the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of trainees post-training. The organizational payoffs angle focuses on the evaluation of the job performance and transfer aspects.

2.6.2. Training Effectiveness Models

According to (Alvarez et al., 2004), training effectiveness is "the study of the individual, training, and organizational characteristics that influence the training process before, during, and after the training". Training effectiveness variables are studied through the targets of evaluation. Most of the training effectiveness models focus on transfer performance. These models focus on the relationship between learning and transfer performance to provide input on how attitude, cognitive, and behavioral characteristics are related to learning and performance transfer.

The theoretical model formulated by (Baldwin & Ford, 1988) suggests that learning and performance transfer are directly related to organizational characteristics. The model places its foundation on the aspect that attitude, cognitive and behavioral characteristics have an indirect relationship with performance transfer. This model was modified and further extended by (Holton III, 1996) where specific characteristics influencing learning and performance transfer are explicitly identified. These characteristics include motivation, ability, interpersonal differences, experience with the transfer system, learner interventions, organizational interventions, training design, and training content. Contrary to Baldwin & Ford's model, Holton's model suggests that attitude, cognitive, and behavioral characteristics are directly related to learning and performance transfer. However, in addition to direct interactions, Holton's model suggests that indirect interactions are also possible due to interactions between the three characteristics.

The model by (Tannenbaum et al., 1993) outlines underlying interactions between attitude, cognitive and behavioral characteristics. The model suggests that individual, training, and organizational characteristics affect trainee motivation. Trainee motivation on the other hand affects learning and performance transfer. This model also outlined the relationship between cognitive, attitude, and behavioral characteristics and learning, training performance, transfer performance, and results.

2.7. Empirical Literature Review

Several scholars studied training and development practices, employee satisfaction, employee performance, and organizational success and the relationship between them over the years. These studies indicated the strong relationship between human resource management practices and organizational success.

In an investigation towards the effects of training and development on employee performance, (Nyoike, 2020) collected data from 37 employees of Government Chemist Laboratories (GCL) in Kenya. The study outcomes underlined the effects of training need analysis on employees at GCL and emphasized that identification of the training needs led to the design and implementation of appropriate training and development programs at GCL. The study also showed potential barriers that hinder training practices including expert trainer unavailability, unwillingness to release employees for training, lack of budget, lack of management commitment, and the unwillingness of employees to take training. Similar outcomes were reported by (Ferdous & Razzak, 2012) who investigated the importance of training need assessment in the banking sector of Bangladesh. They gathered data from 50 employees of the National Bank Limited via electronic mail and phone interviews. Based on the responses from employees, the authors concluded that training needs assessment is a precondition for effective and fruitful training leading to organizational growth and development.

In an investigation on the impact of training and development on employee performance and effectiveness at the Bole Sub-City District Five Administration Office in Ethiopia, (Asfaw et al., 2015) collected data from 94 employees. The outcome of the study indicated a statistically significant relationship between training and development practices and employee performance and effectiveness at the administration. On-the-job training has been reported to be the preferred method at the administration with transfer opportunities for the trainees to pass on acquired knowledge to other employees.

(Costen & Salazar, 2011) gathered data from 641 employees to investigate the impacts of training and development on employee job satisfaction, loyalty, and intent to stay in the lodging industry (in the USA). The study revealed that employee's job satisfaction is influenced by the opportunity to develop new skills and the opportunity for advancement, thereby influencing employee's performance and intent to stay with the company. The researchers confirmed that 27% of the variation in employee job satisfaction is explained by the opportunity to develop new skills alone. This study is a strong indicator that training and development practices, in addition to influencing employee performance, can affect employees' satisfaction and loyalty to the organization.

Management will fail to attain desired goals unless human resources are properly motivated and trained. (Nagaraju & Archana, 2015) investigated job satisfaction through training programs. The authors collected data from 30 employees at the J.K. Tyre Ltd regarding the perceived effectiveness of training design, individual characteristics, and working environment for transferring training. The study concluded that training programs strongly influence employee satisfaction level, and that employee job satisfaction was influenced by poor training and development practices. The authors also concluded that the organization needs to conduct a training need analysis and group employees according to their needs and develop a training program to provide them with the required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

The study by (Neirotti & Paolucci, 2013) explored the relationship between training and innovation using data from 304 large enterprises in Italy. The study outcome indicates two major roles of proper training practices. The first outcome indicates that training plays a role in allowing acquisition of new knowledge and its integration. That means, organizations implementing proper training practices are more likely to develop new competencies internally. The second outcome suggests that training supports organizations in the acclimatization of organizational and technological changes. Firms with proper training practices, when undergoing a change, will have a superior participation from employees leading to smoother transitions.

Several research works indicated the importance of training practices from various angles including employee job satisfaction, employee performance, and organizational success among others. Looking at the multidimensional role training plays, the current study aims at assessing training practices in a technical and scientific services provider company currently availing food and agricultural testing services in Ethiopia.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

A research design is a systematic strategy or plan employed in shaping research. “A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy procedure” (Selltiz et al., 1962). In research, the design and methodology to be followed is strictly dependent on the objective of the research and the nature of the problem to be addressed.

Descriptive statistics is used to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics (Nassaji, 2015). Descriptive research provides a look into the selected issue by exploring the perceptions of multiple sets of respondents and corroboration of findings with existing research. This study accordingly followed a descriptive research approach to assess the training practices at BAFLS.

3.2. Population and Sampling Design

3.2.1. Target Population

Population refers to the group to which the researcher would like the results of a study to be generalizable and includes all individuals with certain specified characteristics (Fraenkel et al., 1993). It refers to the totality of the individuals from which some samples are drawn. The populations for this study were the employees of BAFLS. The target population included the entire 70 employees working at the main office, Addis Ababa customer service office, and Adama customer service office of BAFLS.

3.2.2. Sampling Technique

A simple random sampling technique was used to carry out this study. Each employee was assigned numbers and sample participants were selected randomly using the lottery technique.

3.2.3. Sample Size

Sampling is the “process of selecting a number of individuals (a sample) from a population, preferably in such a way that individuals are representative of the larger group from which they were selected” (Fraenkel et al., 1993). Several important factors should be considered when calculating a sample size including the population size and variability, precision level, confidence interval and sampling error. Putting all these under consideration, the sample size for this study was calculated following the approach of (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) at 95% confidence level.

$$n = \frac{C^2 \times N \times P(1 - P)}{a^2 \times (N - 1) + C^2 \times P(1 - P)}$$

Where; n is the required sample size

C^2 is the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841)

N is the population size

P is the population proportion (0.50 will provide maximum sample size)

a is the degree of accuracy expressed as proportion (0.05)

$$n = \frac{3.841 \times 70 \times 0.50(1-0.50)}{0.05^2 \times (70-1) + 3.841 \times 0.50(1-0.50)} = \underline{\underline{60 \text{ employees}}}$$

3.3. Sources of Data

The data required to conduct this study was collected from both primary and secondary data sources. The researcher collected primary data from employees using semi-structured self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed in such a way that allows data for both qualitative and quantitative analysis to be collected. Open-ended questions will allow respondents to provide detailed answers and opinions they may think is valuable to the study. The closed-ended questions followed the five-point Likert scale approach as it is easy to administer and less time consuming. It allowed respondents to rate their opinions on items of many dimensions. The questionnaires were adopted following an extensive review of literature on training practices Journals, books, and company reports were used as a secondary data source.

3.4. Data Analysis Methods

The first step in the data analysis work was organizing the collected questionnaire and reviewing for completeness. The data was then analyzed using SPSS Version 28. Descriptive statistics was used to describe collected data in terms of frequency, percentage, standard deviation, and using measures of central tendency.

3.5. Validity and Reliability Test

3.5.1. Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which the questionnaire measures what it was intended to measure. Content validity shows the extent to which survey items and the responses from these questions are representative of the research questions. To assure the validity of the questionnaires as much as possible, they were developed carefully through extensive review of literature. In the current research, the validity of the data collection instrument (questionnaire) was evaluated by performing a pilot analysis through the distribution of the questionnaires to 12 employees. The comments and recommendations of the advisor were very instrumental in the validation of the questionnaires. The pilot test was conducted to ensure the questionnaire provides all relevant information required to answer the research questions and to check the clarity of the questions for respondents. Issues raised by the respondents were corrected and the questionnaires were refined and dispatched.

3.5.2. Reliability

Reliability is the measure of internal consistency between different items of the same product. (Bhattacharjee, 2012) defined reliability as the degree to which the measure of a research construct is consistent or dependable. Cronbach's alpha test was used to measure the reliability based on the pilot study with 12 employees. The Cronbach's reliability test is a measure of internal consistency or reliability of a psychometric test score for a sample of respondents. It is used to assess consistency in measurement items. Higher alpha coefficients indicate higher scale reliability (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

Table 1. Reliability analysis of the questionnaire designed for employees

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Training policies and strategies	8	0.889
Training need assessment	6	0.876
Training design	7	0.901
Training delivery	11	0.855
Training evaluation	4	0.858
Employee perception	9	0.874
Complete questionnaire	45	0.730

Source: Own survey, 2021

The Cronbach's alpha analysis was carried out to study the internal consistency between the different items of the questionnaire and their correlation. Values ranging between 0.70 and 0.95 are generally considered acceptable (Bland & Altman, 1997; DeVellis, 2003; Nunnally, 1994). The Cronbach's alpha values in the questionnaire designed for employees ranged between 0.855 and 0.901 (**Table 1**) on each scale category, while the overall Cronbach's alpha score was 0.730. These values indicate there is a good internal consistency between the items in the questionnaire designed for employees.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The researcher informed the management and the staff about the objectives and purposes of the research and addressed all concerns raised by participants. The researcher informed participants that participations are voluntary and provided explanations whenever necessary. Respondents were assured that their responses will be anonymous and that all the data collected will be used for academic purposes only and would be treated confidentially.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Response Rate

This study had a total population of 70 employees out of which a sample size of 60 employees was calculated for the current study. Out of 60 employees selected randomly for this study, 44 respondents returned a properly completed questionnaire. Five employees were attending a training during the time of data collection, and three employees were on a leave. The remaining eight employees failed to return the questionnaire, or the questionnaires were incomplete. The survey from the employees of BAFLS had a total response rate of 73%.

4.2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile of respondents in this study is presented below (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Demographic profile of employee respondents

S/N	Variable	Component	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Female	29	65.9
		Male	15	34.1
2	Age, in years	18 – 29	30	68.2
		30 – 39	11	25.0
		40 – 49	3	6.8
		> 50	-	-
3	Academic qualification	PhD	-	-
		Master's degree	5	11.4
		Bachelor's degree	28	63.6
		Diploma	7	15.9
		Others	4	9.1
4	Professional position	Managerial	12	27.3
		Non-managerial	32	72.7
5	Experience, in years	< 2	16	36.4
		2 – 5	19	43.2
		> 5	9	20.5

Source: Own survey, 2021

Most respondents were females covering nearly two-third of the population sampled contrary to common trends in many organizations where males occupy majority of the positions. This is a good indication that BAFLS strongly believes in women empowerment.

The age distribution on the other hand indicates that youth and adults represent the majority (> 90%) of employees at BAFLS. (Martin, 2005) expressed the work attitude of young and adults in this age group as “independent, entrepreneurial thinkers who relish responsibility, demand immediate feedback, and expect a sense of accomplishment hourly”. No employee reported an age of 50 years and above. All this is in line with the organization’s claims to be filled with young and energetic staff.

In terms of academic qualifications, 11% of the employees possess a master’s degree while 64% respondents reported holding a bachelor’s degree. The fact that 75% of the employees hold a university degree is in line with the highly scientific nature of the service provided by BAFLS. This is a good indication that all technical positions are being held by academically qualified personnel.

Among the respondents, 27% hold managerial positions while the remaining 73% occupy non-managerial position. The respondents served BAFLS from 1 up to 10 years. Among the respondents, 36% joined BAFLS in the past two years while 43% have been working in BAFLS for the last 2 to 5 years. Only 20% of the respondents have been working in BAFLS for over 5 years. The large proportion of employees that joined BAFLS in the last two years and the small proportion of employees who worked in BAFLS for over 5 years could be an indication of high employee turnover and that employee retention plans need to be revisited.

4.3. Analysis of Responses

4.3.1. Development and Availability of Training Policies and Strategies

Training plays a pivotal role in various aspects of organizational performance (Niazi, 2011). To work towards achieving organizational business goals and objectives through training requires a well drafted policy and a strategic approach. The response of employee respondents on the training policies and strategies of BAFLS is summarized in **Table 3** below.

Table 3. Evaluation of BAFLS training policies and strategies by employee respondents

S/N	Statement	Response					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD (1) Freq (%)	D (2) Freq (%)	N (3) Freq. (%)	A (4) Freq. (%)	SA (5) Freq (%)		
1	There is a separate department for managing training and development	- (-)	3 (6.8)	7 (15.9)	18 (40.9)	16 (36.4)	4.07	0.90
2	There is a training and development policy	3 (6.8)	7 (15.9)	7 (15.9)	14 (31.9)	13 (29.5)	3.61	1.26
3	The training and development policy is clear and well-communicated	3 (6.8)	7 (15.9)	7 (15.9)	20 (45.5)	7 (15.9)	3.48	1.15
4	Training and development practices are planned and systematic	3 (6.8)	8 (18.2)	12 (27.3)	13 (29.5)	8 (18.2)	3.34	1.18
5	Training policy and strategies are designed with an aim to improve customer satisfaction	3 (6.8)	8 (18.2)	9 (20.4)	14 (31.8)	10 (22.8)	3.45	1.30
6	The preparation of training and development policy was participatory	3 (6.8)	9 (20.5)	8 (18.2)	18 (40.9)	6 (13.6)	3.34	1.16
7	Sufficient budget is allocated for training and development	2 (4.5)	15 (34.1)	8 (18.2)	11 (25.0)	8 (18.2)	3.18	1.22
8	The management is committed to the training and development of employees	3 (6.8)	6 (13.6)	11 (25.0)	16 (36.4)	8 (18.2)	3.45	1.15
Overall Score							3.49	0.27

Source: Own survey, 2021

The employee respondents gave an overall score of 3.49 ± 0.27 to the training policies and strategies under implementation at BAFLS, which is slightly above average. More than three quarters (77.3%) of the employees believe the operational presence of a separate department for training and development within BAFLS. On the other hand, 6.8% of the employees did not believe in the presence of a separate department for training and development while 15.9% remained neutral on the subject.

Over one half of the employees (61.4%) believe that BAFLS possesses a training and development policy while 22.7% of the employees did not believe BAFLS operates with a training policy. The remaining 15.9% of employees remained neutral on the availability of a training policy at BAFLS.

In addition to the availability of the training policy, equivalent response was obtained for the clarity and well-communicated nature of the training and development policy. This is a clear indication that the training and development strategy is available at BAFLS, but it is not well communicated to the entire staff. Although 61.4% of the employees believe the presence of a training and development policy at BAFLS, only 54.4% of respondents think the development of the policy was inclusive and participatory. Among the remaining respondents, 27.3% did not believe the policy development was participatory while 18.2% remained neutral. The inclusion of a diverse set of workforces in the preparation of training and development policies is crucial to achieve the desired organizational goals. In relation to this, the fact that nearly half of the employees believe the policy preparation was not participatory could be alarming when considering the effectiveness of the policies.

Nearly half of the respondents (47.7%) believe that training and development practices at BAFLS follow a planned and systematic approach while a quarter of the respondents disagree with this statement. A little over one-fourth of the respondents (27.3%) neither agree or disagree that the training and developments are planned and systematic. Regarding emphasis on customer satisfaction during the designing of training and development strategies, 54.6% of the respondents agreed while 25% of the respondents opposed the idea of customer satisfaction inclusion in the policy and strategy development. The remaining 20.4% respondents remained neutral on the subject.

Budget allocation is one of the topics where majority of the respondents stood in disagreement. Among the respondents, a large proportion (38.6%) do not believe BAFLS allocates sufficient budget for training and development. Most of the respondents (43.2%) however believe the budget allocated for training and development practices by the company is sufficient. The remaining 18.2% of the respondents refrained from agreeing or disagreeing about budget allocation. In addition to sufficient budget allocation, 54.6% of the respondents believe the management is committed to the training and development of employees. On the other hand, 20.4% of the respondents question the commitment of the management while 25% remained neutral.

4.3.2. Assessment of Training Need Analysis Practices

Training need assessment is vital in ensuring that trainings are suitable and focused. Without a proper training need assessment, it will be difficult to ensure that training practices address the real training issues at the appropriate level (Adjirackor et al., 2016). The opinion of the respondent employees regarding the training need assessment practices at BAFLS.

Table 4. Evaluation of BAFLS training need assessment practices by employee respondents

S/N	Statement	Response					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD (1) Freq (%)	D (2) Freq (%)	N (3) Freq. (%)	A (4) Freq. (%)	SA (5) Freq (%)		
1	Organizational training need assessment is carried out to determine knowledge, skills, and abilities required to meet organizational goals and objectives	- (-)	2 (4.5)	7 (15.9)	26 (59.1)	9 (20.5)	3.95	0.75
2	Occupational training need assessment is carried out to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform a given job	- (-)	1 (2.3)	9 (20.5)	20 (45.5)	14 (31.8)	4.07	0.79
3	Individual training need assessment is carried out to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities gaps of an individual to perform his/her job	- (-)	7 (15.9)	7 (15.9)	15 (34.1)	15 (34.1)	3.86	1.07
4	Trainings are organized based on a training need assessment	3 (6.8)	5 (11.4)	8 (18.2)	23 (52.3)	5 (11.4)	3.50	1.07
5	The training need assessment process is participatory and involves all responsible parties	- (-)	8 (18.2)	10 (22.7)	16 (36.4)	10 (22.7)	3.64	1.04
6	The training need assessment puts the requirements of customers under consideration	1 (2.3)	4 (9.1)	10 (22.7)	21 (47.7)	8 (18.2)	3.70	0.95
Overall Score						3.79	0.21	

Source: Own survey, 2021

The employee respondents gave an overall score of 3.79 ± 0.21 to the training need assessment practices at BAFLS. Majority of the respondents (79.6%) believe that BAFLS carries out organizational need assessment to determine knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) required to meet organizational goals and objectives. Among the remaining respondents, 4.5% did not agree on the practices of training need assessment at BAFLS while 15.9% of the respondents remained neutral. Relatively similar proportion of the respondents (77.3%) believe training need assessment is carried out to determine the KSA required to perform a given job. On the other hand, 2.3% of the respondents were in contradiction to this statement while the remaining 20.5% of the respondents remained neutral.

Among the employee respondents, 68.2% believe that training need assessment is practiced on individual level through the assessment of KSA required to do their specific job. Half of the remaining respondents (15.9%) did not agree on the individual level training need assessment practices at BAFLS while the other half (15.9%) remained neutral.

Two-third of the respondents (63.7%) believe that BAFLS organizes trainings based on training need assessment, while 18.2% of the respondents opposed this practice. The remaining 18.2% of the respondents remained neutral. Regarding the participatory nature of the training need assessment, 59.1% of the respondents believe that BAFLS conducts training need assessment in a participatory manner. Among the respondents, the remaining 18.2% did not agree on the participatory training need assessment practice while 22.7% respondents remained neutral.

In view of customer satisfaction, 65.9% of the respondents believe that BAFLS considers the needs of customers when conducting training need assessments. On the other hand, 11.4% of the respondents believe customer needs are not considered in the training needs assessment process. The remaining 22.7% of respondents stayed in the middle of the Likert scale by choosing to be neutral on the subject.

4.3.3. Training Design

The response of employee respondents on the training design practices at BAFLS are provided in **Table 5** below.

Table 5. Evaluation of BAFLS training design practices by employee respondents

S/N	Statement	Response					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD (1) Freq (%)	D (2) Freq (%)	N (3) Freq. (%)	A (4) Freq. (%)	SA (5) Freq (%)		
1	The trainings designed are relevant enough to fill the knowledge and skill gaps identified	1 (2.3)	3 (6.8)	6 (13.6)	26 (59.1)	8 (18.2)	3.84	0.89
2	The content of the trainings I received are suitable to help me perform my job well	- (-)	3 (6.8)	10 (22.7)	14 (38.6)	17 (31.8)	3.95	0.91
3	The training methods used are effective and appropriate to provide me with the knowledge and skills I need to perform my job	- (-)	4 (9.1)	7 (15.9)	24 (54.5)	9 (20.5)	3.86	0.85
4	Trainers are selected based on their expertise in the subject matter and possess the qualifications sufficient to provide the required theoretical and practical training	1 (2.3)	5 (11.4)	6 (13.6)	22 (50.0)	10 (22.7)	3.80	1.00
5	Trainees are selected based on organizational assessment and content of the training	- (-)	8 (18.2)	7 (15.9)	20 (45.5)	9 (20.5)	3.68	1.01
6	I received an induction training when I first joined BAFLS	2 (4.5)	9 (20.5)	8 (18.2)	15 (34.1)	10 (22.7)	3.50	1.19
7	The training design at BAFLS equips employees with all the required knowledge, skills, and attitude to meet and exceed customer's needs and expectations	- (-)	9 (20.5)	11 (25)	17 (38.6)	7 (15.9)	3.50	1.00
Overall Score							3.73	0.18

Source: Own survey, 2021

More than 75% of the respondents believe that BAFLS designs trainings which are relevant enough to fill the knowledge and skill gaps identified. In relation to this, 70.5% of the respondents believe that the content of the trainings they received helped them perform their job well. Three-quarters of the respondents also believe that the training methods utilized by BAFLS are effective and appropriate to help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to perform their job.

Regarding the selection of trainers, majority of the respondents (72.7%) believe that the trainer selection process is done well, and trainers are selected based on their qualification in relation to the topic of the training. On the other hand, when it comes to the selection of trainees, although 66% of the respondents agree that trainees are selected based on organizational assessment and content of training, 18.2% oppose this practice at BAFLS.

In view of providing induction training when joining the company, 56.8% of the respondents stated that they received the training, while 25% claimed to not receiving an induction training and 18.2% abstained and stayed neutral.

When asked if they believed the trainings are designed to equip employees with the necessary KSA to meet and exceed customer needs and expectations, 54.5% agreed to the statement while 20.5% opposed the practice of including customer needs and expectations in the training designing process.

4.3.4. Training Delivery

The response of employee respondents on the training delivery practices at BAFLS are provided in **Table 6** below.

Table 6. Evaluation of BAFLS training delivery practices by employee respondents

S/N	Statement	Response					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD (1) Freq (%)	D (2) Freq (%)	N (3) Freq. (%)	A (4) Freq. (%)	SA (5) Freq (%)		
1	The training delivery method allows me to provide customers an accurate service.	- (-)	6 (13.6)	11 (25.0)	19 (43.2)	8 (18.2)	3.66	0.939
2	BAFLS provides appropriate locations and resources for the trainings provided.	1 (2.3)	9 (20.5)	8 (18.2)	17 (38.6)	9 (20.5)	3.55	1.109
3	BAFLS provides employees on-the-job trainings such as coaching, mentoring, and job rotation.	2 (4.5)	6 (13.6)	9 (20.5)	17 (38.6)	10 (22.7)	3.61	1.125
4	BAFLS provides employees off-the-job trainings such as workshops and lectures.	2 (4.5)	7 (15.9)	13 (29.5)	17 (38.6)	5 (11.4)	3.36	1.036
5	BAFLS provides employees off-the-job trainings such as case studies.	1 (2.3)	11 (25.0)	15 (34.1)	12 (27.3)	5 (11.4)	3.20	1.025
6	On-the-job trainings provided by BAFLS help me advance my knowledge, skills, competency, efficiency, effectiveness, and commitment in my job.	- (-)	2 (4.5)	15 (34.1)	20 (45.5)	7 (15.9)	3.73	.788
7	Off-the-job trainings provided by BAFLS help me to advance my knowledge, skills, competency, efficiency, effectiveness, and commitment in my job.	- (-)	5 (11.4)	15 (34.1)	16 (36.4)	8 (18.2)	3.61	0.920
8	On-the-job trainings are more effective than off-the-job training to improve my performance.	- (-)	8 (18.2)	12 (27.3)	20 (45.5)	4 (9.1)	3.45	0.901
9	Off-the-job trainings are more effective than on-the-job training to improve my performance.	1 (2.3)	9 (20.5)	11 (25.0)	17 (38.6)	6 (13.6)	3.41	1.041
10	The techniques implemented by BAFLS for delivering trainings have helped me in improving my performance	1 (2.3)	5 (11.4)	10 (22.7)	16 (36.4)	12 (27.3)	3.75	1.059

S/N	Statement	Response					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD (1) Freq (%)	D (2) Freq (%)	N (3) Freq. (%)	A (4) Freq. (%)	SA (5) Freq (%)		
	on the job since I started working at BAFLS.							
11	The duration for the delivery of the trainings is sufficient to convey the necessary knowledge and skills attributes.	1 (2.3)	6 (13.6)	11 (25.0)	17 (38.6)	9 (20.5)	3.61	1.039
Overall Score							3.54	0.17

Source: Own survey, 2021

Nearly two-third of the employees (61.4%) believe that the training delivery techniques at BAFLS help them provide accurate service to customers. Majority of the respondents (59.1%) also believe that appropriate locations are provided for the trainings.

More than two-third of the respondents believe that BAFLS provides both on-the-job and off-the-job trainings to help them acquire the necessary KSA to carry out their tasks. There are however, a little over 18% of respondents who does not agree with this statement. This could possibly indicate departmental gaps because of non-participatory training need assessments. Around a quarter of the respondents remained neutral on the topic. Over half of the respondents believe that these trainings help them advance their knowledge, skills, competency, efficiency, effectiveness, and commitment in my job.

Nearly two-third (63.7%) of the employees believe that the training delivery methods chosen by BAFLS improved their performance after joining the company. More than half of the respondents (59.1%) believe the duration of the training provided by BAFLS are sufficient for them to receive the knowledge, sills, and abilities required to perform their job.

4.3.5. Training Evaluation

The response of employee respondents on the training evaluation practices at BAFLS are provided in **Table 7** below.

Table 7. Assessment of respondent’s opinion towards training evaluation practices at BAFLS

S/N	Statement	Response					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD (1) Freq (%)	D (2) Freq (%)	N (3) Freq. (%)	A (4) Freq. (%)	SA (5) Freq (%)		
1	Employees are requested for their feedbacks after attending a training program	- (-)	2 (4.5)	8 (18.2)	17 (38.6)	17 (38.6)	4.11	0.87
2	BAFLS conducts a follow-up to see if the knowledge and skills acquired from a training are being implemented	4 (9.1)	7 (15.9)	11 (25)	16 (36.4)	6 (13.6)	3.30	1.17
3	Employees are evaluated before and after attending a training program	- (-)	7 (15.9)	9 (20.5)	14 (31.8)	14 (31.8)	3.80	1.07
4	The training programs are effective and efficient	1 (2.3)	3 (6.8)	12 (27.3)	20 (45.5)	8 (18.2)	3.70	0.93
Overall Score							3.73	0.33

Source: Own survey, 2021

More than three quarters of the respondents (77.2%) confirm that employees are requested for their feedbacks after attending trainings. Nearly 5% respondents don’t agree that their feedbacks are requested after attending a training while 18.2% remained neutral. Although the proportion of respondents who said their feedbacks were not requested is low, it might still indicate inconsistencies in collecting employee feedbacks following attendance of a training.

More than half of the respondents believe in the presence of follow-ups before and after trainings are conducted. More than 15% of the respondents did not agree to this statement, which again might indicate inconsistencies in training evaluation practices. Among the employees, 63.7% think the training programs at BAFLS are effective and efficient while over a quarter of employees (27.3%) remained neutral.

4.3.6. Employee Perception

The overall perception of employees towards the training and development practices at BAFLS are summarized in **Table 8** below.

Table 8. Perception of employees towards training practices at BAFLS

S/N	Statement	Response					Mean	Standard Deviation
		SD (1) Freq (%)	D (2) Freq (%)	N (3) Freq. (%)	A (4) Freq. (%)	SA (5) Freq (%)		
1	I have received all the theoretical and practical trainings that are essential to properly carryout my job	3 (6.8)	7 (15.9)	11 (25)	18 (40.9)	5 (11.4)	3.34	1.10
2	I am not expected to provide a service to customers before I receive the appropriate training required to conduct the task	2 (4.5)	8 (18.2)	11 (25.0)	14 (31.8)	9 (20.5)	3.45	1.15
3	I am satisfied with the training and development practices at BAFLS	4 (9.1)	5 (11.4)	13 (29.5)	15 (34.1)	7 (15.9)	3.36	1.16
4	The training and development practice at BAFLS motivates me to perform my job well	- (-)	9 (20.5)	12 (27.3)	15 (34.1)	8 (18.2)	3.50	1.02
5	The trainings I received have allowed me to do my job accurately	- (-)	4 (9.1)	9 (20.5)	23 (52.3)	8 (18.2)	3.80	0.85
6	The training and development practices at BAFLS have increased my commitments to the organization	- (-)	3 (6.8)	17 (38.6)	17 (38.6)	7 (15.9)	3.64	0.84
7	The trainings I received helped me reduce errors at work	2 (4.5)	1 (2.3)	8 (18.2)	21 (47.7)	12 (27.3)	3.91	0.98
8	The training and development practices at BAFLS motivate me to continuously work towards the satisfaction of customers	3 (6.8)	3 (6.8)	13 (29.5)	18 (40.9)	7 (15.9)	3.52	1.07
9	Trainings I received allowed me to provide better quality of services to customers	- (-)	4 (9.1)	10 (22.7)	21 (47.7)	9 (20.5)	3.80	0.88
Overall Score							3.59	0.21

Source: Own survey, 2021

About one half of the respondents (52.3%) confirm that they received all the theoretical and practical trainings that are essential to properly carryout their job. Among the remaining respondents, 22.7% stated that they did not receive the practical and theoretical trainings essential to conduct their job properly. This is a critical issue, especially considering the scientific nature of the service and the make-or-break nature of the decisions made based on the analytical services BAFLS provides. A relatively similar output was confirmed based on the response of the employees to the statement ‘I am not expected to provide a service to customers before I receive the appropriate training required to conduct the task’.

Around half of the respondents stated satisfaction with the training and development practices at BAFLS while about 20% of the respondents opposed this and 29.5% remained neutral. Relatively similar proportion of the respondents expressed the same opinion regarding the role of training and development at BAFLS on their motivation. Around 65% of the employees also indicated that the training and development practices at BAFLS have increased their commitment to the organization.

Among the respondents, 70.5% indicated that the trainings they received at BAFLS allowed them to do their job accurately while 9.1% opposed and 20.5% abstained. Nearly 70% of the respondents indicated that the training and development practices at BAFLS motivated them to work more towards the satisfaction of customers. About 10% of the employees stood in opposition of this statement.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary of Major Findings

The main objective of this study was to assess the training practices at BAFLS. Training is considered as one of the crucial practices' organizations undertake to equip employees with the knowledge and skills required to perform the given job effectively and efficiently for enhancing performance and to increase productivity. The major findings analyzed and discussed in the previous section of this study are summarized below.

- BAFLS is staffed with young professionals with great academic qualifications. Most of these employees have been with BAFLS for the past two to five years.
- The majority of BAFLS employees are female.
- A separate training and development department is available at BAFLS. There is a training policy developed by the HR department, but a proportion of the respondents didn't agree on the participatory nature of the policy development and sufficient budget allocation.
- BAFLS conducts training need assessment to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to meet organizational goals and objectives as observed from majority of the respondents.
- Most of the respondents agreed on a good training design practice at BAFLS. A quarter of the employees did not agree on the effectiveness of the training design.
- Not all employees received induction training when they first joined BAFLS.
- Majority of the employees believe that the training delivery techniques at BAFLS equip them with the KSA required to effectively carry out their job and meet customer needs and expectations. However, a large proportion of employees remained neutral on the effectiveness of the training delivered and the method of training delivery.
- According to respondents, BAFLS leans towards on-the-job trainings when compared to off-the-job trainings.
- Less than half of BAFLS employees believe the training and development practices at BAFLS follow a planned and systematic approach.
- Most of the respondents are satisfied with the training practices at BAFLS.

5.2. Conclusion

The current study aimed at exploring the training practices at BAFLS. The various steps in the training process in this study (training policies and strategies, training need assessment, training design, training delivery and training evaluation) could be of a good importance for BAFLS as training influences the satisfaction of both internal and external customers, the performance of employees, and their commitment to the organization. The overall training practices at BAFLS are appreciable. However, there is always a room for improvement.

The efforts of BAFLS in systematically handling training processes is appreciable. The fact that there is a separate department handling training related aspects is a sign of the company's commitment and allows immediate actions to be taken to remedy any drawbacks in the applied process. BAFLS conducts organizational training need assessment to determine knowledge, skills, and abilities required to meet organizational goals and objectives. In addition, the company mainly utilizes the on-the-job training approach. This is a useful approach considering the scientific and practical nature of the company's services.

The training and development practices at BAFLS require alterations so as to shift to a planned and systematic approach. In addition, the employee induction training practices although practiced at BAFLS, they require consistency. The company also requires transparency and inclusivity when it comes to the development of training and development policies and training need assessments.

5.3. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed.

- Communicating the training policies and strategies to the organizational staff and creating a participatory platform where different members of the organization can contribute inputs to ensure a better performing policy and strategy.
- It can help the company to analyze if the current training budget is sufficient to ensure better performance and improved customer satisfaction. Allocation of adequate budget and proper utilization of the allocated resources is vital for organizational success.
- The company can improve the current training need assessment practices by devising a more participatory plan. This is crucial because the laboratory service is practical and scientific environment with a huge diversity of practical and theoretical principles. Unless

training need assessment is done in a participatory manner, important training needs can be overseen which can lead to poor performance and customer dissatisfaction.

- The company may consider making induction trainings mandatory and consistent. This should be coupled with continual training and development plans to ensure employees are equipped with the KSA required to carry out their job effectively.
- The training evaluation practices at the company require consistency and strict approach.
- The training practices at BAFLS needs weaking to shape the approach in to having a planned and systematic approach.
- It would be valuable to conduct further research concerning training practices in other private, governmental (regulatory) and academic laboratories providing services to customers.

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ANNEX 1

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Dear Sir/Madam,

This questionnaire is designed to collect information on the effect of training and development practices on customer satisfaction at Bless Agri Food Laboratory Services PLC (BAFLS). The purpose of this data collection is purely academic and for research purposes. I kindly request you to attempt to answer all the questions included in the questionnaire as it will play a

significant role in the successful completion of this research work. All the information you provide will be treated with confidentiality and will be strictly anonymous. Hence, you're not required to write your name.

Thank you in advance for taking your time to complete the questionnaire.

For any questions regarding the questionnaire, please contact me with the following information at any time;

Fasika Asres Kebede

Tel: +251 911 982192

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PART 1: Personal Information

Kindly read each question carefully and tick the box (✓) that corresponds to a response which represents your view most accurately.

1	Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
2	Age _____ years
3	Academic qualification <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> Masters <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors <input type="checkbox"/> Diploma Other (please specify): _____
4	Work experience within BAFLS _____ years
5	Department _____
6	Position <input type="checkbox"/> Managerial <input type="checkbox"/> Non-managerial

PART 2: Training and Development

Kindly read each statement carefully and tick one of the five boxes (✓) next to each statement and that corresponds to a response which represents your view most accurately.

1 (SD): Strongly Disagree **2 (D):** Disagree **3 (N):** Neutral **4 (A):** Agree

5 (SA): Strongly Agree

	Questions	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)
1	Training Policies and Strategies					

	Questions	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)
1.1	BAFLS has a separate department responsible for managing training and development of employees					
1.2	There is a training and development policy at BAFLS					
1.3	The training and development policy at BAFLS is clear and well-communicated					
1.4	Training and development practices at BAFLS are planned and systematic					
1.5	The training policy and strategies are designed with an aim to improve customer satisfaction					
1.6	The preparation of training and development policy was participatory					
1.7	Sufficient budget is allocated for training and development at BAFLS					
1.8	The management is committed to the training and development of employees					
2	Training Need Assessment					
2.1	Organizational training need assessment is carried out to determine knowledge, skills, and abilities required to meet organizational goals and objectives.					
2.2	Occupational training need assessment is carried out to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform a given job					
2.3	Individual training need assessment is carried out to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities gaps of an individual to perform his/her job					
2.4	Trainings at BAFLS are organized based on a training need assessment					
2.5	The training need assessment process is participatory and involves all responsible parties					

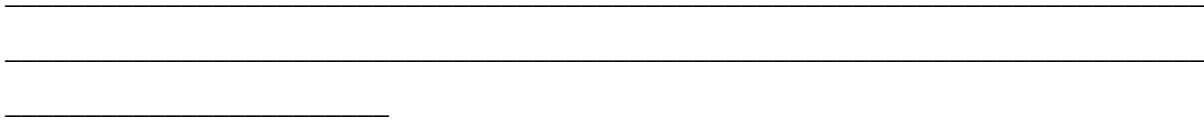
	Questions	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)
2.6	The training need assessment carried out at BAFLS puts the requirements of customers under consideration					
3	Training Design					
3.1	The trainings designed are relevant enough to fill the knowledge and skill gaps identified					
3.2	The content of the trainings I received are suitable to help me perform my job well					
3.3	The training methods used are effective and appropriate to provide me with the knowledge and skills I need to perform my job					
3.4	Trainers are selected based on their expertise in the subject matter and possess the qualifications sufficient enough to provide the required theoretical and practical training					
3.5	Trainees are selected based on organizational assessment and content of the training					
3.6	I received an induction training when I first joined BAFLS					
3.7	The training design at BAFLS equips employees with all the required knowledge, skills, and attitude to meet and exceed customer's needs and expectations					
4	Training Delivery					
4.1	The training delivery method allows me to provide customers an accurate service					
4.2	BAFLS provides appropriate locations and resources for the trainings provided					
4.3	BAFLS provides employees on-the-job trainings such as coaching, mentoring, and job rotation					
4.4	BAFLS provides employees off-the-job trainings such as workshops, lectures, and case studies.					

	Questions	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)
4.5	On-the-job trainings provided by BAFLS help me advance my knowledge, skills, competency, efficiency, effectiveness and commitment in my job					
4.6	Off-the-job trainings provided by BAFLS help me advance my knowledge, skills, competency, efficiency, effectiveness and commitment in my job					
4.7	On-the-job trainings are more effective than off-the-job training to improve my performance					
4.8	Off-the-job trainings are more effective than on-the-job training to improve my performance					
4.9	The techniques implemented by BAFLS for delivering trainings have helped me in improving my performance on the job since I started working at BAFLS					
	The duration for the delivery of the trainings is sufficient enough to convey the necessary knowledge and skills attributes					
5	Training Evaluation					
5.1	Employees are requested for their feedbacks after attending a training program					
5.2	BAFLS conducts a follow-up to see if the knowledge and skills acquired from a training are being implemented					
5.3	Employees are evaluated before and after attending a training program					
5.4	The training programs are effective and efficient					
6	Employee Perception					
6.1	I have received all the theoretical and practical trainings that are essential to properly carryout my job					

	Questions	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)
6.2	I am not expected to provide a service to customers before I receive the appropriate training required to conduct the task					
6.3	I am satisfied with the training and development practices at BAFLS					
6.4	The training and development practice at BAFLS motivates me to perform my job well					
6.5	The trainings I received have allowed me to do my job accurately					
6.6	The training and development practices at BAFLS have increased my commitments to the organization					
6.7	The trainings I received helped me reduce errors at work					
6.8	The training and development practices at BAFLS motivate me to continuously work towards the satisfaction of customers					
6.9	Trainings I received allowed me to provide better quality of services to customers					

PART 3: Further Information/Relevant Inputs

Kindly provide us with any information, input, or comments you think are important to the objectives of this study on the space provided below;



THANK YOU