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Do HRD Climate Mediates Between Performance Coaching and Training Transfer? A Study in Medium and Small, Micro Enterprises of India

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The increasing concern for return on training investment, especially in medium and small-scale enterprises (MSMEs) has been encouraging researchers to explore the factors that affects training transfer. The current research seeks to examine the role of performance coaching and HRD Climate on transfer of training in the context of MSMEs of India. Further, following the social cognitive theory, the research examines the mediating role of HRD climate between performance coaching and training transfer in MSMEs.

Design/methodology/approach: The survey research has been designed to collect data from MSMEs of India using validated scale. The structural equation modelling using SPSS-AMOS software has been used for checking the reliability and validity, and testing hypotheses. construct, discriminatory and used for data collection. Following the Preacher and Hayes's (2008) approach and using statistical programme: PROCESS macro, the mediating role of HRD climate between performance coaching and training transfer has been examined.

Results: The result proved that performance coaching and employee agility exert a significant and positive influence on Training transfer. Further, the result proved that HRD climate mediates the relationship between performance coaching and training transfer. The implication of the result for HRD has been explained.

Originality: In the absence of any research examining the contribution of performance coaching and HRD climate on training transfer in MSMEs, the research findings can exert a substantial influence on training transfer research and practice.

Keywords: Training transfer; Performance coaching; HRD Climate; Medium and Small, Micro Enterprise Sectors.

Introduction

A well-trained workforce is seen as an asset for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), as it leads to higher levels of innovation and adaptability (Gupta and Jain, 2013). Effective training program helps in improving the productivity and efficiency of employees (Bashir and Santhi, 2022; Teixeira and Carvalho, 2022). Research has also highlighted the need for MSMEs to adapt to technological changes and the role of training in enabling this transition (Teixeira and Carvalho, 2022). The fourth industrial

revolution has made digital skills increasingly important for MSMEs, and training programs are essential for bridging the digital skills gap (Manuti *et al*., 2020).

Training or Learning transfer is the process by which newly acquired skills and knowledge are applied to the workplace (Brion, 2022). Researchers concur that the financial investments made in the development of employees often yield low to moderate returns at best. The ultimate objective of training is the successful transfer of newly acquired knowledge and skills, yet achieving this remains highly challenging (Saks, 2002; Brion, 2022). Successive research studies have been explaining that training and learning alone are not sufficient to transfer knowledge and skills to the workplace. Past research has examined the role of various organisational factors or work context such as supervisor support, peer support, opportunity to use, performance coaching, as facilitator or barrier to successful training transfer (Bhurtel and Bhattarai, 2023; Kodwani and Prashar, 2021; Muduli and Raval, 2018; Holton *et al*., and Bates, 2007). For example, training transfer has adhered to Holton *et al*., (2007) Learning Transfer System (LTS) framework to investigate the impediments and facilitators of training transfer across diverse contexts. Following the LTS framework, a substantial portion of research has examined the influence of organizational context, individual characteristics, and training design on training transfer, primarily within the context of large-scale corporate settings (Bhurtel and Bhattarai, 2023; Kodwani and Prashar, 2021; Muduli and Raval, 2018; Holton and Bates, 2007). In the context of MSMEs, where resources may be limited, understanding the factors that affect learning transfer is crucial for improving performance and competitiveness.

Despite the growing importance of MSMEs in recent years, limited attention has been given to the realm of training in this sector, even though it has the potential to yield effective results for the businesses (Haider *et al.*, 2017; Mbura and Minja, 2023). The majority of studies concerning training in MSMEs have predominantly focused on Western countries, often overlooking the impact of training on micro-enterprises(). This oversight is despite the fact that countries like India have a substantial proportion of their employment and export contributions stemming from micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. In the context of training transfer, research indicates that MSMEs often face unique challenges. These may include limited financial resources, time constraints, and a lack of structured training programs. The absence of dedicated training departments in many MSMEs make it challenging to establish and sustain effective transfer processes. Research exploring training transfer has highlighted the significance of the organisational characteristics or work context (Kodwani and Prashar, 2021; Muduli and Raval, 2018; Holton and Bates, 2007). Within the domain of work context, the existing body of research has predominantly focused on elements such as supervisor support, peer support, and performance coaching (Muduli and Raval, 2018). Surprisingly, little to no literature has ventured into the potential impact of performance coaching and HRD climate as an organisational characteristic in the context of training transfer. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the influence of performance coaching, and HRD climate on the process of training transfer in MSMEs. Further, influenced by the social cognitive theory which posits that observational learning, and cognitive processes shapes human behavior, organisation culture in the form of HRD climate has been proposed to serve as a mediating capability between performance coaching (as a resource) and training transfer (as an outcome). Thus, the current research also seeks to examine the mediating role of HRD climate between performance coaching and training transfer in MSMEs.

Background and Hypotheses Development

The Learning Transfer System (LTS) framework developed by Holton and Bates (2002) underscores that

the effective transfer of learning and training outcomes is a result of the contributions of organizational factors, individual characteristics, and training design. Building upon the LTS framework, the current research is designed to investigate the influence of specific organisational factors such as Performance coaching and HRD climate on the training transfer in the MSMEs sector. The research model proposes that performance coaching plays a pivotal role in training transfer and influenced by a positive HRD climate. Further, following the Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) that emphasizes the role of observational learning, and cognitive processes in shaping human behavior (Lim *et al*., 2020), organizational culture surrounding HRD practices (HRD climate) has been proposed to play mediating role in translating performance coaching interventions into tangible outcomes in terms of training transfer or the application of learned skills and knowledge to the workplace.

Performance coaching

Coaching, as defined by Whitmore (2009, p.10), is the process of unleashing an individual's potential to optimise their performance. It involves offering employees the essential time, mental clarity, support, and guidance to help them comprehend the available information and determine how best to apply it within their specific context (Day, 2000). Coaching serves as a catalyst for unlocking an individual's untapped potential by enhancing self-awareness, sparking innovative thinking, and fostering creativity (Taie, 2011).

HRD climate

HRD is "a set of systematic and planned activities designed by an organisation to provide its members with the opportunities to learn necessary skills to meet current and future job demands" (Werner and DeSimone, 2006), which further "maximise organisational effectiveness and performance" (Hamlin, 2004). In a seminal work, Rao and Abraham (1986) coined the word 'HRD climate' to refer to an environment deliberately cultivated by organizations to facilitate the learning and growth of their employees. Muduli (2015) defined HRD climate as the collective assumptions, values, and beliefs held by participants within an organization regarding the learning and development culture that has been perceived as conducive to the development of human resources. Being a subset of organizational climate, HRD climate is employees perception of the development culture of an organization about the human resources development policies, practices and procedures (Kritika, 2015).

Training transfer

Training transfer encompasses the process of applying acquired knowledge and skills from the training environment to the practical setting of the workplace. For the transfer to be considered successful, it necessitates not only the generalisation of learned knowledge and skills but also their sustained application within the job context over an extended period (Reinhold *et al.*, 2018). In essence, training transfer denotes the effective utilisation of trained knowledge and skills in the day-to-day work environment.

Hypotheses

Performance coaching and Training transfer

Coaching plays a pivotal role in promoting training transfer, as supported by a substantial body of research (Schindler *et al*., 2016; Godinez *et al*., 2015; Burke *et al*., 2008; Reinhold *et al*., 2018; Muduli and Raval, 2018; Barnett *et al*., 1998; Mohamad and Ismail, 2020; Dixit and Sinha, 2022). Schindler *et al*. (2016) delved into the impact of coaching on transferring acquired knowledge and skills to the workplace, revealing that coaching serves as a direct and/or indirect facilitator of training transfer. Godinez *et al*. (2015) emphasised the significant role of coaching in enhancing the transfer of learning. Reinhold *et al*. (2018) conducted a comprehensive examination of the connections between social support, motivation for

transfer, and the actual transfer of training. Social support was categorised into four dimensions: supervisor support, peer support, supervisor sanctions, and feedback/coaching. Their findings indicated that peer support emerged as the most influential predictor of motivation for transfer, while feedback and coaching were the strongest predictors of training transfer. Burke *et al*. (2008) recommended that interventions for training transfer are most effective when implemented in the context of work, during the design and delivery phases, and involving both trainers and supervisors. Muduli and Raval (2018) explored the relationship between work context and training transfer, highlighting the role of Performance coaching while refuting the mediating role of transfer motivation. Mohamad and Ismail (2020) evaluated managers' attitudes toward technology-based training programs and their impact on knowledge transfer. Dixit and Sinha (2022) emphasised the value of coaching as a tool for promoting the application of behavioural skills acquired in training programs within the workplace. The findings from these studies are applicable across various industries and hold the potential to enhance organizational training transfer.

Hypothesis 1. Performance coaching positively relates to Training Transfer

Performance coaching and HRD climate

Coaching in general, and performance coaching, in specific, in organisations may relate with organisational culture. The close relation between 'performance coaching' and 'culture' is evident from the increasing acceptance of the term 'coaching culture' by several researcher (Kapoutzis *et al*., 2023; Whybrow and O'Riordan, 2021; Milner *et al*., 2020). Whybrow and O'Riordan, (2021) found that coaching activities in organisation integrated with certain cultural characteristics that may result in higher motivation, engagement, employee retention, and greater productivity, empowerment and learning. Specific cultural characteristics such as alignment with organizational values such as ownership, empowerment, collaboration, and respect, leaders' proactive role in the creation of coaching cultures within their organizations are found positively related with performance coaching (Milner *et al*., 2020). McComb (2012a, 2012b, 2012c) found that effective performance coaching requires an organisational culture based on leaders commitment, active participation by the seniors, and open communication. Kapoutzis *et al*., (2023) argued that performance coaching based culture requires to appreciate the other stakeholders and their interrelationships (e.g., peers, coaches, teams, and formal and informal networks).

Hypothesis 2. Performance coaching positively relates to HRD climate

HRD climate and training transfer

HRD climate plays a vital role in facilitating training transfer, as evidenced by a body of research (Martin and Harry, 2010; Liu *et al*., 2017; Muduli and Gary, 2021; Gemmano *et al*., 2022). Martin and Harry (2010) conducted an investigation into the impact of HRD climate support on training transfer within a corporate field setting, concluding that a conducive climate promotes transfer. Bates *et al*. (2005) explored the relationship between organizational training transfer climate and organizational innovation, establishing that an organizational learning culture predicted the learning transfer climate. Both factors collectively accounted for significant variance in organizational innovation. Liu *et al*. (2017) empirically examined how HRD climate influences innovation and assessed how inter-group variability in HRD climates among clients, contractors, and consultants impacts innovation. Muduli and Gary (2021) studied the mediating role of HRD climate between High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) and organizational performance, demonstrating that HRD climate effectively mediates between HPWS and organizational performance. Gemmano *et al*. (2022) explored the moderating role of organizational learning culture in the relationship between training transfer and work performance. Their findings revealed that learning

culture significantly moderates the relationship between training transfer and dimensions of work performance, including proficiency, adaptiveness, and proactivity.

Hypothesis 3. HRD Climate is positively related to training transfer

Performance coaching, HRD climate and training transfer

The hypothesis that HRD culture mediates between Performance coaching and Training transfer suggests that the organizational culture surrounding HRD practices plays a significant role in translating performance coaching interventions into tangible outcomes in terms of training transfer or the application of learned skills and knowledge to the workplace. A suitable organizational theory that provides a logical framework for understanding HRD climate as a mediating factor between performance coaching and training transfer is the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). SCT proposed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the role of observational learning, and cognitive processes in shaping human behavior (Lim *et al*., 2020).. The observational learning aspects of SCT highlights the importance of observational learning, where individuals acquire knowledge and skills by observing others (Asakura, 2022).. In the context of performance coaching, employees not only receive direct guidance and feedback from their coaches but also observe the behaviors and attitudes promoted by the HRD climate within their organization. A strong HRD climate characterized by openness, trust, collaboration, and authenticity provides employees with positive role models and social cues that reinforce the value of learning and development may promote training transfer. Further, the reciprocal determinism aspects of SCT argues that behavior is influenced by the interplay of personal factors, environmental factors, and behavior itself (Joshi *et al*., 2021). The HRD climate may act as a crucial environmental factor that can interact with performance coaching interventions and employee behaviors. A positive HRD climate reinforces the importance of continuous learning and development, which aligns with the goals of performance coaching initiatives. In turn, performance coaching interventions can contribute to shaping and strengthening the HRD climate by promoting behaviors and attitudes conducive to learning, such as proactive problem-solving, collaboration, and openness to feedback.

Hypothesis 4. HRD climate mediates the relationship between performance coaching and training transfer

Methodology

Research sample and pretest

The sample for the research consists of MSMEs in India, which is the cornerstone of the country's economic landscape, playing a pivotal role in fostering economic growth and contributing significantly to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). MSMEs significantly contribute to India's GDP, accounting for around 30-35%. They drive economic growth, create jobs, foster entrepreneurship, and promote innovation. The government supports this sector with various initiatives, recognising its role in shaping India's economic landscape and reducing regional disparities (Chakravarthy *et al.*, 2023).

To assess the model and the hypothesised relationships between the constructs, we designed a questionnaire that operationalised the latent constructs, drawing from existing scales. The questionnaire encompassed fifteen items tailored for the measurement of three key constructs: five items for Training transfer (Holton and Bates, 2002), three items for Performance coaching (Holton and Bates, 2002), and 20 items for HRD climate. Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire underwent a two-stage pre-testing process, comprising both qualitative and quantitative phases. The qualitative stage consisted of interviews with senior managers, while the quantitative stage involved a pilot test with employees from

MSMEs in India.

To ensure the questionnaire's content accuracy and validity, it was subjected to scrutiny by industry and academic experts. A total of 8 experts participated in the content validity assessment, comprising 4 professionals specializing in formal HR services within the industry and senior academicians representing esteemed higher educational institutions in India. The researcher conducted individual meetings with these experts, providing a comprehensive explanation of the study's topic, objectives, conceptual framework, and target population. Subsequently, the experts were asked to evaluate each item based on four criteria: (i) representativeness, (ii) clarity, (iii) factorial structure, and (iv) comprehensiveness, as per the guidelines outlined by Rubio *et al*. (2023).

Subsequent to these interviews, a pilot survey was initiated. In the process of survey design, we administered the instrument to a diverse range of experts across various domains. This group included managers, employees, researchers, and a statistician. The purpose of this exercise was to enhance the face validity and content validity of the survey. Following this phase, we employed Dillman's Tailored Design Method (2007) for the execution of the survey. This approach encompassed elements such as invitation letters, thank-you postcards, and reminders to optimise survey response rates and engagement.

The sample consists of 411 respondents representing executives from MSMEs of India (details in Table 1). Hair *et al*., (2010) suggested that, as a common rule, the sample size should be at a minimum ten times of the items with an upper ratio that might still be desirable. In the current research context, total number of items is 28 (PC-3, HRDC-20, TT-5). Thus, the considered sample size is acceptable and much higher than the desired sample size. The questionnaire has been administrated using Offline modes only.

[Table 1 here]

Common method bias

Common Method Variance (CMV) refers to the spurious covariance between variables arising from the common data collection method (Buckley *et al*., 1990). This research employed a single-method research design(Survey method only) and mitigated potential CMV issues by utilizing the Marker-Variable Technique proposed by Lindell and Whitney (2001). In accordance with this technique, theoretically, unrelated variables were deliberately included alongside the research variables to address CMV concerns. For instance, some sample marker variables utilized in this study included statements such as 'To remain healthy, people often increase sugar intake these days,' which was incorporated within the 'Training Transfer' related variables. Additionally, a theoretically unrelated variable, 'Covid has created a lot of opportunities for the entire world for more than 2 years,' was introduced within the 'Performance coaching' construct. As per Lindell and Whitney (2001), the absence of significant correlations between marker variables (CMV1-4) and other variables within the relevant constructs implies that common method bias is unlikely to be a significant issue (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986).

Statistical procedures and Measurement model analysis

The measurement model underwent validation using AMOS to cross-validate the factor structure, following the approach by Mishra, Heide, and Stanton (1998). The results indicated a good model fit, as evidenced by several fit indices (Hair *et al*., 2010; Kline, 2005), including $\chi 2 = 870.573$ (p-value = .000), df = 436, $\chi 2$ /df = 1.997, RMR = 0.128, CFI = 0.943, and RMSEA = 0.055. Mean, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables, the standardised factor loadings are detailed in Tables 2 and 3. Most loadings surpass the threshold of 0.6, with only a few items slightly below this level. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all used items surpassing the 0.7 threshold (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

[Table 2 and 3 here]

Inner measurement model analysis

To assess the hypotheses in the model, we employed covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 7.0, with the Maximum Likelihood indicator. SEM is a versatile statistical technique that amalgamates elements of regression and factor analysis, enabling the simultaneous exploration of multiple relationships between latent constructs (Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2013). A covariance-based approach to SEM analysis is particularly fitting for this research, given its aim to test the developed theory, the non-recursive nature of the model, the substantial sample size, and the need for an overall global goodness-of-fit criterion (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2011).

Our analysis demonstrates that the model aligns well with the data. The fit measures and significance levels are summarized as follows: $\chi2 = 916.32$ (p-value = .000), df = 448, $\chi2/df = 2.045$, RMR = 0.150, Standardized RMR (SRMR) = 0.0639, CFI = 0.938, and RMSEA = 0.056. These results collectively indicate a strong alignment between the model and the data, supporting its overall fit.

[Table 4 and 5 here]

The second step involves testing the hypotheses. A path analysis was conducted using AMOS-SEM to evaluate the direct impact of the independent variables (performance coaching and HRD climate) on the dependent variable (training transfer) without considering the mediator (refer to Figure 1 and Table 6).

[Figure 1 here]

Hypothesis 1 examines whether performance coaching (PC) exerts a significant and positive influence on Training transfer (TT). To test this hypothesis, the dependent variable (TT) was regressed against the predictor variable (PC). The results indicated that effective Performance coaching initiatives ($\beta = 0.494$, $t = 10.155$, $p < 0.000$) are associated with greater Training transfer within Indian MSMEs. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted in large-scale corporate settings, providing support for H1. For example, in the context of an educational organization, Schindler *et al*., (2016) proved that coaching serves as a direct and/or indirect facilitator of training transfer. On the same line, Dixit and Sinha (2022) proved the value of coaching as a tool for transferring behavioural skills to the workplace.

Hypothesis 2 assesses whether performance coaching has a significant and positive impact on HRD climate (HRDC). The results revealed that performance coaching significantly and positively relates to employee agility ($\beta = 0.718$, $t = 9.493$, $p < 0.000$), indicating that PC plays a substantial and beneficial role in influencing HRDC. As a result, H2 finds strong support. The study result is consistent with several previous studies (Gan et al., 2021; Bozer and Sarros, 2012), where researcher proved the positive role of an organisational climate and culture based on the support and commitment from top management emphasizing on openness, trust, transparency for the success of executive coaching.

Hypothesis 3 examines whether HRD climate has a significant and positive impact on Training transfer (TT). To test this hypothesis, the dependent variable TT was regressed against the predictor variable (EA). The results clearly indicate a significant and positive effect of HRD climate ($\beta = 0.314$, $t = 11.590$, $p < 0.000$) on TT. Consequently, H3 is strongly supported. The model summary also suggests that increased HRD climate is associated with enhanced training transfer.

[Table 6 here]

H4 evaluates the mediating role of HRD climate between performance coaching and training transfer. The main factor to consider in a mediation analysis is whether there is a meaningful relationship between the independent variable (PC) and the outcome variable (TT) through the mediator (HRDC). Following Preacher and Hayes's (2008) approach, we bootstrapped the sampling distribution of the indirect effect.

Statistical programmes PROCESS macro (Version 4.3.1; 2023) technique was executed to estimate the indirect effect, along with bootstrapped confidence intervals. The study result suggests a statistically significant indirect effect (t-value > 1.96, two-tailed, $p < 0.05$) and hence may be accepted as evidence of mediation (Preacher and Hayes 2004; Zhao *et al*., 2010). Another important requirement to support a mediation effect is the evaluation of confidence intervals (Memon *et al*., 2018). The mediation effect (and vice versa) is confirmed if the confidence interval for the indirect effect does not straddle a zero in between. The bootstrapped confidence intervals indicate that the lower confidence interval (LCI) = 0.0758, and upper confidence interval (UCI) = 0.2864) proving mediation and supporting H4. The mediation analysis summary is presented in Table 7.
[Table 7 here]

Implications for HRD

The findings of the research have important implications for HRD managers in MSMEs. The following paragraph explains the hypothesis-wise implications:

Firstly, the research findings that Performance coaching has significant and positive impacts on training transfer in MSMEs provide valuable insights for managers in MSMEs to enhance the effectiveness of training transfer. Managers should consider investing in Performance coaching programs or initiatives that provide one-on-one coaching to employees. These programs can help bridge the gap between training and on-the-job application, leading to higher training transfer rates. However, this requires the managers to tailor coaching to individual needs. In other words, MSMEs should recognise that one-size-fits-all coaching may not be effective. Customize coaching programs to address the specific needs and challenges of individual employees can only help in having effective Performance coaching. The coach needs to understand the learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses of the employees to provide targeted support. Further, MSME managers must ensure that the individuals selected as coaches have the necessary skills and competencies to provide effective coaching. The effectiveness of coaching hinges on active listening, analytical prowess, adept interviewing techniques, effective questioning abilities, and the capability to establish clear expectations of the coach (Rutjes *et al*., 2016). Furthermore, personality traits such as empathy, emotional intelligence, ethical conduct, positivity, and respectfulness play a pivotal role in fostering successful coaching engagements and hence transferring training (Rutjes *et al*., 2016). Hence, MSME managers should take initiatives to provide training for coaches to help them understand the goals and objectives of coaching in the context of training transfer.

Secondly, given the strong relationship between coaching and the identified HRD culture components, organizations should integrate coaching into broader HRD initiatives. For example, coaching can be incorporated into training and development programs, leadership development initiatives, and performance management processes to reinforce desired cultural values and behaviors. Managers should carefully select and develop coaches who embody the characteristics of an open, collaborative, proactive, and trustworthy culture (Lyons and Bandura, 2021). This may involve assessing candidates' interpersonal skills, communication abilities, and alignment with organizational values. Additionally, providing coaches with ongoing training and support can enhance their effectiveness in fostering a positive HRD culture through coaching interventions. A culture of openness and trust is essential for effective coaching relationships to flourish. Managers should create an environment where employees feel psychologically safe to explore challenges, seek feedback, and experiment with new ideas. This may involve promoting a non-judgmental approach to mistakes, encouraging constructive feedback, and recognizing and rewarding

vulnerability and learning (von der Heydt, 2021).

Thirdly, the findings that "HRD climate facilitates better training transfer in MSMEs" suggest managers to integrate training programs into the broader HRD climate framework. Training initiatives should not only focus on building technical skills but also on fostering a culture that supports learning, knowledge sharing, and application of new skills in the workplace. This may involve incorporating interactive and collaborative learning methods, encouraging employee participation and engagement, and providing opportunities for practice and application of new skills in real-world scenarios (Khasawneh, 2024). Organizations should encourage the formation of learning communities where employees can collaborate, share knowledge, and support each other's learning and development efforts. This can be facilitated through platforms such as online forums, peer mentoring programs, and cross-functional project teams (Marsick *et al*., 2022). Organizations should establish metrics to assess the effectiveness of training transfer and its relationship with the HRD culture (Rahman, 2020). This may involve collecting feedback from participants, measuring changes in job performance and behavior, and tracking the application of new skills in the workplace. By evaluating training outcomes in relation to HRD climate factors, managers can identify areas for improvement and make data-driven decisions to enhance training effectiveness.

Finally, the finding that "HRD climate mediates the relationship between performance coaching and training transfer" has significant managerial implications for MSMEs. Managers should recognize the interplay between performance coaching, HRD climate, and training transfer. Understanding that HRD culture acts as a mediator highlights the importance of aligning coaching efforts with the organization's cultural values. This implies that coaching interventions should not only focus on individual skill development but also on fostering a supportive organizational culture conducive to training transfer. Given the mediated relationship between performance coaching and training transfer through HRD climate, organizations should invest in both coaching programs and initiatives aimed at cultivating a culture of openness, collaboration, proactiveness, and trust. This may involve allocating resources to train coaches, develop HRD policies and practices, and create supportive environments for training and development. Overall, the mediated relationship between performance coaching, HRD climate, and training transfer underscores the importance of taking a holistic approach to employee development in MSMEs, integrating coaching efforts with broader cultural initiatives to maximize the effectiveness of training interventions.

Limitations and future research

The research has been designed following the LTSI framework by Holton and Bates, (2002), which advocates the role of organisational characteristic, individual characteristics, transfer design, and transfer motivation in training transfer. Performance coaching, HRD climate have been considered to represent ‘organisational characteristics’ for training transfer. Future research may investigate the role of specific individual characteristics, transfer motivation and transfer design for training transfer in MSMEs. Secondly, the current research has considered the performance coaching, and HRD climate to represent ‘organisational characteristics. However, in the context of MSMEs, researchers have been arguing the role of other organisational variables such as innovation culture, workload, and technology (). Future research may consider the other organisational factors relevant to MSMEs, such as innovation culture, workload, and technology. For example, researchers may choose to investigate the role of a culture that encourages innovation and impacts employee learning. Similarly, future research may be conducted to study the workload policy of the organisation and its impact on training transfer. Further, the researcher may choose a study on the role of technology (access to and use of technology) as a organisational characteristics-

related factor affecting training transfer. Fourthly, the current research has used the single-method research design (Survey method only). Although proper care has been taken to mitigate the potential CMV issues by utilizing the Marker-Variable Technique proposed by Lindell and Whitney (2001). However, future research can be planned by using both qualitative and quantitative data. This can help the researchers to triangulate their findings, which enhances the validity and reliability of their results (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). Furthermore, research in the field of training transfer has increasingly underscored the significance of both pre-training and post-training contexts in comprehending training transfer issues. For instance, the Learning Transfer System (LTS), developed by Holton and Bates (2002), includes specific inquiries that pertain to the post-training context. Additionally, Kodwani and Prashar (2021) delved into the realm of training transfer within the pre-training context. It's worth noting that our present research was conducted in a broader, more general context, without a specific focus on either the pre-training or post-training phases and their potential influence on training transfer. To contribute to this evolving body of knowledge, future research endeavours could explore the comparative aspects of pre-training and post-training factors related to training transfer.

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Table 1 Demographic Information of respondents

Age	Age of the respondents falls within the predefined range	25 to 32 yrs 33 to 40 yrs 41 to 47 yrs 48 to 55 yrs 56 & above	37.2% 28.0% 24.1% 10.7% 0%
Qualification	Identifying the qualification level of the respondents	Graduation. Post graduation Doctorate and Above	70.1% 29.9% 0.0%
Tenure	Tenure in the present organisation within the predefined range	0-3 Years 3-6 Years 6 to 9 Years 9 to 12 Years 12 Years and Above	43.1% 37.5% 12.2% 4.4% 2.9%
Position	Position in the present organisation ranging from executive to top management	Executive/Team member Assistant Manager Manager/Senior Manager General Manager Top management	50.1% 30.4% 18.7% 0.7% 0%
Industry	Small	Small Scale Medium Scale Large Scale	18.2% 37.2% 44.5%

Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables

	Variables	Mean	S.D.	1	2
1	Performance coaching	3.83	0.59	1	
2	Employee agility	4.07	0.43	.497*	1
3	Training transfer	4.16	0.46	.449*	.425*

*p<0.05, **p<0.01.

Table 3. Factor loading, and Alpha

Construct	Item	Factor loading	Cronbach Alpha
TT	TT1	.604	.645
	TT2	.672	
	TT3	.630	
	TT4	.621	
PC	PC1	.688	.715
	PC2	.671	
	PC3	.642	
EA	EA1	.516	.784
	EA2	.690	
	EA3	.695	
	EA4	.692	
	EA5	.660	
	EA6	.656	
	EA7	.480	

Table 4. Measurement Fit Model

Overall model measure	Model score	Acceptable model fit	Acceptable range
CFI	0.943	Passed	>0.90
GFI	0.913	Passed	>0.90
RMSEA	0.055	Passed	<0.10
CMIN/DF	1.997	Passed	<3
RMR	0.128	Passed	>0.05
NFI	0.918	Passed	>0.90

Table 5. Measurement Structural Model

Overall model measure	Model score	Acceptable model fit	Acceptable range
CFI	0.938	Passed	>0.90
GFI	0.948	Passed	>0.90
RMSEA	0.056	Passed	<0.10
CMIN/DF	2.045	Passed	<3
RMR	0.150	Passed	>0.05

NFI	0.918	Passed	>0.90

Table 6: Stepwise Regression

Hypoth -esis	Regression weights	Beta Coefficient	R^2	F	p-value	Hypothesis Supported
H1	PC ➔ TT	.494	.201	103.124	.000	Yes
H2	PC ➔ EA	.718	.247	134.339	.000	Yes
H3	EA ➔ TT	.314	.181	90.119	.000	Yes

*p < 0.05.

Table 7: Mediation analysis

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Intervals		t statistics	Conclusion
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
PC ➔ EA➔TT	.5943 (0.000)	.4157 (0.0000)	.1786	.0758	.2864	13.2236	Partial Mediation

Figure 1. Structural Equational Model