



AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON THE EFFECTS OF A NATIONAL HUMAN
RELATIONS TRAINING PROGRAM ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE IN
ST LUCIA

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Approval of the Thesis

AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON THE EFFECTS OF A NATIONAL HUMAN
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ST LUCIA

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Abstract

AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON THE EFFECTS OF A NATIONAL HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINING PROGRAM ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE IN ST LUCIA

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Human Relations (HR) soft skills are prevalently misunderstood contributors to employee performance, organizational success and potential social ills alleviation. This study investigated whether implementing a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP), would improve business performance throughout St. Lucia. It hypothesized a positive relationship between HR and business performance (BP) improvement, focusing on public sector (PS) organizations as business entities utilizing conventional business practices within nonprofit, service and socially beneficial mandates. This study emphasized the understated intrapersonal implications of Elton Mayo's seminal Hawthorne studies, defining HR as self-regulatory behaviors toward successful interactions with others. BP improvement was seen as positive changes in client perception about a business, and employees' personal transformations supporting organizational goals. The research took a three phased, mixed method, qualitatively lead approach, using five purposively selected PS departments, for their high volume client interactions. Training in self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership (SAIL), deemed foundational to HR transformations, based on Training Transfer and Transformational Learning theories, was provided to 33 PS participants over one week followed by two focus group sessions. Pre and post training questionnaires administered to 477 clients were compared.

These assessed the perception of client's post-transaction experience as measures of employee performance and potential for transferring acquired transformations to business and social contexts.

Results confirm a clear positive link between HR and BP improvement and justifies a NH RTP.

Moreover, HRT pushes improvements to already existing high standards of employee performance and stimulates individualized decisional processes which positively impact business outcomes. HRT's transferability, transformability and portability renders it effectively conveyable through business as conduits and agents of social change, facilitating a new corporate social responsibility (NCSR) PS approach. Recommendations include legitimizing HR as a BP enhancer, emphasizing person-centered HRT and exploring business HRT for SC purposes.

Keywords: HRT, BP, training transfer, transformability, SAIL

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research examines the relationship between Human Relations (HR) and business performance (BP) and hypothesizes a positive correlation between training in HR and improved BP. Primarily, the study investigates whether implementing a National Human Relations Training Program (NHRTP) would improve business performance in St. Lucia. To this end, the investigation considers HR skill acquisition by individuals and improved business outcomes, as potential products of HR training, evidenced in the manifestation of individual enhancement that positively impacts an organization. Thus, the study with its emphasis on individual growth as a means of effecting business improvement, is situated within the discipline of Human Resource Development (HRD), which focusses on training, educating and otherwise developing employees in a manner that ties individual growth to organizational benefits (Khan and Soverall, 1993).

Importantly, the research informs the feasibility for establishing national policy mandating HR training delivered through a NHRTP, in an attempt to foster state-wide BP improvement, particularly in the public sector (PS). The mandatory HR training would focus on new entrants to the PS labour market as part of the employment “on boarding” process, to embed required values early (Satell, 2019) and subsequently extending the training to older workers.

Secondarily, the research sheds light on the latent potential of business serving as agents of social change (SC) and the alleviation of prevailing social ills via the administering of HR skills training. This consideration is fuelled by the assumption that training is both transformational and transferrable (Satell, 2019). Thus, individuals who are transformed by HR training accessed through business are potential conduits for the transference of values and principles to others external to business interactions. Agreeably, the tenets of training transfer theory suggest that

knowledge, values, skills and learning are transferrable outside of the original learning context (Dudovskiy, 2013). Hence, using an HRD approach of training in HR to improve business performance, puts business in a position to serve as institutionalised and strategic catalysts for social change.

However, while the study emphasizes an HRD orientation by dint of its interest in training, interconnections are established with several areas including HRD itself, which are subsumed within the ambits of Human Resource Management (HRM), with its overarching concern for maximizing business outcomes through people (Robbins and Judge, 2014). As such, given the centrality of HR to the research and the attempt to determine its impact on business performance, necessary consideration is given to the distinctly defining characteristics of HR and BP as well as other attendant HRM related elements. Congruently, the interdisciplinary connections, processes, orientations and outcomes of the research are briefly discussed in the following overview.

Overview

This research is in partial fulfilment of DBA studies started at the Unicaf University in 2018. The actual research activity began in January 2021, with data gathering which lasted approximately one month and culminated in January 2022 after the completion of data analysis processes. The study set out to empirically investigate whether a national Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP), would improve business performance in St. Lucia. The research was prompted by Human Relations (HR) skill deficits reported by both private and predominantly public sector stakeholders. These expressed deficits were manifested in a range of interactional shortcomings exhibiting the need for self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership (SAIL), which hindered optimal employee performance and produced poor client

perception of businesses. These poor client perceptions further resulted in actual negative client behaviors toward the businesses and hesitancy repeating future transactions.

The study focuses on the public sector as “business” on the basis of its similar operational processes, notwithstanding governments not for profit and public stewardship mandate (Spicker, 2009). Additionally, the public sector was chosen on the basis of its size and being the largest single employer in St. Lucia, with a workforce of approximately fifteen thousand persons. This allowed access to the largest mandated influencer with the single widest potential social reach. The public sector, as a significant employer has been battling stakeholder perception of a negative performance image along with uncertainty of how to measure public sector employee performance (NCPC, 2016).

Additionally, there has been a sharp rise in violent crime and relational social issues. This latter concern prompted the idea that the relational benefits potentially derived from HR within the business context, are also potentially transferrable to HR related social circumstances. The observation was made that St. Lucia had not confidently considered the option of HR as a means of BP improvement and potential social ills alleviator. Thus, the problem the study addressed was stated on two dimensions. Firstly, assessing whether the implementation of a NH RTP would promote improved business performance in St. Lucia and secondarily, explore the potential of business to be used as an agent of social change through the provision of HR based training to employees.

Consequently, the study examined the seminal Hawthorne studies of Elton Mayo and the inadvertent beginnings of the Human Relations Movement, which gave greater credence to the manipulation of working conditions and extrinsic factors as the driver of HR as opposed to the intra-personal decisional capabilities of individuals as the impetus for HR, on which this study

focuses. Thus, while seminal HR held a transactional group to individual direction of influence on organizational outcomes, this study holds a transformational individual to group direction of influence on organizational outcomes, suggesting that personal internal transformations is the primary contributor to employee performance and positive client perception about a business. Also, to facilitate its assumptions, the study built on an integrated theoretical/conceptual framework employing Training Transfer Theory (Jordan, 2016; Harris, Lowry-Moore and Furrow, 2008), which accommodated that phenomena in the abstract personal nature of HR could be effectively transferred through training. Additionally, Transformational Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2001), was engaged since it supported learning as a means of individual transformation.

The study generally assumes that HR by nature is a viable option for generating related BP improvement, HR soft skills could be trained, perception of performance equates actual performance, improvement in employee performance equates improvement in the client's perception of business performance and positive change in employees brought about by HRT within the business context can be transferred with the same benefits to social contexts. As such the following research questions (RQ) and hypothesis (H) were employed.

RQ1. To what extent does HR affect Business performance (BP)?

RQ2. How impactful are employee demonstrations of HR on how clients perceive BP?

RQ3. How would employee demonstrations of HR behaviour affect client willingness to engage in repeated interactions with a business entity?

RQ4. To what extent are employees willing to undergo personal adjustments for organizational purposes?

RQ5. Would national HR programs through businesses be useful for addressing HR related social issues?

The research uses the following hypotheses in relation to the stated research questions.

- H1. Human Relations improves business performance.
- H2. Demonstration of HR behavior affects client perception of business performance.
- H3. Demonstration of HR behavior affects the willingness of clients to engage in repeat transactions with a business.
- H4. HR affects employee willingness to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others.
- H5. HR generated improvements are transferrable from business to social contexts.

Methodologically, the study utilized a mixed method quan-QUAL approach, indicating a qualitative research with a quantitative component for “countability” purposes (Johnson and Christensen, 2017). Descriptive sequential strategy in a three phased pre-training, training and post training approach was also used for data gathering (Toby and Kampen, 2018). Accordingly, SAIL HR training was provided to 33 PS participants over one week, followed by two focus group sessions. These assessed the transfer and transformational ability of HR training, to be manifested in employee demonstration of business supportive behavior and positive perception by clients. Pre and post training questionnaires randomly administered to 477 clients of five purposively selected PS departments were compared. These assessed the perception of clients’ post-transaction experience as measures of employee performance and potential for transferring acquired transformations to business and social contexts. Additional, qualitative tools in the form of Public Service Feedback Forms and Drop or Adopt (DA) cards were used. These DA cards captured employees’ personal intentions of transformation by their indication of behaviors they would like to drop or adopt after HR training.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. Congruent with the research questions and hypothetical assumptions, the findings revealed from the quantitative data, an 11% increase in positive perception, a 10% decrease in negative perception and overall willingness to engage in repeat interactions with a business entity among clients. The findings among employees for the qualitative data showed that employees placed an extremely high value on the acquisition of HR training. Also, employees found HR training to be highly beneficial for the improvement of client perception about a business entity. Additionally, most participants express high intent to become more introspective, positively adjust their behavior, share their HR learning, improve their interpersonal skills and apply their HR training within and outside of the business context.

Accordingly, the findings imply that HR training not only improves but pushes business performance, even where existing standards are high. Additionally, HR training, positively affects client perception, encourages repeat client engagement, promotes “other centered” behavior and is transferrable from business to social contexts. These implications fuel several recommendations, among them that the profile of HR as a BP enhancer should be improved. Also, that client perception should be used as a valid measure of BP, while person targeted HR training approaches should be engaged for positive employee transformations. Overall, the findings of the study support the implementation of a NH RTP. Limitations included the withdrawal of one PS department as a result of a Covid 19 outbreak and the forfeiture of control in the selection of employee participants by the researcher to avoid bias. Both areas of limitation had negligible impact on the results of the study. Thus, after this overview which also serves as a summation of the study, the research provides the basis for conceptualizing and defining both HR and BP.

Subsequently, the chapter follows with an orientation to St. Lucia, background, problem statement, purpose of the study and statement of the significance of the study.

Conceptualizing and Defining HR and BP

Thus, as an area inextricable from HRM, Human Relations places value on the relational aspects of employee interaction and its impact on productivity (Lee, 2016). As such, Human Relations theory is founded on the principle that relationships and interactions among employees affect productivity (Perry, 2011). Accordingly, this idea was conceived during the industrial revolution of the 1920's as a shift in focus to people being an important factor of production instead of machinery. As such, nascent studies in the field of HR, particularly the Hawthorne studies of Elton Mayo, which manipulated working conditions to emphasize attention to the "humane" aspects of work (Robbins and Judge, 2014), draw attention to areas focused on employee psychosocial interaction. These areas included, employee relationships in terms of consideration for their growth, participation in organizational affairs, motivation and working conditions. All of which, contributed to impacting the quality of work output (Lee, 2016).

Notwithstanding that the beginnings of the HR movement included group and organizational factors as contributors to business outcomes, this research emphasizes individual relational behaviour as personal effort derived from training as opposed to being the product of an externally manipulated variable outside of the individual. Hence, relationship behaviour is not seen to be achieved by manipulating the group or environment as suggested in the seminal Hawthorne studies (Robbins and Judge, 2014) but originating from an individual's own efforts which manifest deeper personal transformation as a result of the effective transfer of training. Thus, relationship behaviour emanates from within the individual who acts from a personal desire and intention to

do so and not because of organizational dictates. This research therefore, realigns the generalized defining qualities of HR with a more individually driven emphasis.

By definition HR has been considered as the way in which persons use the studied knowledge about human behaviour for improvement in effectiveness of themselves, their job and their career (DuBrin, 2012). While this definition does indirectly imply benefits to business as a result of individual improvement, it does not strongly indicate that subjective efforts are consciously directed toward non-personal, particularly business gains.

Human Relations Defined

However, for the purposes of this research, Human Relations is conceptualised as an individual's focussed efforts toward self-development and self-regulatory behaviours for the benefit of interacting successfully with others. This definition places greater emphasis on the individual having increased awareness of self and their role in impacting the business as a result of their interactions with others. Hence, HR is considered in this study to be more transformational in that the individual's change through HR training is personal and positively impacts the organization rather than transactional, in which case the individual changes superficially and specifically for rewards from the business or in response to prescribed, institutionally expected behaviour.

Business Performance Defined

Accordingly, and in keeping with the alignment on individual emphasis, improvement in BP is considered as a client's improved positive perception of a business's service after interaction with employees, along with, the awareness of demonstrated HR qualities by employees that

support the attainment of business goals. Thus, BP is determined by client perception based on interaction with a business's individual employees. As such, the research does not focus on other factors that may affect business performance but emphasizes employee performance as the trained HR link to BP improvement in St Lucia.

The remaining chapters, two, three, four and five, retain the expressed ethos of a person-centric influence in the determination of BP and potential social ills alleviation, in connection to HR training (HRT). Among other issues, chapter two surveys relevant literature discussing the nature, viability and value of HR, including contestations regarding its inadvertent origins, questionably harnessable abstract nature and the conceptual approaches foundational to the study. Following, chapter three considers the methodological approaches deemed valid for capturing the phenomena of interest, suggesting that *like* measures should be utilized for measuring *like* phenomena, particularly espousing the abstract quality of perception as a suitable measure of equally abstract HR soft skills and HRT outcomes. Further, chapters four and five focus on the results of data analysis and conclusionary pronouncements respectively, offering significant clarification of the beneficial correlation between HR to BP, the extensive implications of HRT as a business booster and potential social ills alleviator, as well as recommendations for implementing widespread HRT. As such the ensuing contextualization of St. Lucia and background provides further orientation to the entire study.

The St. Lucian context

St. Lucia is a member of a subgrouping of nine Caribbean islands known as the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). It is found along the coordinates of 13.54 degrees north latitude and 60.58 degrees west longitude, with a total area of approximately 238

square miles (Niddrie, Momsen and Tolson, 2022). The Caribbean region is essentially a long arc-shaped chain of islands in the Caribbean Sea which lies between North and South America (Gore, Wynne and Myers, 2019). The islands are grouped into 28 sovereign states and notwithstanding some characteristic commonalities, each has its own share of geopolitical uniqueness, history and culture. For instance, St. Lucia is noted to have been seven times British and seven times French as an indication of the number of times that the two countries battled for political control of the island. While the British wrested final control from the French in 1814, a strong influence on the nation's language remains in that, French Kweyol or St. Lucian patois is largely spoken by natives as their first language and English as the country's official language. This mixture of French and British influence transfers into uniquely St. Lucian cultural practices and socioeconomic affairs.

Thus, despite a tropical climate that allows for year-round opportunities of “sun, sea and sand” as the basis of a tourism driven economy, which has supported a stable Eastern Caribbean Dollar currency and living standards, St. Lucia as a 43 year old independent nation competes openly with international states despite a relative paucity of natural resources and a small newly developing manufacturing sector. Although St. Lucia is the largest of the OECS grouping with a population of approximately 170,000 people as reported in the 2010 census, with sources estimating up to 183,000 presently (World Population Review, 2020), it is relatively small in terms of the regional Caribbean community (CARICOM) and global context. As such, while the country along with some of its member state counterparts have been described as top performing within the grouping (World Bank Group, 2018), St. Lucia has faced significant challenges regarding slow economic growth, high unemployment, low productivity and social degeneration issues (World Bank Group, 2018).

Background

Previously, a thriving banana industry supported the country's economic prosperity and smaller agriculturally based population, until the removal of preferential arrangements saw a shift to dependence on the tourism and service industries (IMF, 1999). Presently however, while tourism and service industries are not the only revenue earners for St. Lucia, its dependence on these industries expose a greater vulnerability of the island in that its survival is heavily dependent on international or external participation for its economic growth, not having a strong manufacturing sector or significant natural resources to sustain itself (IMF, 1999). This vulnerability was made starkly evident during the global economic recession of the mid 2000's which saw St. Lucia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) decline from 4.6 in 2006 to -1.1 in 2009 (Machardo, 2009). As a result, St Lucia competes openly, without protection or preferential treatment in the regional and global context for its economic revival and survival.

Another recent occurrence exposing St. Lucia's vulnerability, is the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, which at times results in the country's forced inability to participate in major economic, revenue generating activity. In this regard, tourism as the island's largest income generator, accounting for 65% of national economic output and 50.8% of employment, has been experiencing major decline as a result of periods of border closures, with pauses in airlift and cruise ship arrivals (Sagewan, 2020). Additionally, transport and export services that support manufacturing and dependent revenue generation efforts, have been stymied and must draw on available means of recovery, advancement and sustainability for socioeconomic wellbeing.

Thus, in light of competing amidst regional and globalized challenges, it has become critical that St. Lucia gives attention to every component of industry that could provide competitive advantage and success to its businesses. Accordingly, the St. Lucia government (SLG), has

instituted interventions for the monitoring of all aspects of productivity, growth and competitiveness locally, in comparison to other countries, through the establishment of a National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC). Additionally, the SLG has mandated the monitoring of all aspects of sector related productivity and competitiveness as well as the assessment of specific issues related to productivity and competitiveness in greater detail (NCPC, 2016). In spite of these institutionalized attempts to address every area that potentially affects business performance, some areas, including HR, remain under-attended or totally unattended.

The Case for Policy

Thus, several national and international documents have reported gaps in St. Lucia's attention to key HRD factors that affect business performance. For instance, the National Employment Report 2003-2005 indicates that there are no active policies geared at addressing problems in the labor market. Since then, no further national employment reports have been issued and no further evidence of policy based responses have been forthcoming except for the drafting of a training and development policy for the public service in 2019.

Similarly, a NCPC (2016) summary report on productivity, highlights the unavailability of means to measure performance particularly in the public sector, emphasizing that while significant inputs are made comparable to other industries, the problem remains of how to measure the performance resulting from these inputs. This implies that in the absence of quantitative measures for public service performance, a significantly unexplored means of assessing the result of inputs remains the public's experience, satisfaction and perception of the services provided. Further, while the NCPC acknowledges a highly trainable workforce in most sectors, it highlights

significant challenges in several performance impeding areas in terms of training opportunities, crime and employee attitudes (NCPC, 2016).

Hence, the disclosures regarding training, social ills and employee attitudes as factors in St. Lucia's business performance outlook, places the country in a position to consider HRD and particularly HR, more strongly as options in its mandated quest to secure performance feedback. Moreover, the social concerns and employee attitudes expressed, point more directly to justifying a Human Relations preoccupation.

However, there are no well-established guides directing the content of HR skills requirements within business. These skills are considered by HRM practitioners among the 'soft skills' which employees are expected to have upon entering an organization. Notwithstanding that the draft training policy highlights HR related and interaction dependent topics such as leadership, people management, performance management, customer relations and effective communication, there is no indication that these HR areas are expected to be acquired by all members of the public service as requirements upon entry (Training and Development Policy, 2019).

The National Socioeconomic Context and HR

Thus, Human Relations issues are increasingly manifested problematically in St. Lucia both in the social and business contexts. For instance, the rate of suicides and homicides have sharply risen within the past five years, with the World Population Review (2019) ranking St. Lucia as having the eighth highest homicide rate in the world at 29.6%. Congruently, the year 2017 saw a rise to the highest homicide figure in the country's history with 60 murders recorded from January to December. However, by December 2021, the homicide figure surpassed the high of 2017 and stood at 75 (Andrew, 2021), representing an increase of approximately 25%. Although

most of these homicides can be linked to criminal activity, several appear to bear defective relational undertones and result from sibling, conjugal or acquaintance based interactional degeneration, along with inadequacy of self-regulatory skills.

As such, persons become perpetrators of criminal acts on the basis of escalation of issues such as delays in receipt of payments owed, uncontrolled emotional sensitivities, irresponsible communication, poor social skills and the inability to manage conflict. Thus, on the basis of news reports, particularly from agencies represented in popular daily sources such as radio, television and online media, which highlight the sentiments of stakeholders, there appears to be an awareness of a relationally discordant foundation to particularly homicides, violent crimes and other social ills.

For instance, The St. Lucia times (SLT) online news agency, whose content reflects similar to all other local news agencies, in November 2021 highlight comments from the Department of Justice (DOJ) Minister, who suggests a relationally inclusive “youth at risk” initiative to combat crime. Similarly comments from St. Lucia’s Commissioner of Police, suggests that persons need to explore alternative ways to manage conflict. While at least one relative of a homicide victim specifically laments absence of the use of conflict management approaches as opposed to violence. Additionally, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019) highlights a deleterious association between homicides and economic performance, suggesting that high homicide rates signal relational inabilities that potentially affect business performance (UNODC, 2019). Corroboratively, St. Lucia reports business performance diminishment resulting from skill deficits in HR among employees (National Employment Report, 2006).

Further, UNODC’s (2019) Global Homicide Report, acknowledges categorizations of causes of intentional homicide as criminally related, interpersonal and socio-political. This

acknowledgement supports a connection between social ills such as homicide and suicide to interpersonal or HR skill competency factors, along the lines of Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimension of care and concern for others. St. Lucia's case shows an unusual tendency, in that high percentages of homicides and reported "crimes against person" are attributed to the poor management of self-regulatory, relational issues (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2010, St. Lucia Times, 2017). Consequently, the implication emerging from St. Lucia's scenario, is a need for supporting interventions based on HR as an additional means of pre-empting crime and other related social ills as supplements to increased criminally oriented interventions.

As such, St. Lucia's prevailing socioeconomic context, demonstrates deficiencies in satisfying a range of warranted HR needs that could prove beneficial to social and business performance improvements. Foremost among these deficiencies is the apparent lack of focused approaches to strengthen the associations between HR and BP. Thus, despite awareness of HR needs revealed in policy documents (Training and Development Policy, 2019), there is no stipulated systematized approach to the instilment of self-developmental and self-regulatory behaviour for new entrants to the workforce or older workers. Moreover, there is need for the exploration of studied means of transferring HR values and proactive approaches to training that minimize the negative effects of HR deficiency on BP.

Statement of the Problem

This research primarily addresses the problem of assessing whether the implementation of a NH RTP would promote improved business performance in St. Lucia. Secondly, it explores the potential of business to be used as an agent of social change through the provision of HR based training to employees. Accordingly, the research is prompted by problems highlighted in St.

Lucia's National Employment Report (2006), and other documents (NCPC 2015, UNODC, 2019) of deficits in HR skills relating to areas of self-development, interpersonal skills and general self-regulatory behaviour.

The concerns of stakeholders have been expressed in the form of questions that seek clarification on the implications these HR deficiencies may have on BP and possible solutions to the problem (St. Lucia Times, 2017). Among the widespread concerns raised by stakeholders include, poor perception by the public of individual businesses, loss of income, reluctance by clients to do repeat business, workplace discord, lack of interest by workers in personal and organizational growth, highly individualistic behaviours and generally poor quality customer service.

Notwithstanding the concerns raised by stakeholders and the National Employment report (2006) which highlights problems of poor business performance, St. Lucia has still not to date made concerted efforts to assess the strength of the relationship between HR and BP. However, indications from larger countries suggest a strong inextricable link between HR and BP (Dubrin, 2012, Reece and Reece 2016). Corroboratively, in studies conducted by Aigbepue and Mammud (2012) and Hand and Slocum (1972), significant relationships were shown to exist between HR and improvement in BP. More importantly, the studies showed a positive impact of HR training on BP over time. Therefore, since St. Lucia is a small country operating in greatly globalized environment, it relies heavily on training and developmental practices to gain competitive advantage. Thus, this research considers the problem of assessing whether a national training program in HR would improve business performance in St. Lucia.

The problem addressed by this research is distinctive since unlike previous research it emphasises a more personally transformative role for HR as opposed to a transactional role in

which the business undertakes HR training in exchange for the expressed outcome of its own improvement and nothing else. For instance, while HR research from University College (2017), finds a significantly positive correlation between HR and workplace performance, the subjective well-being of individuals is what prompted their return of improved performance and not performance improvement because of personal development and transformation. Also, Muhammad, Mohamed, Pandiyan and Akmal (2013) while supporting the possibility of training transfer through their research, did not facilitate in their findings the possibility of cross-contextual transference of training. Thus, the preoccupations of this research address those gaps as it empirically assesses the impact of a NH RTP on improving business performance, as well as explores the potential for social transformation through the transference of HR training.

Purpose of the Study, Research Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to empirically determine whether the implementation of a NH RTP would improve business performance throughout St. Lucia. The study uses a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve its main purpose which entails more deliberately highlighting the linkages between HR and BP improvement. Further, the purpose of the study is to explore the potential for alleviating the deleterious effects of national HR skill deficits on business performance by employing HR specific training to all entrants of particularly public sector (PS) organizations and subsequently extending the training to older workers. Along with this, the research serves the latent purpose of modelling a strategy through which businesses could be used as agencies to channel HR training which is transferred to the wider society for addressing HR related social ills.

Moreover, the study serves to highlight the importance of individual “soft skill” acquisition to socioeconomic concerns such that Human Relations is defined as the focussed efforts of an individual toward self-development and self-regulatory behaviours with the intent to achieve interactions beneficial to others. This definition emphasises greater individual awareness of self and the individual’s subjective role in impacting business as a result of their social interactions. Accordingly, improvement in BP refers to the increased positive perception of a client about a business after interacting with employees, along with the demonstrated awareness of HR qualities of employees in pursuit of business goals. Thus, while the study is situated within the area of Human Resource Development (HRD), it relies heavily on training transfer theory (Jordan, 2016), as the investigation places emphasis on how training impacts subsequent behaviour, as well as how training could be converted into beneficial action from one entity to another (Satell, 2019).

Nature and Significance of the Study

This study analyses stakeholder perceptions to determine business improvements based on interaction with HR trained employees. Data is collected using mixed qualitative and quantitative research methods employing mainly questionnaires and focus group interviews. These methods are used to satisfy the overall aims of the study which is conducted in three phases namely, pre-training, training and post-training.

In the pre-training phase, responses are sought from randomly selected exiting clients of a business to determine their experience and level of satisfaction with the HR aspects of their just concluded transaction. This data is analysed to determine initial client perception about the business and stored for comparison with data collected in the post-training phase.

Subsequently, purposively selected public sector businesses and employees undergo training

in key HR areas that promote leadership, effective communication, esteem building, customer service and interpersonal skills. This training is delivered through a dedicated devised program in the specific areas of self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership (SAIL). Participants are selected on their level of interaction with the public as part of their daily job role.

The post-training phase of the research repeats the first phase of the data collection process and compares findings to determine differences or similarities in client perception about business performance before and after training. Additionally, focus group interviews are conducted with trainee participants as to their perception of personal and business improvement before and after training. Supportively, established Public Sector Training Feedback Forms along with Drop/Adopt Cards which indicate participant's desire to drop or adopt particular behaviours after training, are employed as data gathering tools. This data is also used to determine employee willingness to display self-regulating behaviour and explore the degree to which personal transformation could be carried outside of the business context and effectively transferred for benefits to the social context.

This study is significant as it establishes the strength of the link between HR and BP in the relatively small Eastern Caribbean island of St. Lucia. Since the country has no significant natural resources and must rely on the strength of its national business performance for its local regional and international survival, any area of business that would affect national competitive advantage must be strongly considered (NCPC, 2016). Thus, this research takes on significance in assessing how soft skills, particularly HR, can be directly converted into business performance benefits.

Additionally, the study is significant in focussing the impact of client and employee interaction on client perception of the business. Significantly, how that perception redounds to a

willingness to engage in repeat business with the organization. These client perceptions potentially impact the profitability and attractiveness of the entity as favourable for transacting business.

Moreover, St. Lucia has seen a high rate of homicides and violent criminal activity in recent times. Therefore, this study is significant in that while it focuses on assessing the feasibility of establishing a national HR training program as a national business performance enhancer, its use of training transfer theory can also facilitate the research being used as a model for other required areas of national soft skill training needs including crime alleviation. Thus, St. Lucia can explore the use of businesses as agencies through which mandatory training is provided to employees in relevant areas, such that this training is transferred and translated into national social improvements. As such, the study is guided by the research questions and hypothesis listed below.

Research Questions and Research Hypotheses

This research is concerned with establishing the link between HR training and improvements in business performance. Particularly, it assesses the effects of a NH RTP on business performance in St. Lucia. To this end, the study enlists the following research questions.

- RQ1. To what extent does HR affect Business performance (BP)?
- RQ2. How impactful are employee demonstrations of HR on how clients perceive BP?
- RQ3. How would employee demonstrations of HR behaviour affect client willingness to engage in repeated interactions with a business entity?
- RQ4. To what extent are employees willing to undergo personal adjustments for organizational purposes?
- RQ5. Would national HR programs through businesses be useful for addressing HR related social issues?

The research uses the following hypotheses in relation to the stated research questions.

- H1. Human Relations improves business performance.
- H2. Demonstration of HR behavior affects client perception of business performance.
- H3. Demonstration of HR behavior affects the willingness of clients to engage in repeat transactions with a business.
- H4. HR affects employee willingness to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others.
- H5. HR generated improvements are transferrable from business to social contexts.

Contributions to Knowledge

Apart from confirming, clarifying and legitimizing Human Relation's link to business performance improvement, the study offers several contributions to knowledge. Among these contributions is the reconstitution of Elton Mayo's seminal Hawthorne study ideas which inadvertently gave rise to the Human Relations Movement (Reddy, 2016). These ideas focused on the manipulation of interpersonal and working conditions as the basis for organizational improvement while minimizing the emphasis on person centered decisional processes as the key factor in HR based organizational improvement. Thus, the Hawthorne studies takes a transactional perspective which stops at an extrinsically motivated direction of influence from the group to the individual. This study takes a more transformational approach, positing that it is primarily the intrinsically motivated direction of influence from the individual to the group that promotes organizational improvement. As such as a contribution to knowledge, the research redefines HR in terms of self-developmental and self-regulatory behaviors geared toward successful interactions with others.

Congruently, the study offers a conceptualization of business performance on the basis of employee transformations demonstrated in personally emanating, “other centered” behaviors toward the achievement of organizational goals. This contribution allows for a dedicated option for measuring investment inputs to HR soft skill training as opposed to dependence on quantity centric formulas for measuring return on investments that usually lead to the cutting of HR initiatives, which seem not immediately exchangeable for profit (Madsen, 2019). Particularly useful in this contribution, is the position the study holds regarding public sector (PS) organizations as businesses, given their susceptibility to the same effects and practices as the private sector, notwithstanding their not for profit and stewardship concerns (Spicker, 2009; Schraeder, Tears and Johnson, 2005) and the absence means for measuring inputs to public performance (NCPC, 2016).

Further, on the basis of an epistemological position that considers personally emanating abstract phenomena of the nature defined as HR to be valid, the study strongly proposes the engagement of like instruments for the measurement of like phenomena as a means of improving validity (Chen, Lu and Qu, 2015). In this regard, the study contributes that HR interventions improve client perception of business performance such that, client perception is a valid measure of business performance, when business performance is considered on the basis of behaviors derived from abstractions embodied in HR and HR training (HRT).

Moreover, HR interventions filter out technically oriented phenomena and removes the somewhat “strained validity” placed on the assignment of mismatched quantitative and scientifically oriented approaches in the measurement of non-quantifiable HR subjectivities (Boon and Van Baalen, 2019). Thus, the study further contributes that client perception as an HR induced measure, bypasses technically oriented organizational phenomena, such that the fixed nature or

clients' feelings about the technical aspects of an interaction, do not factor in the measurement of HR phenomena.

An additional contribution provided by the study is that the introduction of HR/T to an organization, pushes performance improvement regardless of prevailing performance standards. Accordingly, in circumstances where performance standards are low, the introduction of HR interventions are manifestly drastic. Alternately, in situations of high performance standards, HR interventions assume a somewhat subtle clinical "scouring" effect that serves as a forceful driver of performance, which surpasses what prevails. Thus, on the basis of the findings, the study contributes that HR/T interventions generally improve and push performance betterment.

This study also contributes the idea of the new corporate social responsibility (NCSR) which is the institutionalization of HR to facilitate business acting as agents of social change. The NCSR removes the emphasis from finance and profit based corporate initiatives to acknowledging the transferability of HR and its benefits across contexts, and the portability of HR within trained individuals to contexts beyond the workplace. Thus, the NCSR as a contribution to knowledge, is based on the research proven premise that HR training is transformative, transferable and portable.

Companion to the contribution of the NCSR is the secondary concern of the study in exploring the potential for institutionalized HR to be used for the alleviation of social ills, as such facilitating the engagement of business as agents of social change. To this end, the confirmation of HR/T to transform, to be transferred and to be transported within individuals for the dissemination of its inherent benefits, supports the contribution to knowledge that, HR training delivered through a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP), has the potential for effecting wide-scale business performance improvement and the potential for promoting social change. Thus, the following literature review, surveys literature relevant to the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The last section introduced the study and its various elements including its key focus on empirically investigating the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP) on business performance (BP) improvement in St. Lucia. Thus, this section examines relevant literature that facilitates and elucidates the emerging themes of the research. Among the overall deliverables of this section are the presentation of conceptual issues and definitions, the exploration of previous empirical studies and the adopted theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. The chapter begins with an introduction following this overview, then proceeds to detail the areas highlighted and themes to be explored against the backdrop of relevant literature.

As a filter for harnessing applicable literature, the thematic elements embedded in the expressed purposes of the study are specifically considered. Accordingly, the purpose of the study is to more solidly confirm the link between Human Relations (HR) and BP improvement, while using a mixed method approach to achieve this. Mixed methods are employed since the research measures both quantitative and qualitative variables through questionnaires and focus groups.

For instance, quantities of participants (clients) holding particular perceptions regarding degree of favorability about their interactions with employees before and after a training intervention, is measured. While in a designated post training phase, perceptions of both client and employee participants is measured, based on their unquantifiable experiences with employees or HR training respectively. Consequently, BP is measured by the extent to which clients feel positive about their interactions with employees and the demonstrated willingness of employees to work in favor of others including the organization, as a result of HR training.

Additionally, the research is purposed to examine how the deleterious effect of inadequate HR skills is alleviated through training and is effectively converted as a result of training into performance improvements, primarily among public sector employees. Notwithstanding its highly public sector and organizational contextual orientations, the research's purposes reaches outside these contextualities as it determines whether business as affected by training find strategic usefulness as agents for stimulating social change (SC).

Thus, the research also serves the purpose of examining the efficacy of training in achieving HR specific personal, organization and social change. As such, the investigation utilizes empirical evidence which generally determines the feasibility of implementing a NH RTP for effecting widespread personal and improved organizational performance changes through HR training. Further, it serves to assess the potential for using businesses whose employees are trained in HR as conduits through which training in HR can be channeled for the alleviation of HR related social ills.

As a consequence of the purposes highlighted, this research makes several assumptions. One being, that there is a potential positive correlation between Human Relations (HR) skill acquisition through training and improvements in business performance (BP). This first assumption gives rise to both manifest and latent conceptual issues that prompt elucidation of concepts such as Human Relations (HR), skill acquisition, training and business performance.

Another assumption of the research is that acquired training not only bears transactional currency for use within the organizational context but is also individually transformational and becomes an intrinsically portable currency that could be used external to the organization within social contexts, to effect social change. Thus, as a matter of emerging conceptual issues, this assumption carries with it the ideas that, training possesses transferability and bears utility as

exchange for organizational purposes and change for individual growth. Moreover, the transferability of training content is assumed to be potentially portable outside of the context and purposes for which it was originally delivered.

Thematic Structure

The assumptions and emerging themes are stoked by questions hypothesized in the research. These hypotheticals signal positive correlations between HR training and a range of variables including, improved BP, satisfactory perception of the business, decreased client reluctance to engage in repeat business, employee willingness to work in favor of others and transferability of HR training improvements from business to society. Hence, in keeping with the research's overall purposes, assumptions, questions, hypotheses and theoretical framework, the emergent themes going forward are categorized into four broad groupings, each comprising several related subthemes. Namely, Human Relations and business performance, training and transformation, training and the public sector, with business as social change agents being the final category.

Identifying Human Relations and Performance Issues

This theme focuses on the central question of the research and explores literature including (Kitana, 2016; Wood and Wood, 2004; Onisk, 2020) seeking clarity on the HR to BP connection. In this vein, subthemes regarding obscurities within HR, the effects of its origin on current practice and HR's group emphasized orientation to impacting subjective behavior are examined. Further, contentions surrounding the measurement of HR and particularly, perception as a measure of business performance are considered among the issues to be clarified in keeping with the

objectives of the research. As such, components of the study give rise to other themes relevant to HR, specifically its amenability to training and transformation.

The Feasibility of Human Relations Training

Subsequent to clarifying the HR to BP link, this theme examines HR in terms of its ability to be trained as well as its potential to transform individuals and their behavior in the interest of others, both within and in extra-contextual situations. The preoccupation of this theme informs the component of the study interested in the feasibility of training HR skills, the trainability of HR skills, the potential for HR skills to be transferred and the importance of individual transformation effecting organization and social change. Thus, key among the subthemes are the trainability of soft skills, training transfer in relation to subjectivity, the transformability and portability of training in HR and the specific areas of training for the study. These areas include self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and transformational leadership, having been highlighted as key areas of HR training delivery for the research. Literature contributors to this theme include Chamorrow-Premuzic, (2018), Mezirow, (2001) and Marathe and Kakani, (2020). Following from this theme is the consideration of training and the public sector, which facilitates exploration of HR training issues within its primary research context.

Assessing Public Sector Impact on Training

Accordingly, this theme focuses on the peculiarities of the public sector that potentially impact HR training. As such, examination of prevailing attitudes and approaches to public sector training are facilitated by relevant literature including public sector documents. Importantly, this theme enables exploration of understandings pertaining to the meaning of performance in the

public service and by extension ability to determine performance improvement. Apart from the nature of the public service, subthemes focus on highlighting deliberate concerns of employee motivation to training, general attitude of public sector employees toward work, the perceived value of HR and HR training to the public sector along with public sector HRM practices that impact HR and BP. Literature support is drawn from but not limited to the contributions of Soomro, Shah and Memon (2020) and Ko and Smith-Walter (2013). Thus, given the importance of the public sector as a large scale employer and the research's interest in its employees serving as transformed conduits for extra-contextual transfer of positive change behavior, the study adopts the theme of business as social change agents.

Social Change and Business Impact

This theme examines the potential of HR training derived from the efforts of business organizations to render these entities agents of social change by virtue of their conscious and conscientious institutionalization of HR soft skills training. This theme is fuelled by the assumption that HR training's potential to improve organizational performance, holds the same potential to effect social change improvement (Marathe and Kakani, 2020; McCaslin and Kilrea, 2019). Thus, the theme considers the potential individually transformational, portable and organizationally obtained HR soft skills training as transferrable to society through employees. Hence, situating businesses as prospective interveners against social ills. Subthemes include, social conditions reflecting HR deficiencies, national training interventions and the impact of national training on social change.

The final part of the literature summarizes its content. However, going forward the research draws from the thematic structure established, to explore the highlighted themes and facilitate the

examination of subthemes. In this regard, the first theme of Human Relations and business performance probe the link between the two and assesses the literature informed strength of their connection.

Thus, in order to fully explore these themes and other elements of the research, seminal and peer reviewed literature developed particularly within the past five years spanning 2014-2019 but extending beyond this period where relevant and necessary are employed. Additionally, a range of resources including library data bases and search engines such as Proquest, EBSCO, Research Gate, Academia.edu and related journals on HR, Human Resource Management (HRM), Training and Human Resource Development (HRD) are enlisted to support the research. These resources contribute to key searched information on training transfer theory, the linkages between HR and performance improvement as well as transformational training and training in the public sector among other searches. Further, the resources facilitate with unpacking the latent but salient elements of the research including assisting with the exploration of conceptual issues and definitions at work in the study.

Industry/Field Description and Conceptual Issues

Before delving into conceptual issues and definitions it is important to describe the industries or fields that give rise to these issues and provide working definitions for use within the parameters of the research. Thus, this research relies heavily on the major areas of Human Relations (HR), Human Resource Management (HRM) and Human Resource Development (HRD), within which it is most deeply situated based on its strong dependence on training, individual transformation and organizational performance improvement through personal effort. As such, the study links these fields together and forces consideration of each before highlighting

conceptual issues and forging definitions, since tensions arising from dedicated adaptation of concepts exist among the areas and definitions derived bear specific application to the present study.

Human Relations

For instance, this research takes an intrinsically focused, individually self-emanating view of HR in terms of the locus of its impact on the group. Whereas the original intentions of HR as proposed by founder Elton Mayo in his 1920's Hawthorne studies, sought to establish impact from group and organizational conditions to the individual (Peek, 2020). Corroboratively, (Mulder, 2017), highlights the introduction of Human Relations Theory as a movement away from the prevailing Scientific Management approach of the 1950s which emphasized productivity and efficiency without consideration for humanistic interests. In contrast, the Hawthorne studies concluded that attention to the interests of employees as a group contributes to individually improved performance (Mulder, 2017).

Interestingly, the resulting performance improvement of the Hawthorne studies is based on sentimentality, since workers feel valued as members of the group and the attention given by superiors to the human needs aspects of their work (Grover, 2016). Albeit, the individual performance response is dictated by attention given to the group and resembles a form of subtle, sentimentally driven motivation placed on the individual to work harder, stimulated by the group (Mitchell, Skinner and White, 2010).

However, the slant of HR to which this research is inclined, defines it as the focussed efforts of an individual toward self-development and self-regulatory behaviours with the intent to achieve interactions beneficial to others. As such, this definition does not squarely fit with the conventional

conceptualization of HR which focuses vicariously on individual interaction affecting group behaviour but more strongly emphasizes group effect on individual behaviour (Peek 2020).

Management and Organizational Behaviour

Consequently, although HR for the purposes of this study is immersed in the fields of HRD, HRM and training, it has evolved to become a concept critical to influencing broad areas involving organizational behavioural matters and essential to the field of Management (Burke and Day 1986). HR espouses principles pertinent to management that consider individual and group interactions with regard to performance and profitability (Tirintetaake, 2017). As such, HR finds applicability to managers as it offers an alternative to Scientific Management based approaches which are more mechanistic in orientation and do not uphold the centrality of human input to organizational success as does HR (Tirintetaake, 2017).

Agreeably, Philip and Arrowsmith (2021) defines HR in widely conventional terms as a management approach not predominantly given to the idea of solely financial benefits for the motivation of employees but enlists other social factors to inform their management, including “soft side” considerations such as offering praise, engendering feelings of achievement and belonging, fostering personal development as well as healthy workplace attitudes. As a result, several aspects of HRM, highlight functions, that make HR and the concerns of this research inextricable from the field.

Human Resource Management

Generally, HRM is an approach to managing employees that focuses on the human capital concerns of a business, particularly revolving around intra-organizational relationships, employee

effectiveness, staffing, performance and generally maximizing the returns on investments in employees (Rouse, 2017). Thus, four main categories of objectives including, societal, organizational, functional and personal objectives exist within the practice of HRM. More explicitly, societal objectives attend to issues relating to ethical, social and legal needs of employees (Rouse, 2017). Organizational objectives seek measures to improve employee and organizational efficiency including training and appropriate staffing. Functional objectives maximize and optimise the use of human resources and personal objectives support each employee's personal goals and development for the betterment of the business (English, Polin and Brown, 2017).

Human Resource Development

This latter objective of HRM's support for employee goals and their development, along with an interest in training albeit for organizational benefits, also speaks to the themes of this research and introduces its deep grounding in the field of HRD (Pineda 2010). Accordingly, the traditional understanding of HRD as coined by Leonard Nadler, is that it refers to the designed production of behaviourally positive changes by means of a set of timed, organized and specialized activities (Han and Stieha, 2020). As such, the field is closely tied to training activities as the means through which desired behaviour within an organization is achieved (Pineda 2010).

By extension, BasuMallick (2020) suggests that improvements in organizational culture, up-skilling and personal development fall under the purview of HRD and its key functions. Implicitly, these functions include performance related improvements and the implementation of learning and development programs for organisational benefits (BasuMallic, 2020). Hence, with this research's interest in training as a means of business performance improvement, it prominently

establishes HRD as both a significant contributing field and benefactor. However, although the research's developmental and training preoccupation situates it firmly within the field of Human Resource Development (HRD), it intersects with disciplines and interests subsumed within Human Resource Management (HRM), particularly, Human Relations (HR) and performance, which are additional key focal points of the study but bear general applicability to the practice of Management.

Conceptual Definitions

Notwithstanding the seeming linearity and congruity of the fields of concern, this research produces several conceptual challenges based on how it chooses to treat, adapt and define its key variables and align its processes toward the research purposes. As previously indicated, this research takes interest in the potential for internalized HR training to be sufficiently transformational that it moves the individual to affect the group as opposed to the group affecting the individual.

To this end the study defines HR from a person to group directional emphasis, placing the responsibility for demonstrating HR behavioral outcomes on the individual. Thus Human Relations is defined as the focussed efforts of an individual toward self-development and self-regulatory behaviours with the intent to achieve interactions beneficial to others. Therefore, emphasis is placed on an individual's deliberate actions and awareness of enhancing themselves and demonstrating awareness of their ability to affect both social and business outcomes as a result of their interactions with others along with a considered willingness to make the impact positive.

Essentially, the adopted definition highlights the soft skills embodiment of Human relations and signifies the acquisition of soft skills as fundamentally the acquirement of HR skills.

Confirmatively, Wellington (2005) supports that HR is soft skills and regards it among the key components for individual and business success. Similarly, Chatteraj and Shabnam (2015) distinguish soft skills as abstract personal qualities, attributes and behaviors, while hard skills refer to the technical skills needed for job performance. However, they highlight that hiring, promotion and retention criteria often emphasize dependability, self-directedness, social graces, willingness to learn and overall positive attitude as soft skill qualities necessary for both individual and organizational success as opposed to possessing merely technical skill (Chatteraj and Shabnam, 2015).

Accordingly, self-developmental and self-regulatory behavior consciously geared toward positive interactional outcomes as a demonstration of HR acquisition, specifically for improved business performance and social ills mitigation, depends on the generation of soft skills designed and defined specifically for those purposes (Gleaton, 1978). Thus, improved business performance is evident in the extent to which the specific soft skills acquired by an individual is perceived as manifesting itself in evoking positive feelings and sentiments from others (clients) toward the business (Gleaton, 1978).

Hence, improved BP refers to the increased positive perception of a client about a business after interacting with employees, along with the demonstrated awareness of HR qualities of employees in pursuit of business goals. Thus, the abstract application of HR soft skills is used for measuring the abstract conceptualization of improved business performance. Specifically, improved business performance is measured on the basis of perception founded on soft skill application not technical improvement (Henville, 2012).

Usually, the measurement of business performance is done through HRM instruments evaluating technical and tangible outcomes. For instance, Horváthová and Mokrišová (2017) point

to the application of matrix and linear conceptual models of measuring business performance that allow for mathematical descriptions of efficiency and performance. Their study supports the matrix model in which the application of combined variations of inputs and outputs are employed as performance indicators instead of the prevailing output oriented approaches (Pineda, 2010, Horváthová and Mokrišová, 2017). Likewise, Butler (1995) in stressing the use of Key performance indicators (KPIs), suggests a kind of “at a glance” measurability that are more conveniently derived from the assessment of calculable outputs.

While assessments are made on BP improvement, they are perception based and depend on the impact of individuals through training. Thus transformation, as derived from supporting transformative learning principles (Mezirow, 1991), implies a three dimensional change within an individual to include psychological, convictional and behavioral shifts (Kroth and Cranton, 2014). More explicitly, transformative learning produces changes that revolve around individual self-understanding, revising beliefs and engaging in lifestyle adjustments (Kroth and Cranton, 2014). Aptly, the principles conveyed in transformative learning theory support present purposes in that it bears applicability to the transfer of abstract soft skills that are both cognitive and sentimentality laden.

Previous Empirical Studies

Relevantly, this study conceptualises Human Relations as an individual’s focussed efforts toward self-development and self-regulatory behaviours for the benefit of interacting successfully with others. This implies that the research aims to consider the transfer of HR content such as values, which transform individuals in terms of mentality and behavior as well as find applicability both within and outside of the organizational context. Thus, Training Transfer Theory (TTT),

especially in terms of its cognitive orientation is found to be most useful for this study. For instance, Wujcik, Nowak, and Nęcka (2014), studied the far-transfer effects on cognitive control, which is an individual's ability to regulate mental processes and behavior, enabling self-control. They found improvements in cognitive control and general fluid intelligence, which predicts potential to achieve in various areas including education and occupation (Wujcik, Nowak, and Nęcka, 2014).

Further, research by Vermue, Meleady and Seger (2019), investigating how trust behavior is generalized in terms of the way prior experience affects pro-social behavioral experiences between in-groups and new out-group members, cite evidence demonstrating that feelings towards out-groups can be affected positively or negatively, based on individualized interactions with group members. This disclosure is important to the present study since there is a dependence on the generalization of transferred training both within and external to the organizational context. Moreover, both internal and external contexts are dependent on individual transformation, adoption and dissemination of highly non-technical content such as attitudes that align with interpersonal skills, motivation and the overall willingness to make an effort to work for the success of others and the organization.

Moreover, HR specific soft skill and TTT related research suggest strong support for using the approach in a range of organizational environments. For instance, Gleaton (1978) investigated the use of training in HR to improve the effectiveness of hospital staff and focused on variables such as attitude, feelings, self-control and lovability. While Harris, Lowery-Moore and Farrow (2008) engaged the supporting alignment of transformative principles and TTT to model leadership for teachers. The research focused on emphasizing long term teacher commitment toward guiding new colleagues and students to programs at their college. Likewise, Jordan (2016),

compared perceived transfer effectiveness between classroom and synchronous online training. Again the research measured the abstract variable of perception in keeping with the objectives of the present research.

More directly however, attention is given to cognitive TTT supported by transformative learning principles. As revealed by Harris, Lowery-Moore and Farrow's (2008) study emphasizing commitment and leadership, the combination of TTT and transformative learning seamlessly support training in content which is abstract, nontechnical and intended to transform. Likewise, Wujcik, Nowak, and Nęcka's (2014) attempt to train what they term executive functions, in the form of interference resolution, response inhibition, task switching, and goal monitoring, was thought to be best undertaken using combined TTT and transformative learning. The approach proved successful in catering to the nature and intents of their study.

Specifically, Hand and Slocum (1972), sought to determine the impact of Human Relations training (HRT) on attitude change and whether these attitudinal changes reflected in organizational effectiveness. The managerially focused research comprised a total of forty-two participants divided equally into a control and experimental group. Among the variables measured were, self-awareness, sensitivity to others and leadership styles (Hand and Slocum 1972). Pre and post training instruments in the form of questionnaires which measured opinions on perceived leadership styles and supervisory behavior were utilized before and eighteen months after training respectively. The research yielded positive results in targeted HR oriented changes within the experimental group with little or no change within the control group (Hand and Slocum 1972). While Hand and Slocum's (1972) research bears relevance to the current study, it creates a gap with its emphasis on managerial and not individual HR concerns.

However, a more individually focused approach is assumed by Margulies (1973) who sought to measure the effects of an HR organizational sensitivity training program on self-actualization. In this regard, Margulies (1973) notes that while HR training labs have become increasingly important to organizational training efforts, linking the HR training to behavioral improvements on the job lack clarity. Burke and Day (1986), as a basis for their research on the cumulative effectiveness of training, also cite issues of inconclusiveness in both private and public sector training intended to improve BP and general management practice, via the HR areas of self-awareness, problem solving, decision making, motivation and values.

Notwithstanding, Margulies (1973), investigated the impact of sensitivity training over a four month period on five groups of middle managerial participants. The study measured changes in individual psychological growth using a Personal Orientation Inventory (POI), administered before and after an HR training program. The results indicated that the four, ten participant experimental groups showed positive movement in the direction toward self-actualization as a result of the direct application of HR content to them. Again these results point to a positive correlation between HR training and organizational performance. Particularly, individually transformative training content that could be carried within the individual and measurably manifested as improvements to the organization and wider contexts (Khalfani, 2014).

However, indirectly related to the specific interests of this study, HR has featured significantly in previous research as a factor affecting various areas of organizational concern. For instance, Omodan, Tsotetsi and Dube (2020), focus attention to HR in investigating far reaching systemic disturbances within the Nigerian university system and resulting in social unrest. The researchers consider the plausibility of Hawthorne originated managerial principles based on HR,

as potentially effective for managing the crisis of frequently erupting student concerns and by extension serving as corrective to the circumstances.

Using HR management theory along with observation and literature examination, the researchers find that addressing HR elements such as motivation, belongingness, group cohesion and interpersonal communicative qualities, are not merely effective as management aids but useful in the address of student issues. They recommend the adoption of managerial strategies such as inclusivity in decision making, a system of collaborative committees as well as the promotion of HR associated communication and motivational strategies. As such Omodan, Tsotetsi and Dube (2020), use their research in acknowledgement of a relationship between HR and BP, further suggesting that management approaches based on the HR entrenched principles would improve productivity and harmonious relationships.

In similar research acknowledging HR's potential influence on organizational objectives, Myklebust, Motland, Garnas and Fostervold (2020), empirically evaluate the relationship between organizational HR climate and change readiness. The researchers suggest that being ready for change is a significant aspect of organizational transformational efforts but how climate affects readiness is unclear. Thus, with particular reference to HR climate, the study employs Quinn and Rohrbaugh's framework of competing values of organizational climate and change readiness to investigate the perceived mediating role of organizational support, within the Norwegian public sector police force. Using an analytical approach involving preliminary models of measurement followed by examination of construct relationship, the study finds that the relationship between HR organizational climate and employees' change readiness is mediated by perception of organizational support.

As such, Myklebust, Motland, Garnas and Fostervold's (2020), study is useful as a reference of previous research to the present investigation, since it is reiterative in pointing to a relationship between HR and organizational outcomes, but moreover, it assembles several interests of the present research in terms of public sector environments, phased research approach and perception as a measure of organizational attainment. To this extent, the study recommends fostering a HR climate as a means strengthening the perception of organizational support. Again, the previous studies and their attribution of HR considerations to organizational outcomes, appeals to various elements of interest to this study and provide impetus for the pursuance of related attending issues as represented in the theoretical and conceptual framework.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Training Transfer Theory

Training Transfer Theory (TTT) has found widespread usage in research dealing with the conversion of training content into beneficial individual and organizational behavior (Jordan 2016). Training Transfer Theory, axiomatically implies the transferability of training event content from one entity to another. Also, Baldwin and Ford (1988) add that positive training transfer is the degree to which skills, attitudes and knowledge are effectively applied from one context to the next by a trainee. However, beyond this self-explanatory superficiality, the theory holds deeper complexities and applications in alignment to the purposes of this research. For instance, Awais, Mohamed, Pandiyan and Othman (2013), assert in agreement with the assumptions of this research, that training transfer effectiveness is vital to employee performance and organizational improvement. This assertion, while in keeping with present assumptions also introduces the idea

of efficacy, which gives rise to the need for more in-depth consideration for the suitability and nuances of the theory for this research.

Near and Far Transfer

Among the nuances are the distinctions between near and far transfer. These refer to the extent to which training content matches the context in which it is to be applied by the trainee (Baldwin and Ford, 1988). Near transfer emphasizes close similarities between training content, context and outcomes, with emphasis on specific skills and concepts to be transferred back to the dedicated context (Royer 1979). Far transfer requires less dependability on strict matching of content to contexts but relies on approximations of these to the reality, approximations of outcomes and emphasizes generalizable concepts and application of skills (Kim and Lee, 2001). Thus, far transfer oriented training is suitable for utility in cases that expect training content to be applied beyond predetermined environments with allowances for adaptation of content to varied contexts (kim and Lee, 2001). Further, far transfer facilitates abstract non-technical, personally transformative content that seek to engender change using transformational learning approaches (Harris, Lowery-Moore and Farrow, 2008).

Transformational Learning Theory

In this regard, Harris, Lowery-Moore and Farrow (2008) suggest transformational learning as a process that is recursive and encourages reflexivity, discourse and critical assessments about worldviews. It entails revisions and engagement in the exploration of beliefs with a plan to implement new behavior as a result of the learning experience. Friere (1970), describes transformational learning as liberating and having as its goal the transformation of the world

toward social justice. Agreeably, transformational learning aligns with training transfer theory and the interests of this study in that it facilitates changes in individuals that lead to the application of acquired skill toward the improvement of people, business and society.

Theoretical Suitability

Apart from research conducted by Elton Mayo in the nascent stages of the HR movement (Robbins and Judge, 2014), several studies have been conducted that shifted focus from the manipulation of group or environmental factors of the original studies toward more individually derived inputs to organizational success (Lee, 2016), making personally transformational approaches to training transfer effectiveness more critical to the organization. Importantly, Awais, Mohamed, Pandiyan and Othman (2013), outline the need for individual acquisition of qualities such as interpersonal skills, team spirit and social grace to support the effectiveness of training transfer for both individual and organization.

Accordingly, Yamnill and Maclean (2001), support the competitive advantage gained through people as an organization's most important resource but lament the traditional linear horizontal linkage between training transfer and performance without consideration for trainee, input and contextual factors, stating that training without consideration of these factors is rendered useless. They argue that training transfer as part of an HRD training intervention changes both individual and organizational performance (Yamnill and Maclean, 2001), thus making it necessary to examine the multidimensional applicability to this research.

Thus, one of the concerns of this study is the extra-contextual viability of training. This is important since most discourses on training transfer suggests that closeness of match between the content and context within which training is to be used increases its effectiveness of transfer (Van

der Locht, Karen and Chiaburu, 2013). While this principle is captured in the theory of Identical Elements as proposed by Thorndike and Woodworth in 1901 (Dudovskiy, 2013), it runs counter to the purposes of this research in that it retards generalizations to contexts and purposes that do not match those of the training delivery.

However, Charles Judd's formulation of the far transfer concept known as Generalization of Experience, suggests that the experiences of individuals could be applied and generalized to dissimilar situations (Choi and Levinthal, 2022). This conceptualization supports the purposes of this study but falls short in that it does not fully specify allowances for practical and abstract or cognition based types of transfer. Alternatively, cognitive theory which focuses on mental processes rather than simply experiences, lends greater applicability to this research since it facilitates transfer of most kinds of content in most contexts (Bandura, 2001).

While other theories such as Intergroup Contact Theory hold the potential to measure intergroup relations similar to the concerns of this research, Mazziotta, Mummendey and Wright (2011), they are limited in that they don't cater to individual transformative behavior or to training transfer approaches that work through the individual to obtain organizational performance benefits. Training Transfer Theory facilitates the nature of the intended training content, individually transformational objective, transactional performance improvements to the organization and potential for effecting social change.

To this end, Training Transfer Theory (TTT) is employed as it most aptly facilitates the multiple dimensions of this study namely, the agreeability that training can be transferred (Baldwin and Ford, 1988), the possibility of transferring training of the value laden nature with which this research is concerned (Blume, Ford, Baldwin and Huang, 2010), the inherent transformational potential of transferred training (Muhammad and Kaur, 2010), the potential for performance to be

enhanced through training and the possibility of transferring training beyond its targeted context and purposes (Grohmann, Beller and Kauffeld, 2014).

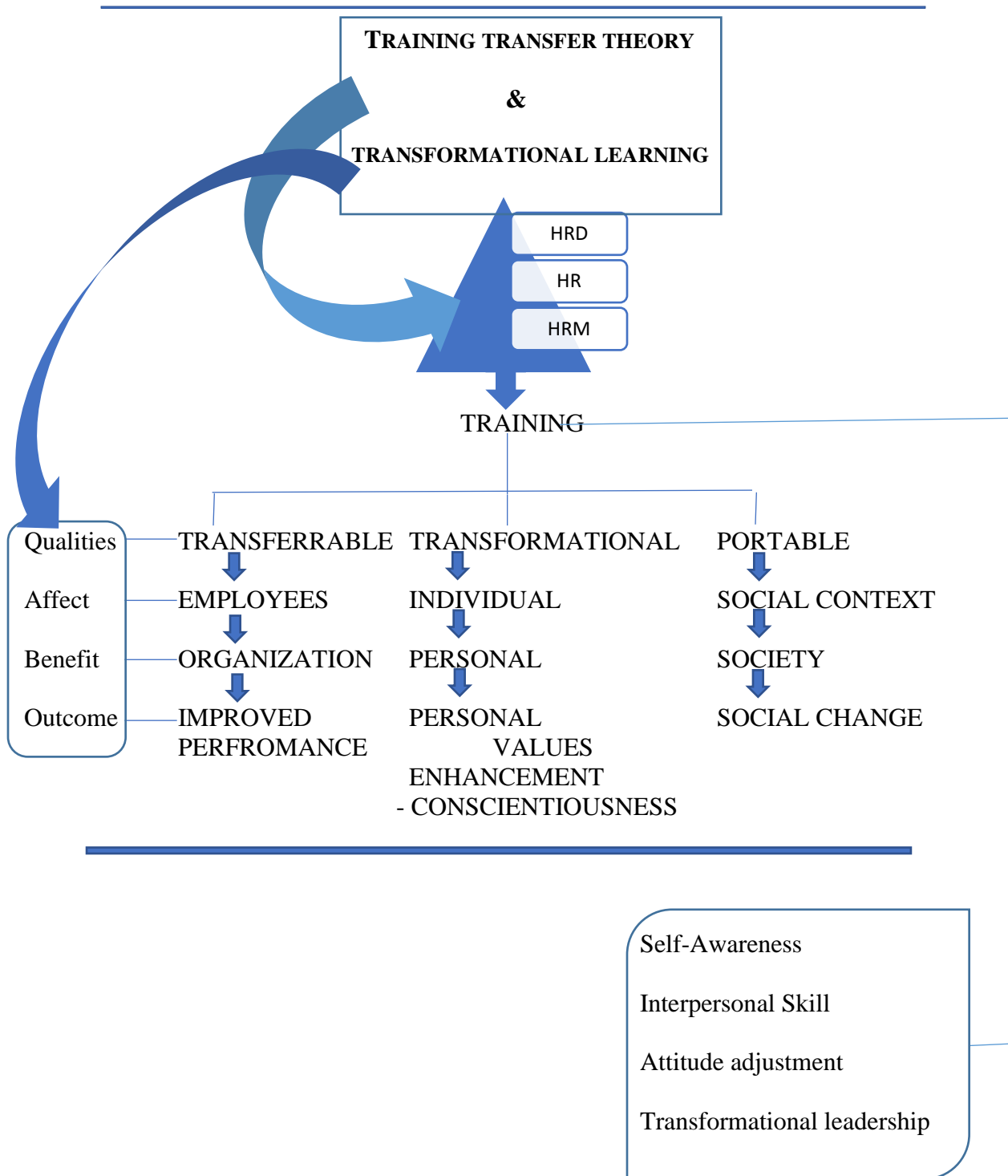
Based on these premises, the research gathers from the principles, content and ethos of HRM, HR and HRD to administer training to participants in transformational leadership, Interpersonal skills, self-awareness and attitude adjustment. The transferability and transformative ability of these areas are measured in the perceptions of clients about doing business with the entity before and after training. The use of training transfer theory along with transformational learning support the hypothesized assumptions of the research that:

- HR training is transferable
- HR training transforms the individual
- HR training leads to improved business performance
- HR training is effective beyond intended business contexts
- HR training is useful for widespread business performance improvements delivered through a NH RTP.

Thus the integrated theoretical and conceptual frameworks are diagrammatized below. Both frameworks provide the sound theoretical and conceptual underpinnings required for the conduct of this study.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework



Justifying the Hypotheses

Accordingly, against the backdrop of the research's frameworks and in relation to the various hypotheses assumed, the literature lends both support and stimulus for their examination. For instance, with regard to a link between training improvement and business performance, evidence is highlighted in research by Lahope, Worang and Gunawan (2020), into the importance of soft skill training on company performance at the BNI Tolitoli Bank, branch office, that HR soft skills training are important for achieving organizational objectives and improving employee skills. Using a conceptual framework founded on the delivery of soft skills training in areas such as communication skills, leadership, problem solving and interpersonal skills, the study proposed improvement in banking industry performance on both non-financial and financial levels. These findings coincide with the hypothesis of this study as follows.

H1: Human Relations improves business performance.

Also, despite soft skill evaluation methods being criticized as unscientific and inadequate (Power, 2004), there are competing arguments that soft skills need to be measured by equally "soft" methods such as perception (Boon and Van Baalen, 2019). Although the literature is not profuse in this area, recent research by Hayes (2020), suggests that lack of service quality training negatively affects students' perception of a college's tutoring center. Moreover, Hayes (2020) suggests that poor perception by students, particularly results in lowered student retention, slowed progression and matriculation, which directly affect the institution's ranking and prestige. These findings stimulate pursuance of two hypothetical concerns of this research as follows.

H2: Demonstration of HR behavior affects client perception of business performance.

H3: Demonstration of HR behavior affects the willingness of clients to engage in repeat transactions with a business.

Additionally, Human Relations as conceptualized by this study, demands the inclination to act selflessly for the benefit of others. In this regard Vieweg (2018), in studying prosocial behaviors, what motivates them and their impact on the culture of an organization, finds that prosocially inclined sacrificial behavior engenders collaboration, inspirational environments, collectivistic proclivities and organizational stability. As such, these findings fuel another hypothesis of this study as follows.

H4: Human Relations affects employee willingness to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others.

In light of exploring a possible soft skills training intervention via business, to potentially redress social ills, this research probes the literature and find evidence to suggest that organizationally derived soft skills are useful beyond business contexts and particularly for relationally centric purposes. To this end, Cimatti (2016), in her research assessing the role of soft skills to organizations, indirectly but importantly points to the social value of soft skills in labeling them as transversal competencies. These competencies, though organizationally focused, span a range of behavior including social aptitudes, friendliness, personality traits and other characteristics that are based on getting along with others. This disclosure assists in setting the basis for further exploration of the literature on the hypothesis as follows.

H5: HR generated improvements are transferrable from business to social contexts.

Human Relations and Business Performance

Clarifying the Human Relations Performance Connection

The theoretical and conceptual framework facilitates clarification of several opacities which exist within the assumptions of this study, suggesting indications of relatedness but demanding the establishment of stronger, more transparent linkages between the variables. Among

these assumptions is the implied positive relationship between Human Relations (HR) as soft skills and business performance (BP). However, while support is generally given to the idea that soft skills matter, with a 2018 Linked-In Business Report (LIBR) highlighting it as the most necessary learning area for businesses (Muir, 2019), inconclusiveness regarding the clarity, strength and positive correlation between the two phenomena remains (Wall and Wood, 2005). Ambivalently, increasing expressions of confirmation highlighting positive connections between HR and BP from research and business professionals, do not appear to unquestionably solidify the contribution of soft skills to BP success, merely yielding tentative, hopeful acknowledgements and continued groping for acceptance (Agarwal, 2018).

For instance, collaborative research between the Michigan Institute of Technology (MIT) and India based manufacturer Shahi Exports, sought to find out whether soft skills “actually” mattered in the workplace (Walsh, 2017). The research using a controlled randomized approach with employees of five factories, over a twelve month period of soft skill training, reported over two hundred and fifty percentage points on return on investments (ROI) and significantly improved productivity eight months after the study (Walsh, 2017). Interestingly, given the routinized nature and hard skills emphasis of the manufacturing company, the researchers did not envisage that soft skills would be so obviously impactful on the organization’s performance improvement. Thus, while apparently bold assumptions are made with regard to the HR to BP relationship, feeble confidences seem to linger among proponents.

Likewise, Agarwal (2018) highlight a similarly pyrrhic outcome in revealing findings from internal studies by Google to determine their most productive and innovative teams and Twitter polls from edX which sought to determine the value of soft skills. The data from both studies decisively confirm a positive relationship between HR and BP, emphasizing in the case of Google

that interdisciplinary teams with employees high in soft skill capabilities, were the highest performing teams. While the Twitter polls suggest that employees found soft skills to be the most helpful for achieving high workplace performance (Agarwal, 2018).

Congruently, Hartati (2020) in examining the role of HR in increasing the performance of employees, finds basis for the acceptance of hypothetical assumptions to the extent that HR positively impacts employee performance. The research, prompted by employee manifestations of inadequate implementation of tasks, delays in task completion and low levels of discipline, sought to determine the role of HR in alleviating the manifested employee performance shortcomings. To this end, the study engaged in data gathering from a public sector Sub-District Office in a constituent of Indonesia and through descriptive analysis determined that HR practices had been poorly implemented by district superiors, resulting in the experience of performance demise.

While Hartati's (2020) overall findings point to positive correlations between HR and performance, the idea of poor HR practice implementation is striking in illustrating the potential results of mismanaging, misunderstanding or misusing HR as a workplace practice and its relation to business performance. This veiled attention to HR appears to sustain tentativity or at best lack of emphatic confidence in the relationship between HR and performance. Thus, studies such as Hartati's (2020) investigation which concludes that proper implementation of HR practices not only affects but improves performance, help to strengthen the prospects of clarity between the HR and performance connection.

Supportively, Lepeley (2021) makes the observation over three decades of research, training, teaching and management practice, that users of soft skills generate positive effects that promote rigorous standards of high quality, which in turn stimulate organizational performance and productivity, universally. As such the ubiquitous significance of soft skills are regarded as

“Luna Franca” to describe them as a language common to all people and a potent, necessary supporting element of people centric management practice (Lepeley, 2021). As such, soft skills are considered the language through which human related practices are operationalized.

Resultantly, soft skill imbued communications are expedited among groups with greater efficiency than technical skills and without restriction to tasks, disciplines or fields of knowledge. Thus, soft skills are credited as a transferable facilitator of understanding across workplaces, business sectors, industries and nations, rendering them as highly demanded and beneficial to the workforce (Lepeley, 2021). Notwithstanding these affirmations, Agarwal (2018) acknowledges a challenge in the acquisition and measuring of soft skills but nevertheless calls for a rethinking of the value of soft skills as an organizational necessity. Hence HR struggles to gain outright, unquestioned conclusivity as a contributor to BP.

Human Relation’s Legacy of an Unplanned Origin

Accordingly, the origins of HR thinking emerged in contention to prevailing Classical Management theories of the early 1900s which sought to maximize measured, scientifically rationalized non-human factors as the basis for profitability and minimize humanistic contributions to organizational performance (Kitana, 2016). Thus, Frederick Taylor’s Scientific Management and Henry Fayol’s Administrative Principles, gained almost unchallenged entrenchment in the burgeoning industrial climate characterized by capitalization and profiteering (Kitana, 2016). In contrast and as a result of the accepted rationalistic approaches to optimizing performance, the nascent schools of thought promoting humanistic considerations as espoused in Neo-classical theory, arose in contest to the immediately expedient Classical Management approaches (Smith, 1998).

Notwithstanding, the Neo-classically oriented HR approach emerged as a weak link to supporting performance since the outcome of initial experiments by founder Elton Mayo proved inadvertently ambiguous and did not immediately establish a strong distinctive connection between HR to performance improvements (Reddy, 2016). Originally, Mayo's research known as the Hawthorne experiments were conducted to establish the link between working conditions and production, in particular how levels of lighting affected worker productivity (Reddy, 2016). The studies involving workers of the Hawthorne Electrical company over a three year period, found that when lighting conditions were improved productivity increased, although this increased productivity was somewhat immeasurable and erratic (Gitelman, 1992). Unexpectedly however, decreases in the level of lighting did not correspondingly decrease levels of productivity. Instead productivity stabilized or increased, causing the researcher to attribute behavioral, relational and otherwise social factors as contributors to the results (Smith, 1998).

More specifically, subsequent experiments by Mayo yielded that psychological and social factors significantly and consistently impacted worker performance as a result of, or in spite of, conditional variability (Gitelman, 1992). Thus, while the central questions posed in the original Hawthorne studies are left unanswered, the experiments proved counter to the prevailing impersonal approaches to management and promoted consideration for a non-mechanistic, psycho-social perspective which humanized worker contribution to organizational performance and gave rise to the Human Relations movement (Ugoani, 2020).

Notwithstanding the emergence of HR and a significant following of impactful theorists including Maslow, McGregor and Lewin who are among those noted for contributing related work in the form of the Hierarchy of needs, The X and Y theory and organizational change models respectively (Mackay, 2007), critiques argue against HR's empirical soundness and persistently

relegate it to an overwhelming body of common wisdom. For instance, Wood and Wood (2004) highlight criticisms of Mayo and the HR movement which suggest that individual autonomy is subsumed within the group and that the group merely acts in unitarist accord to the satisfaction of its members. This critique argues that the effect of individual influence is diminished in favor of group dictates and places the organization at the whims of collective emotional subjectivities for its governance, to the exclusion of other externalities and environmental changes (Wood and Wood, 2004).

Deindividuation as a Human Relations Paradigm

This critique brings into focus a major concern of the present research in emphasizing the individual influence on group and organizational success relative to HR, as opposed to the converse which suggests a form of deindividuation or loss of identity awareness, which stresses social and organizational influences on individual behavior (Vilanova, Beria, Costa and Koller, 2017). Congruently, Langfred (2013) highlights an increasing trend in employees toward desiring individual autonomy. As such, Langfred's (2013) study involving 103 participants from diverse industries revealed that individuals sought autonomy as a means of achieving job satisfaction and improving productivity. Consequently, the study introduces the notion that individuals possess the potential as a matter of intrinsic or self-derived factors to determine organizational outcomes that are not orchestrated by group influence (Ostroff, 1992). Moreover, the revelation directs attention to the idea that HR matters albeit at the individual and subjective level, are linked to organizational results.

However, the inclination of organizational discourse is more heavily oriented toward group effect on the individual in relating to matters of performance (Laruffa, 2020). Thus, while

increasing attention is directed toward the influence of individuals on the behavior of groups, there is a scantiness in Management literature concerning this orientation (Torro-Palacios, 2000). Instead most social science inclined disciplines focus attention on the impact of the group on individual behavioral outcomes (Gençer, 2019). This studied attention to groups and the dynamics of groups, span a wide ranging field of areas including citizenship behavior within organizations, motivation, ethics, leadership and job performance, notwithstanding that the focus maintains a directional emphasis on the impact of the group on the individual (Gençer, 2019).

For instance, Charness, Rigotti and Rustichini (2007), in their study on individual behavior in relation to group membership, chiefly focus on how the individual's perceived saliency as a member of the group, serves as a factor in dictating how, what the group prefers is weightier than individual membership. Based on the idea that the foundation of social organization is vested in groups Charness, Rigotti and Rustichini (2007), posit that anthropological, sociological and psychological thinking is that the behavior of humanity is best understood as social and not individual behavior. Thus, in the case of the Charness, Rigotti and Rustichini (2007) study, evidential accounts based on their utilized experiment is supportive of their hypothesis that membership in a group is what influences individual choices.

Again, this group weighted focus is exhibited in research by Secchi and Bui (2018) examining the effects of groups on the attitudes of individuals in respect to social responsibility. While the interest in social responsibility is appealing to the current study, its position of individually subjective inputs as a key influencer of group outcomes runs counter to the prevailing notions in the Secchi and Bui (2018) study. For instance, the study utilized a quazi-experimental approach as a means of investigating the impact of exposure to group dynamics on the social

responsibility attitudes of individuals, finding that it is group engagement that increases the attitudes of individuals in the direction of social responsibility.

However, in addition to this finding the study reveals that individuals possessing poor attitudinal dispositions regarding social responsibility, are more predisposed to adopting positively inclined social responsibility attitudes when members of the group exhibit more directionally positive social responsibility attitudes and conversely. While this latter finding hints at a more individualized impact on group behavior, the reporting orientation is framed in terms of collective importance. Thus, within the context of social science and group dynamics, the research literature is thin in focus on individual influences on the group.

However, despite the sparsity of thoughts along these lines, rising interest in the area extends even into biological science. In this vein, Pruitt and Pinter-Wollman (2015), lend their study to the notion by examining the effects of keystone or lead individuals among spiders on collective behavior. The research which specifically investigates the impact of keystone individuals on the behavior of the colony after lead individuals have departed the group, revealed significant behavioral manifestations in terms of aggression, boldness and feeding habits on the remaining members, after the departure. This suggests, at least within the biological science context, that individual behavior has a strong impact on group behavior. Although this research merely confirms an interest in individual to group influence across disciplines, it bears similar concerns to HR related organizational and social interactions.

In this vein, early research interests by Kim (1988) regarding work and organization related psychology, highlight the idea of differences within individuals that impact their interactions, as the basis of the science of human behavior. Further, Kim (1988) posits the existence of two theoretical paradigmatic viewpoints from which individual differences could be considered, within

the ambits of differential and general psychology. Thus, explanations of behavior from the psychologically differential position, hold that the impetus for manifested individual behavioral characteristics are resident and stable within individuals. On the other hand, the general psychology paradigm explains behavior as products of individual responses to processes while placing the characteristics of individuals in the background.

Significantly, Kim's (1988) disclosure assists in directing attention to the idea of individually derived versus individually impacted behavior. Along these lines, propositions advancing a practical managerial perspective on handling individualized characteristics, point to two dichotomies of interventional approaches, one works with the individual and the other modifies the person. Both dichotomous approaches are executed through strategies embodied in the selection of personnel, job design and training, which are inadvertently more implicative of an extra-individual locus of influence as opposed to an intra-individual origin of influence (Furukawa and Shibayama, 1997).

Congruently and more overtly implicit in these earlier approaches is the idea by Argyris (1976) that a more meaningfully significant issue is the determination of means for the optimal suppression of individualized differences, for the achievement of both individual and organizational benefits. Admittedly, through this suggestion, Argyris (1976) supports that an optimized relationship is represented in an individual's surrender of aspects of the self in favor of personal and organizational effectiveness, notwithstanding that the giving up of the self is as a result of extra-individual processes. Simultaneously, Argyris (1976) acknowledges a smothering of individuality in these approaches and questions the fairness of claiming their effectiveness as optimal suppressants of individuality and promoters of socially organized successes. Thus while the present research is interested in individual sacrificial behavior for the benefit of the self and

group, its departure from earlier thinking rests in the notion of exploring individually sacrificial behavior as intra-individually emanating with a directional impact from individual to group.

As such, recent research (Bryson, Forth and stokes, 2017, Peccei and Van De Voorde, 2019, Ugoani, 2020) while indistinct in their individual to group influence concerns, inadvertently point to interests which signal individual prominence in the determination of organizational outcomes. For instance, Bryson, Forth and Stokes (2017), sought to examine whether employee subjective well-being affected performance in the workplace. Although the research found a positive correlation between the subjectively perceived variable of employee well-being and performance, well-being is represented as a product of organizational constructs (Bryson, Forth and Stokes 2017).

Similarly, Peccei and Van De Voorde (2019), investigate twenty years of data relating to what they highlight as an increasing interest in the effect of Human Resource Management (HRM) Systems on organizational performance and employee outcomes, particularly employee wellbeing. They posit however, that scholarly works of late adopt an employee centered approach to HRM systems, not merely focused on how the organization affects employee wellbeing but how employee wellbeing potentially affects individual and the organization's performance (Peccei and Van De Voorde, 2019).

Individual Influence on Group Performance

While these studies are not outright in their quest for gaining understanding of self-derived, self-self-directed, individualized impact on the organization, they inevitably hint at the potentiality of subjective impetus associated with HR and soft skills, as an influencer of performance. Therefore, studies examining variables of, satisfaction, attitudes, motivation, empathy and other

personally related, self-attached HR soft skills (Ugoani, 2020; Ostroff, 1992), give indirect credence to the importance of the individual effect on the group, although most research are oriented conversely (Charness, Rigotti, Rustichini, 2005; Laruffa, 2020). Further, since these subjective variables reside within the domain of abstraction, in the form of attitudes, satisfaction, motivation, perception and feelings, they present additional obscurities for making clear linkages between aspects of HR and performance amidst a preponderance of indications that they are inseparable.

Along these lines, the defining attributes of HR for this research, acknowledge its workings as an interactive process within the contexts of groups and integral to group consequences. However, the onus for successful interaction is vested within the individual (Laruffa, 2020) and manifested in the demonstration of personalized transformations resulting in conscientious effortful behavior directed toward the benefit of others. Supportively, Toro-Palacios (2000) indirectly clarifies the individual to group interactivity paradigm by suggesting that group performance is not merely to be based on a summing up of individuals with varying levels of acceptable group ideals but on a collective of individuals with personally driven, intentional, organizationally beneficial behavior. Thus in this sense, soft skills could be considered a form of Human Relations Capital (HRC), in which the combined relational qualities of employees are deliberately converted into business benefits.

The Challenge of Measuring, Practicing and Acquiring Soft Skills

However, despite conclusive evidence and heightened awareness that individually emanating HR skill application positively affects BP, there continues to be challenges in terms of measurability, HR practice and nomenclature that understates the “hardness” of soft skill. For

instance, Power (2004) implies flaws in the tendency toward measurability in non-rationalistic areas, positing that the emergence of this tendency gained feasibility as a compatible match to the scientifically oriented precision and quantifiability, required to foster agreement, trust and credibility in communities of management focused on rationalism. This implies a possible mismatch with the measurability expectations of rationalistic orientations and the measurability demands of non-rationalistic HR applications (Power, 2004).

Thus, from an epistemological view which regards objective knowledge more highly than subjective knowledge, scientificity is based on the acceptance of what is considered to constitute valid knowledge, with the attendant implication that philosophical orientation must find congruity with what is to be studied (Boon and Van Baalen, 2019). In agreement, Chen, Luo and Qu (2015), in their study investigating rationalizability of behavior in general situations, draw reference to the idea that the justification for rationalistic behavior should be based on rationalistic principles and that rational principles should be applied to rationalistic behavior. While these epistemic ideologies purportedly inform practice, HR with its humanistic, abstract, subjective objectives, continues to exist within and in contention to, pervasively Classical Management organizational orientations, constructs and interests. Succinctly stated, HR as a subjectively based discipline operates within organizational contexts that contrarily utilize objective approaches in the measure of subjective performance. Inadvertently, this condition blurs the connection between HR's soft non-technical elements and its influence on organizational performance.

In recognition of this contention Boon and Van Baalen (2019) use their research to propose an epistemological shift that caters to multidisciplinary utility. They note a current specificity in the application of approaches to solving "real-world" problems and offer instead what they call an engineering paradigm which supports both subjective and objective concerns. Although this

approach is forcefully proposed on the strength of their researched information, Boon and Van Baalen's (2019) suggestion may prove illusory for "real-world" HR applications since it sets justifications for cross disciplinary and mixed approaches but fails to decisively assign equal value to subjective and objective measures.

Consequently, while assigning reasonably strong hypothetical credence to measuring subjective phenomena in theory, significantly less forceful acknowledgement or confidence is demonstrated in practice. Instead, criticisms levelled at indicators of subjectivity in the area of health care research, relating to quality of life and life satisfaction for instance, suggest that they lack comparability and comprehensibility, representing merely general judgments in retrospect and constructed in response to the prevailing moods and memories of participants (Macku, Caha, Paszto and Tucek, 2020). Further, Rothstein (1989) laments the derogatory connotations associated with the use of subjectivity as a form of demeaned measurement while simultaneously applying the common notion of superiority to objective measurement. However (Alaimo, 2020) in social science research concerning complexities in social phenomena, asserts that subjectivity is inextricable from any process of measurement, particularly in relation to social phenomena since the definition of phenomena itself is subjective. This assertion seems to equalize the importance of subjective measurement as integral to all phenomena, despite the feeble confidence awarded to subjectivity in practice.

Subjectivity versus Objectivity Measures and HR in Practice

In fact, the weakness of outright confidence in subjective measures is reflected in the practice of HR, such that most measures of performance give heavier weighting to the objective aspects of performance measurement (Calvert, 2017). Thus tokenized trust and credence is

awarded to subjective evidence, which remains in ambiguity with heavily instinctively based assessment, as is the case with soft skills (Zandan, 2019). For instance, in terms of assessing return on investment (ROI), both “soft” and “hard” (technical) aspects of Human Resource Management (HRM) are measured using the same approach and in the same way that the ROI for physical structure would be measured (Phillips and Phillips, 2007). Power (2004) notes a tendency toward mathematical calculations in areas of performance assessment, crediting this tendency to a historically complex urge to quantify and measure in a diversity of practical fields.

Thus, while there may be widespread acknowledgement that HR is linked to organizational performance, consideration of subjectivity as an indicative measure of improvements is not solidly accepted (Wijewantha, Jusoh, Azam and Sudasinghe, 2020). By extension, perception as a measure of performance or its improvement, according to the interests of this research, is not acceptably convincing for critiques of HR soft skills as manifestation of improvement (Onisk, 2020). Acceptance of perception as a feature of performance, runs counter to the objectives of ROI principles which are primarily concerned with counting of profitability and budgetary purposes (Onisk, 2020; Madsen, 2019). Hence, count centered approaches to measuring improvements, measure success in calculable profitability and not actual improvements, to the extent that soft skills budgets are first cut in favor of more easily calculated technical skill (Madsen, 2019). Thus, while it has become unquestionable that HR promotes improvements in firm results (Calvert 2017), improvement without tangible returns as evidence, keep HR’s worthiness questionable within the rationalization of ROI principles (MacLaclan, 2018).

Disadvantageously for HR and practitioners with soft skill concerns, this objectively inclined measurement of performance is not feasible particularly for public sector organizations which are not primarily profit making but nonetheless need improved performance measures

(Phillips and Phillips, 2009). In this case, ROI cannot be readily measured by calculable profits but on the basis of subjective improvements as perceived by stakeholders. In this regard, Phillips and Phillips (2009), propose a more value focused approach to ROI processes which would represent subjective variables as opposed to directly tangible objective variables. Supportively, Burton, sheather and Roberts (2003), give credence to a value focused approach to performance assessment by suggesting that stakeholder perception impacts their behavioral intent toward the organization. However, they admit to a lack of clarity regarding the extent to which actual and perceived performance affects judgments and behavioral intention of stakeholders.

In acknowledgement of the demands for subjective measurements of performance, Singh, Darwish and Potocnik (2016), offer their study in support of making a case for using subjective measures as a means of measuring organizational performance. Their study highlights that there are limitations of both objective and subjective performance measures and finds that subjective measures are potentially successful for organizational performance assessment. Singh, Darwish and Potocnik (2016), make the distinction between objective measures which are suitable for quantifying rationalistic purposes of finance, marketing and stocks while subjective measures find suitability for assessing HRM matters including job satisfaction, commitment and other HR related concerns. Thus, the research contends in making the case for subjective measures that these may be necessary not only because they measure subjective data but are useful in the absence of compatible, inaccessible, adequate data, which forces reliance on individually derived data.

Clear Link between Human Relations and Business Performance

Notwithstanding these opacities and contentions regarding measurement, nature, origins and issues surrounding HR, the academic and professional attention awarded to them, demonstrate

the irrefutable importance of HR and its strong unharnessed link to business performance. As such, numerous wide ranging studies spanning decades from the inception of HR to present (Mann, 1959; Hand and Slocum 1972; Saridakis and Cooper, 2017; Muldoon, 2017; Philipos, Buljac-Samardzic, Van De Klundert, 2018; Zandan, 2019), attest to the existence of a positive link between HR and business performance. Along these lines, Khan, Hoque and Shahabuddin (2019), confirm the HR to BP improvement relationship in their study of particularly “soft” HRM practice and performance within the Bangladeshi public sector. The mixed research approach with a convenience sampling of 142 participants, stimulated by taxpayer disgruntlement with government worker attitude, found that HRM interventions were commensurate with performance improvements.

Again, Rintari, Gachunga and Senaji (2018), confirm the positive correlation between HR and improved performance, in their consideration of Kenyan Referral Hospitals to determine the relationship between HR and organizational performance. Their research was conclusive despite negative criticisms over previously inconclusive results declaring lack of clarity between the two variables, that performance was positively improved across all Referral Hospitals and that there is a linear relationship between HR and performance, to the extent that, making adjustments to as minimal as one element of HR resulted in a 0.079 increase in performance (Rintari, Gachunga and Senaji 2018).

Perception and Actual Performance

Noticeably, most studies linking HR to BP, while finding a positive relationship, do not unconditionally consider perceived performance improvement as actual business performance improvement (Wang, Sunghoon, Rafferty and Sanders, 2020; Burton, Sheather, and Roberts,

2003). However, this study on the implication of its definition, holds that improved performance is based on the perception of stakeholders as a result of their comparative experience with the firm pre and post training. This perception of improvement is deemed to be actual since it is experienced as a result of consciously effortful, intentional behavior on the part of an organization's employees toward clients, post training.

Thus, while not directly related, a growing number of studies consider the value of perception to organizational interests. Among these studies, Janda, Trocchia and Gwinner (2002), sought to examine consumer perceptions of service quality within the internet retail industry while Flavián and Guinalú (2006), examined perceived consumer trust regarding security and privacy issues. Again, Ribeiro and Prayag (2019), studied the perceived quality of service experience on consumer emotions with Cheema, Afsar and Javed (2020) investigating employee perceptions of corporate social responsibility, in terms of organizational citizenship behavior. While these studies are not exhaustive, they all find plausibility in the use of perception as an indicator of actual performance, demonstrating an undeniable awareness of the value of perception and the worthiness of its consideration as a measure of actual performance. Importantly, acknowledgement of the role of HR "soft" concepts such as perception signal their clear link to potential business effects.

More directly, Giao, Vuong, Huan, Tushar and Quan, (2020), Use their research to examine the effect of the soft skill quality of emotional intelligence on turnover intentions, noting the mediating role of conflict between work, family life and burnout along with the moderating role of perceptions of organizational support. The study analyzed survey data from 722 Vietnamese bank employees and revealed that perceived organizational support did positively contribute to reducing work-life balance conflict, turnover intentions and burnout among employees (Giao, Vuong, Huan, Tushar and Quan, 2020). Further, the study notes that understanding service

industry employees' feelings and emotions, similar to the interests of this study, is critical since they are in direct contact with customers. The implication is that inattention to these feelings and emotions could impact quality of service and associated perceptions of the organization from both employees and clients.

Thus generally, HR's research preoccupations are centered on the clarification of its linkages to performance productivity and effectiveness vis-a-vis "soft" subjectively emanating phenomena, such as perception, attitudes, interpersonal skills and leadership (Guest, 1997, Dyer and Reeves, 1995). Indirectly but in agreement as pertains to the St. Lucian context, Wulf-Soulage (2017) asserts that education should be such that it aligns its recipients to workplace outcomes and focuses on soft skills such as emotional intelligence, personal, social, interpersonal and communication skills. Wulf-Soulage (2017) notes that at the parliamentary level declarations introducing a soft skills focused, Education for Democratic Citizenship program beginning at the primary school stage, is thought necessary as an entrenched long-term organization performance enhancer. As such within the St Lucian context, these declarations confirm the preoccupations with soft skills and evidence of awareness of an important undeniable link between HR soft skills and organizational performance. More so, the ability of soft skills as embodied in HR to improve BP.

This section focused on firmly establishing and clarifying the relevant issues relating to the link between HR and BP. Among specific issues considered from the literature, is the inadvertent detection of HR as an organizational performance contributor. Of seeming consequence to the HR Movement on account of its origin, is an unabated critique and uncertainty about its importance to BP, capacity to be measured within positivistically scientific and rationalistic conditionalities as well as HR's dependence on subjectivity. Notwithstanding, research evidence both demands and

bears out HR's clear link to performance but further informs the use of appropriate, preferably mixed measure that would adequately supplement the deficiencies of traditional Classical Management approaches. Having clarified the existence of a strong link between HR and BP, the next section deals with training. In particular, training related to HR soft skills and issues of transformability.

Training and Transformation

The Nature and Value of Training

The preoccupation of this research is to empirically inform the feasibility of establishing a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP) in St. Lucia, as a means of effecting nationwide business performance improvement. This chapter explores literature relevant to the aims of the study and the elements presented. As such, the last section considered issues related to the key component of Human Relations (HR), particularly soft skills and its influence on business performance (BP). This section considers the literature on matters pertaining to training and its transformative capacity according to the interests of this research and the foundation of the theoretical framework. Accordingly, matters regarding the nature of training, the trainability of soft skills, concepts related to training's transformative potential and the specific areas of training intervention for the research are examined. Thus, an inevitable springboard for the examination of literature resides in discourse exploring the nature and value of training.

Accordingly, training is widely regarded as a Human Resource Development (HRD) activity essential to organizational performance, productivity and the HRM function (Talukder and Ahmed, 2020; Govil and Usha, 2014; Smith, 1991; Chopra, 2015). In keeping with the high value placed on training, it is the subject of relentless academic and professional scrutiny as a

phenomenon of itself and on the basis of the various claims, contributing factors of its nature, effects and organizational implications.

Thus, in keeping with the value laden assumptions associated with training, Talukder and Ahmed (2020), Consider training as an investment in human capital development which is concerned with the enhancement of competencies, qualifications and knowledge of employees, such that these enhancements lead to performance improvements in both individual and organization. Moreover, Talukder and Ahmed (2020) consider the individual, organizational and country-wide gains derived from investment in training, to be more important than physical capital investment. Talukder and Ahmed's (2020), particular research interest focused on the HRM determinants of training and their effects on job performance, from which they found that harnessing the determinants lead to improved outcomes including job performance, employee efficiency and effectiveness.

Similarly, Govil and Usha (2014), in advancing the importance of training, assert the vital role of a "good" program to the performance benefit of employees and an organization's success. To support this assertion, Govil and Usha (2014) offer that training is activity with the consequence of learning specific competencies, knowledge and skills that are important for facilitating optimum social group functioning. Govil and Usha's (2014), particular research interest and investigative focus rests in the importance of training to organizations. The researchers relate that a gap exists between acquired skills and required skills as a result of inadequate fulfilment of training demands across all levels of companies. Resultantly, the wide gap between training need and training provision, has caused a severe disconnect in the interrelationship between training and performance as well as organizational HRM dysfunctions.

Notwithstanding, extensive research by Garavan et al (2021), indicate a strong relationship between training and organizational performance as made evident through their meta-analytical examination of temporal, institutional and contextual moderations within organizations. Accordingly, the investigation draws from systems theory and one hundred and nineteen studies across several countries, finding a positive direct correlation between training and organizational performance. Notably the study observes positive performance efficacy of training regardless of industrial sector, size or degree of technological immersion.

Additionally, whether training is specific to the firm or general in nature, did not moderate the relationship between training and performance. Thus while noting an increase in training investments beginning over two decades ago, Garavan et al (2021) also note a significant commensurate under exploration of the training to performance relationship and cite an inadequate understanding of the conditions moderating the relationship. However, Garavan et al (2021), confirm a stronger positive correlation between training and performance than within previous meta-analytical reports and that investments in training increases performance, notwithstanding seemingly persistent blurriness in the relationship.

Again, Chopra (2015) emphasizes that the training and development function is indispensable to organizations in a fast pace corporate world marked by continuous change. Chopra's (2015) pronouncement on the importance of training is accompanied by the advisement that organizations should ensure peak performance of employees by doing all in their power through delivery of relevant training to the individuals who inevitably determine the business' success or demise. Additionally, Smith (1991) views training as an aid to imperfect recruitment and selection practices and holds that the way to increase and maintain skills is through the vital activity of training.

However, despite the deep interest, expressed value and multiplicity of facets, training is not uncontested. Thus, Smith (1991) cautions that training has its limitations and highlights abstract quality of individual intelligence as one such area that no degree of training can increase. Congruent with the sentiments of Smith (1991), detractors of training's efficacy, particularly in relation to soft skills, take a strict definitional approach in proclaiming that soft skills cannot be trained. In this regard their operational definition holds that a skill possesses practical and behavioral elements such that they are applied practically to doing or accomplishing a task. Alternatively, soft "skills" do not meet the defined characteristics of a skill since they are characterized by intangibility and unpracticality (Andriotis, 2018). Thus, skeptics argue that soft skills cannot be learned or trained since they are not actually skills and provide no observable measure to determine learnability or trainability. Notwithstanding these criticisms, proponents of training counter argue that while skills training, is not without limits, it is also not without value as a contributor to organizational benefits.

Trainability of Soft Skills

Appropriately, discussion on the limitations of training initiates literature exploration on the trainability of HR soft skills with which this research is concerned. To this end, soft skills are regarded as HR related non-technical skills as opposed to the "hard" or technical skills in the HRM function (Doyle 2020). Further, the distinction points to the teachable and quantifiable nature of hard skills that would be readily amenable to training as opposed to the subjective, quantifiably challenging interpersonal soft skills including communication, emotional intelligence (self-awareness), attitude and leadership (Doyle 2020). However, despite the admittance of a challenge to training, many (Chamorrow-Premuzic, 2018; Hindiarto, Hidayat and Riyono, 2020; Hansen,

2018), support that soft skills can be trained, providing researched evidential support for the position.

Of notable interest is Ng's (2020) study which examines the perceived importance of soft skills training in nursing care. While this study highlights the importance of training it also considers the issue of "perception" of training benefits within a public sector service environment. The research employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches to determine how patients and their families perceived the care they received from nurses in Singaporean health care facilities (Ng 2020). The study supports that strong soft skills are essential to nursing practice and should be heavily incorporated in care training in addition to technical competencies. Accordingly, patients and family members perceive the soft skill qualities of reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance to be of extreme importance to the essentially people oriented nursing service (Ng, 2020).

While attending more directly to the question of the trainability of soft skills, Hindiarto, Hidayat and Riyono (2020), offer their study on the effectiveness of training in the development of individual's soft skills in organizations, which essentially sought to confirm whether individual soft skill competencies are trainable. Thus, the study utilizes an experimental approach which implements a pre and post-test of four hundred and ninety-six participants divided into an experimental group and a control group, using an untreated control group design. The results, after administering training intervention in friendly behavior, reveal a significant positive difference in the scores of the first of two pre and post-tests for the experimental group and no difference for the second, while no change is observed in the control group for either of the two tests (Hindiarto, Hidayat and Riyono, 2020). Significantly, the results confirm the hypothesis that individual soft skill development is trainable.

Additionally, Chamorrow-Premuzic (2018) notes an upward shift in talent recruiter's tendencies toward emphasizing soft skills. He points to research in which growing scientific evidence suggests a predictability in the relationship between improved job performance and training in soft skills (Chamorrow-Premuzic, 2018). Among these research claims are statistical indications that ninety percent of creativity training in the USA produce positive results and that sixty-five percent of large corporations consider leadership development the major priority for investment (Chamorrow-Premuzic, 2018). These declarations both reaffirm confidence in the possibility of soft skill training and stress the significance to diverse areas of training and soft skill application relevant to organizational growth and performance.

Moreover, along these lines, Hanson (2018) dispenses an assemblage of statistical information supporting the trainability of soft skills and its importance to performance. He divulges that research by Stanford International Institute in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon foundation find that the mastery of soft skill is responsible for seventy-five percent of long-term job success. Suggesting that the ROI on soft skill training is both qualitative and quantitative, Hanson (2018) notes Boston University's reference to a twelve percent increase among workers with soft skill training. Further, he alludes to the malleability of soft skills such as empathy, leadership and emotional intelligence, referring to them as highly trainable as well as transferrable across a variety of businesses (Hanson 2018).

Training Transfer and Subjectivity

Importantly, allusion to the malleability of HR training and transferability of its content across individuals and business environments, promote its suitability as an efficient performance enhancement intervention, amenable to intangibility (Muhammad and Kaur 2010). Supportively,

Jordan (2016) examines the intangible “soft” quality of perception in regard to training transfer while comparing the effectiveness of learning between face to face and online technical classes. Although the investigation proves conclusive in confirming evidence of transfer from both content sources to recipients as is more readily anticipated with technical skills (Doyle, 2020; Sahoo and Mishra, 2019), of greater profundity is that perception as an intangible is made integral to the interpretation of transferability. This is both reflective and instructive of the role of subjectivity in training and the effectiveness of its transfer.

Therefore, proponents (Gegenfurtner, Knogler and Schwab, 2020; Muhammad, Battour, Sundram and Othman, 2013; Sahoo and Mishra, 2019) argue that variables of individual subjectivities are strong determinants in the effectiveness of training transfer. As such, Muhammad and Kaur (2010) find from their study examining the role of individuals and training design on transfer, that subjective factors manifesting as readiness, perception of relevance and individual intention to use, are key influencers of transfer effectiveness. Congruently, but using a slightly different approach to the same end, Gegenfurtner, Knogler and Schwab (2020) capture a range of abstract, individually derived variables described in the term motivation, as significant to the effectiveness of transfer. Gegenfurtner, Knogler and Schwab (2020) further emphasize the subjective and abstract contributions to transfer by employing what they refer to as a Transfer Interest Questionnaire (TIQ) to investigate individual “interest” in transfer and “interest” in content as indicators of effectiveness.

Again, Sahoo and Mishra (2019), consider motivation to transfer training from the standpoint of individual trainee characteristics but more importantly their attitudes. In this regard, Sahoo and Mishra (2019), make the point that employee knowledge is critical to an organization’s competitive advantage, notwithstanding its rootedness in the experiences, ideals, values, emotions

and attitudes of individuals that affect the acquisition and quality of knowledge transference. Connectedly, there is growing interest in a range of previously unconsidered HR associated, soft skill variables along the subjective lines of attitude as well as their impact on organizational performance, trainability and transferability. Some of these emerging areas of training transfer interests range from studies in empathy training (Teding van Berkhout and Malouff, 2016), compassion training (Patel et. al, 2019) and Gratitude training (Noviati, 2017), to self-awareness training (Sutton, Williams and Allinson, 2015), Emotional intelligence training (Farnia and Fredrick, 2016) and Spiritual intelligence training (Ahmed, Arshad, Mahmood and Akhtar, 2016), all of which have proven through respective research investigation to be trainable, highly dependent on individual transformability and positively impacting on organizational performance.

For instance, in terms of empathy training, Beaupre (2021), while highlighting steps for the creation of empathy in workplaces, emphasizes the importance of empathy by suggesting that it is the key to performance maximization of employees. More pointedly, Beaupre (2021), declares that both comprehending and practicing empathy enables productivity, conflict resolution and improvements in interpersonal relationships among all organizational stakeholders. However, more importantly in relation to the present discourse Beaupre (2021), considers empathy to be trainable. This brings into focus the defining intangibilities of empathy which are grounded in an individual's capacity to recognize and relate with understanding to the feelings, emotions and point of view of others in a manner that fosters performance improvements (Teding van Berkhout and Malouff, 2016). Notably, Beupre (2021) emphasizes that these abstractions captured within the exercise of empathy are trainable and confirmed in the offering of steps to acquiring empathy which include, listening, questioning, judgment avoidance and recognition of personal and other's feelings.

Although equally abstract and subjectively emanating as with empathy, compassion is proposed as a trainable quality. In this regard, (Jazaieri, Jinpa, McGonigal, Rosenberg and Finkelstein, 2012), consider the cultivation of emotionally positive states in individuals in opposition to the previous focus of the alleviation of negative states, as was the preoccupation of psychosocially oriented interventions. Hence in research conducted within the field of Mental Health, (Jazaieri, Jinpa, McGonigal, Rosenberg and Finkelstein, 2012), set out to determine the contested clarity of the trainability of compassion. The researchers who define compassion in terms of its personally emanating qualities, as a consciously sympathetic desire to alleviate the distress of others, subject one hundred participants to nine weeks of compassion cultivating training (CCT), in a control and experimental group approach. Thus, the results of the study determines that pre and post training measurements confirm improvements in compassion among the trained group in the domains of having compassion for others, receiving compassion and self-compassion (Jazaieri, Jinpa, McGonigal, Rosenberg and Finkelstein, 2012).

While the “compassion” research emphasizes the point that highly subjective personal phenomena are trainable and therefore convertible into consciously practiced skills, it latently signals the idea that soft skills and otherwise perfunctorily acknowledged, personally abstract qualities, are impacting on the self and others. In this regard, the finding that trained participants demonstrated improved compassion for others, indicate a deliberately conscious personal effort to invest in the expression of soft skill oriented empathetic behavior as a result of training. Further, the Jazaieri, Jinpa, McGonigal, Rosenberg and Finkelstein (2012) study findings relating to improved receiving of compassion appears to indicate that compassion-trained individuals are able to attract increased compassion from others. Another apparent derivative of compassion training

seems to be an inward directional flow of intentional consciousness made evident in the improvements in self-compassion exhibited by participants.

These findings and their apparent indications relevantly serve the interests of the current study in that they suggest the possibility of perceivable improvements in abstract qualities as a result of training and by extension provides the plausibility that personally emanating abstract phenomena are trainable. Moreover the results point to the potential for benefit to others as a result of individually derived intentional behavior as well as the creation of mutually constructive interactional behavior and concurrent introspectively induced, personally beneficial behavior. In this vein Novianti (2017), directs attention to the religiously inclined concept of gratitude training as the development in individuals of a gratefully positive mental attitude and disposition of ownership toward life occurrences, leading to more calm and constructive approaches to problem solving.

Notably, Novianti's (2017) study which focuses on the reduction of job related stress in persons experiencing conflict between work and family life, suggests the trainability of qualities such as kindness, optimism and positivity as evidenced in persons who are grateful and employ these attitudes in problem solving (Emmons and McCullough, 2003). As such, the study utilizes a gratitude training intervention design involving one hundred and eighty two Indonesian public sector employees. Initially, the findings of the study indicate strong positive correlativity between work-life conflict and workplace stress, explicitly revealing that in the moderate to high category, scores among 74 participants show confirmable corresponding incidence of work-family experiences of conflict and actual job related stress.

Less explicitly but more in keeping with the interests of the present research, Novianti's (2017) study indirectly forges a link between individual abstract qualities and their potential impact

on business performance. This connection is made in the observation that tendencies of ingratitude may lead to job stress, which in turn may negatively impact employee task completion, overall organizational efficiency and performance (Noviati, 2017). More significantly however, is the abstract, personal nature of the phenomena in the name of gratitude, which is deemed to be trainable and productive of “gratitudinal” behavior, resulting from the development and adjustment of attitudes.

Thus, the gratitude training as employed in the study, utilized exercises emphasizing a cognitively focused behavioral approach, with training steps which included identification of erroneous thoughts, formulation of mental representations of gratitude, substitution of erroneous thinking with gratitudinal replacements and the application of gratitudinal qualities to the self in words, thoughts and deeds. Thus the driving takeaway from gratitude studies is that highly abstract, generally obscure person dependent phenomena, similar to identified soft skills, are trainable and are potentially impacting on organizational performance. To further this point, perhaps more considerably far reaching in terms of trainable abstractions is the idea of spirituality and the possibility of spiritual intelligence training (Ahmed, Arshad, Mahmood and Akhtar, 2016).

Accordingly, research by Khandan, Eyni and Koohpaei (2017), descriptively refers to spiritual intelligence (SI) in terms of a combination of an individual’s intelligence quotient and emotional intelligence which facilitates personal and social level reasoned interactions, in connection to a higher external power or deity. Taking this abstraction steeped definition of spiritual intelligence into account, Khandan, Eyni and Koohpaei (2017), researched within the Iranian health care system to determine the relationship between spiritual intelligence and job performance among nursing staff.

Particularly, the study engaged the use of questionnaire instruments as part of its methodological approach to examine the trainability of spiritual intelligence with one hundred and ninety-seven randomly selected nurses. The study found spiritual intelligence to be highly impacting on nurses' job performance with the accompanied recommendation that spiritual intelligence should be integrated to work based training for nursing staff (Khandan, Eyni and Koohpaei, 2017). This finding and recommendation result from the observation of attitudinal and behavioral changes in nurses and improvements in the support of patients after engagement with spiritual intelligence processes.

As such, the research concludes that training in spiritual intelligence assists in the improvement of nurses mental health, such that they are more responsive to their patients' needs, well-being and by extension, improve the efficiency of the organization. Again, Khandan, Eyni and Koohpaei's (2017) research, makes the point that abstractions, equating to the soft skills qualities of the present research, are trainable. Moreover, spiritual intelligence training appears to elicit actions that are personally developmental, interactionally enhancing and organizationally beneficial. Thus, notwithstanding the obscurity, vagueness or the identifiable commonness of a person centered abstraction, there appears to be the potential for trainability, regardless of the contested views, demands for evidence and challenges by critiques (Smith, 1991, Andriotis, 2018).

Indomitably, despite criticisms there appears to be persistent increasing interest and continually emerging evidence of a growing range of previously ignored person centered abstractions, toward a grouping of "subjective sciences" that are rising into focus as contributors to individual, social and organizational benefits which are harnessable and made transferrable by training (Teding van Berkhout and Malouff, 2016; Patel et al, 2019; Noviati, 2017; Sutton, Williams and Allinson, 2015; Farnia and Fredrick, 2016; Ahmed, Arshad, Mahmood and Akhtar,

2016). Thus, as with the current trend in the exploration of newly acknowledged trainable and transferrable person centered abstractions labeled as soft skills, some emerge to the attainment of more studied popularity and help to direct attention to more familiar grounds for assessing matters of soft skill training transferability such as Emotional Intelligence (EI) (Groves, McEnrue and Shen 2008).

Among the more conventionalized soft skills, the concept of Emotional Intelligence has assumed prominence by both educators and HRM practitioners, as a trainable and transferrable contributor to personal, social and organizational benefits (Mattingly and Kraiger, 2019; Cherry, 2020). Accordingly, in Mattingly and Kraiger's (2019) meta-analytical investigation regarding the trainability of emotional intelligence, they find from their results, a moderately positive effect between EI training and relational improvements which bear implications personally, socially and organizationally. More strongly however, Groves, McEnrue and Shen (2008) assert on the basis of their study on the development and measurement of emotional intelligence in leaders, that EI is deliberately trainable. As such, Groves, McEnrue and Shen's (2008) study, reinforces the idea of EI as a personally derived management of emotional tendencies for positive outcomes, is highly trainable as a soft skill that is highly subject to the dictates of training interventions.

Significantly, Groves, McEnrue and Shen (2008) emphasize confidence in the transferability of emotional intelligence as a soft skill, making the observation of statistically significant gains across all studied EI dimensions within its experimental group as opposed to the control group used in their research. As such, the researchers suggest a key role for emotional intelligence training in the development of leadership programs and initiatives. This burgeoning confidence among some in relation to the range of emerging and steadily solidifying list of soft skill oriented phenomena as being beneficially malleable and perceptively transferable, appears to

stimulate expansive thinking with regard to the legitimizing of soft skills as an integral, increasingly important component of organizational activity.

Thus, while trainability and transferability have been more legitimately associated with technical skills (Smith, 1991), organizationally oriented non-technical activity are increasingly acknowledged not merely for their apparent potential impact on organizational performance but for their amenability to training and transference (Mitsea, Drigas and Mantas, 2021). Accordingly, non-technical activity that fall within the ambits of soft skills are revealed to include personally emanating concerns such as developmental and emotional management, interactional areas such as interpersonal skills, communication, conflict management and organizational promoting skills that according to Mitsea, Drigas and Mantas (2021), many do not possess.

Moreover, in supporting the idea that soft skills are both trainable and transferable, Mitsea, Drigas and Mantas (2021), highlight them notwithstanding their unquestionable importance, as vague and ambiguous. As such, Mitsea, Drigas and Mantas (2021, p.121) offer that the difficulty with soft skills is the absence of a specifically established definition and describe them as a wide ranging set of intra and interpersonal or “socio-emotional” qualities that engender personal, social and work success. Congruently, Mitsea, Drigas and Mantas conceptualize the soft skill companionate idea of metacognition as a set of self-regulatory skills that enable successful individual responses to all aspects of life. The researchers, extend the activities and skills of metacognition to include Self-observational, self-regulatory, self-reflective and self-assessment behaviors, as well as abilities to make functional adaptations and modifications to cognition and emotion.

Although these soft skill domain socio-emotional and metacognitive skills are deemed as being increasingly essential to socio-economic success (OECD, 2018), there appears to be

corresponding increasing credibility in the trainability and transferability of soft skills (Hindiarto, Hidayat and Riyono, 2020). Notably however, and notwithstanding the rising range of human abstractions identified and investigated as soft skills, all of these qualities appear to be subsumed within activities demanding self-awareness, adjustments to attitude, harmonious interpersonal interactions and influential leadership behavior (Doyle 2020). As such, soft skill trainability and transferability seem to be dependent on and resultant in, intrinsically residing operations that stimulate personal changes for the benefit of self and others.

Transformational and Extra-contextual Viability of HR Training

Thus, while this study engages similar interests in trained HR skills transference and BP improvement particularly in the areas of self-awareness, interpersonal skills, attitude adjustment and leadership, it is also premised on the notion that these skills are transformational. Accordingly, transformability is both defined and catalyzed by the critical thinking, self-directedness and reflexivity oriented behavior encouraged via HR soft skills, such that an individual is changed as a result of engagement with them (Mizerow, 2001). Further, transformational learning refers to the change acquired from constructing meaning, both instrumentally by solving task related problems and communicatively in ways that sentimentality, feelings, desires and needs are met (Mizerow, 1991). Consequently, subjectivity in the form of quelling mental disequilibrium, thinking critically as well as challenging pre-existing assumptions and beliefs are important to meaningful relationships that transform and potentiate on an individual level (McCaslin and Kilrea, 2019).

Thus, Huang, Ford and Ryan, (2017) lament the static view of training transfer interventions, submitting instead that allowances for “within-person” changes that affect training and performance outcomes should be more deeply considered. This submission signals the

potential transformational ability and the probability for organizational impact to be situated within the control of the individual and thus be portable to extra organizational and social contexts (Marathe and Kakani, 2020). More emphatically, Mertens, (2017) stresses those involved in transformative research have the power to affect personal and societal transformations. Thus acknowledging an almost inflexible endorsement of the awareness of HR training and transformative activities that transcend their transferability to the attainment of subjective transformability and individual extra-contextual portability.

Additionally, Marathe and Kakani (2020) point to the innateness of HR soft skill qualities such as leadership potential as being nurtured by organizational interventions. These organizational interventions or processes, mediate the development of individuals, their resulting transformation and the consequential impact on all of their social contexts, including work and society (Mertens, 2017; Marathe and Kakani, 2020). As such, an important increasingly prevalent starting point for training interventions with interest in transforming or developing individuals to make an impact across organization and social contexts, is in the area of self-awareness (Eurich, 2018).

Self-awareness as a Foundation for Effective Interactions

Thus, the importance of the potentially transformational factor of self-awareness to personal and organizational performance is highlighted in several studies (Taufik, Fadli and Putri, 2019; O'Rourke, 2009; Kreibich, Hennecke and Brandstätter, 2020). For instance, Sutton, Williams and Allinson (2015), who associate self-awareness with positive outcomes in terms of life and general well-being, investigate whether there is any specific benefits of self-awareness acquisition to the workplace. They discover, through conducting training interventions and using

questionnaires to fulltime employees, that self-awareness is improved by training and positively associated with job related well-being, communication and confidence as reported by employees (Sutton, Williams and Allinson 2015). Supportively, these findings back the interests of this research in highlighting the potential trainability of soft skills, particularly Self-awareness in this case and its linkage to performance improvement attributes.

Moreover, Sutton, Williams and Allinson (2015), attend to the inter-relational influence of self-awareness by suggesting that it is a reflective higher order concept which includes the degree to which individuals are consciously aware of their impact on interpersonal relationships and their own internal states. Corroboratively, Yeung (2009) prescribes that initiating the skill of emotional intelligence, which encompasses identification and regulation of personal and others' emotions, demands the prerequisite of self-awareness such that a person is conscious of their impact on others. Hence, acquiring self-awareness precedes management, application and by extension performance related interactions (Yeung, 2009). Likewise, Caldwell and Hayes (2016), declare self-awareness to be the keystone of emotional intelligence which enables the selection of the most effective behaviors for working with others.

Importantly, while self-awareness encourages behaviors that seem to produce effective workplace interactional outcomes, research by Dishon, Oldmeadow, and Kaufman (2018) has gone further to suggest that self-awareness also promotes the capacity of an individual to display “selfless” or sacrificial behavior in favor of others. To this end, Dishon, Oldmeadow, and Kaufman’s (2018) research to determine the effects that possessing the trait of self-awareness has on perceptions of meaningfulness in decision making choices, find that participants of an experimental group, while making self-awareness driven choices of presented material, did not

make those decisions solely based on their own subjective preferences or “self-relevance”. Rather, participants who exhibited highly in the trait of self-awareness, tended to make decisions that were not self-catering but based on meaningfulness and concern for the greater good.

Thus, the tendency for self-aware individuals to base their behavioral intentions on meaningfulness or considerations outside of their self-served benefits (O’Rourke, 2009), coincide with the interests of this research in that HR training and potentially transformative soft skills such as self-awareness, facilitate enhanced organizational outcomes via the efforts of individuals toward the benefit of others. Instructively, while defining the concept of self-awareness Sutton, Williams and Allinson (2015), distinguish between dispositional and situational self-awareness. Respectively, they represent an individual’s tendency to strictly positively or negatively self-focus and an individual’s tendency to self-focus against internalized standards with the conscientious intent to modify behavior in relation to others (Kreibich, Hennecke and Brandstätter, 2020; Sutton, Williams and Allinson, 2015). Thus, self-awareness is foundational to self-directed contextually oriented, consciously demonstrated benefits to others despite personal inconveniences (Aronson and Reilly, 2012).

Although self-awareness assumes a trainable foundational role in individual transformation and behavioral interactions that impact organizations, Kreibich, Hennecke and Brandstätter (2020), caution that self-aware individuals are also more inclined to identifying obstacles. While this caution attempts to imply that the identification of obstacles is problematic, especially in relation to inwardly restricted, negative dispositional awareness that may hinder effective interactional outcomes, it merely highlights the importance of the individual in terms of contextual performance (Aronson and Reilly, 2012).

Thus, contextual performance refers to individually derived non-goal or task designated behavior that is contributed for the effective, successful performance of a work-team (Aronson and Reilly, 2012). As such, contextual performance encompasses subjectively motivated, organizational citizenship behavior, facilitated by self-awareness including, assisting others, defending, promoting and adhering to inconvenient organizational policies along with a generally positive and enthusiastic attitude (Aronson and Reilly, 2012; LePine, Hanson, Borman and Motowidlo, 2000).

As such, while the interplay of training mediated, self-awareness and transformation evoke subjective changes, these changes are made manifest on the group level in the demands for individually positive attitude and attitude adjustment. Agreeably, Marcinkowski and Reid (2019) posit that attitude is both precursive and predictive of behavior. Notably, although attitude acts as an indicator of potential or intended action, Grensing-Pophal (2019) introduces the idea that attitude is trainable by suggesting that employees can “build positive mental circuitry” with practiced focus on positives as opposed to negatives. This notion reinforces the developmental and transformational nature of attitudinal qualities. Further, the notion that attitude is trainable, links strongly to the idea that individual attitude is adjustable, particularly in favor of positive organizational outcomes (Murphy, 2017).

Although attitude is grounded in subjectivity as a psychological tendency expressed favorably or unfavorably toward objects, events, symbols or groups of social significance (McLeod, 2018), it is highly valued as a teachable soft skill (Tulgan2016). Moreover, several (Lay, 2017; Tulgan 2016; Mask, 2015), support the idea that employees can be trained using organizationally initiated programs to facilitate attitude adjustment and corrective anti-organizational behavior. In this regard, Lay (2017) asserts that training strategy for

organizationally misaligned attitude bears minor differences in training for poor job skills and considers good attitude as a job skill to be practiced until competence is achieved in the same way that hard skills are managed. Advisably, Lay (2017) suggests attitude training programs with clearly defined objectives but with more reinforcement than for technical skill development.

Apart from the trainability of attitudes which support the transformation of individuals through the utility of training interventions with clearly defined requirements (Murphy, 2017), research by Soomro, Shah and Memon (2020) sought to find out the role of attitude as a mediating variable to organizational performance within the practice of HRM. Their study using responses from two hundred and thirty-five randomly sampled participants from nine Pakistani public sector universities, confirmed a significant positive relationship between employee attitude and organizational performance. This confirmation does not merely solidify the attitude to performance relationship but positions attitude within the practice of HRM while emphasizing the HR soft skills role contribution to organizational performance.

Similarly, Ko and Smith-Walter (2013), study the relationship between public sector performance and HRM practice, with specific focus on the variable of attitude to work as a mediating factor. The investigation engaged the viewpoint of American federal employees and determined that employee attitude to work bore a positive relationship to performance. Interestingly, regarding citizenship behavior to be indicative of performance, Ko and Smith-Walter's findings, also capture the HRM practice concerns of high performance and employee commitment, noting that both the respectively tangible and intangible areas are impacted positively or negatively by attitude.

However, despite the empirically confirmed relationship between HR soft skills and performance, in particular attitude, Mask (2015) observes the scarcity of training, classes, college

courses and “how to” guides on changing poor employee attitude into positive attitude. Among other issues, this observation hints at the challenge of attitude adjustment within organizations and the paucity of clear strategy especially via training to harness the potential of attitude as a performance enhancer (Mask 2015). Importantly, Tulgan (2014) in identifying the manifestations of poor attitude, cite individual communication practice as its key indicator. Thus, in pointing to communication practice as the key revealer of attitude quality, Tulgan (2014) also introduces the notion of interpersonal skills as a factor in the HR to performance relationship.

Training Interpersonal Skills

As such, Febrianita and Hardjati (2019) find that there is a close link between interpersonal communication skill and improved service provision while Sood (2016) posits that individuals who have developed strong interpersonal skills find greater success in personal and professional contexts. Both Febrianita and Hardjati (2019) and Sood’s (2016) positions are informed by respective qualitative studies which sought to verify the link between interpersonal relationships and improved quality of group interactions. Congruently, Sood (2016) describes interpersonal skills as life skills used every day in communicating and successfully interacting with others. Importantly, Greenshaw and Denny (2020) highlight that professionals daily interact with the public in the technical or scientific aspects of their jobs but are not exposed to education or practice in the development of interpersonal skills, resulting in struggles to positively interact with colleagues and clientele.

Again, Greenshaw and Denny (2020) indirectly point to the potential trainability of interpersonal skills and its effects on personal, social and organizational outcomes. As such, interpersonal skills have attained cross disciplinary applicability as a means of balancing out a

primarily technical performance dependent focus in recognition of the increasingly emerging visibility of the value of interpersonal skills to organizational success (Murphy, Nestel and Gormley, 2019). Accordingly, Green and Burleson (2003) provide survey reviews from twenty-four variable industry papers from wide ranging personal, social, management and organizational disciplines regarding social interaction skill theory and the interactional skills required for public and professional life. The review unearths data reinforcing the notion that all iterations of social skill training are of essential benefit for the enhancement of trainee quality of life and well-being.

Similarly, Klein (2009) emphasizing the beneficial nature of interpersonal skills training, from a review of forty-two related papers, contributes that it is necessary for improving the behaviorally based competencies of individuals and supersedes their trait and personality orientations. More specifically, Hutchins *et al* (2013) highlight several required interpersonal competency elements of interest to this study, that impact interactional improvements including, courtesy, disposition to service, conflict resolution, assisting others and self-presentation. In particular, self-presentation is highlighted as a competency that facilitates the management of personal impulses, behavior and emotions, using situational knowledge to purposefully influence the perceptions of others (Hutchins *et al*, 2013). Almost companionately, social influence is suggested as an interpersonal skill competency that appeals and manages the perceptions of others, with the specific intent of guiding their behaviors, beliefs, attitudes and opinions (Hutchins *et al*, 2013). Significantly, both self-presentation and social influence, resonate with the qualities of influence and purposeful change embodied in the area of transformational leadership (TL).

Transformational Leadership and Transforming Performance

In as much as interpersonal skill components depend on influence, this attribute aligns with the defining component of leadership as influence and situates the necessity of leadership as a requirement for all employees by virtue of their interaction with stakeholders and capacity to influence organizational outcomes through these interactions (Chammas and da Costa Hernandez, 2019). However, of more immediate interest is the capacity for transformation of both those emanating and under the influence of leadership (Hughes, Ginnett, Murphy, 2019). As such, (Herminingsih, 2020) contributes that TL is a two way process that affects the individual dispensing transformative leadership behavior and the recipient of that behavior.

To this end, Northouse (2001) captures the intent of several seminal writers (Downton, 1973; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990) while defining transformational leadership as the creation of a connection with others that engenders morality and motivation in both leader and follower. Strongly represented in the characteristic of TL, is the importance of others and the awareness of equity in the parties of interaction for the positively meaningful outcome of goals. White (2018) expresses the inspirational qualities of TL that creates change for growing and directing the future success of an organization resulting in both individual and systemic development.

Consequently, the qualities of TL do not merely lend value to persons in leadership positions but are important possessions to all employees for facilitating organizational improvements (Marousis, 2021). Thus, Marousis (2021) refutes the notion that TL training is of leader benefit only and admonishes on the bases of research (Global Leadership Forecast, 2018), that leadership training is important for all employees. In so doing, Marousis (2021) implies both the value and trainability of TL, importantly citing increased profitability and organizational performance improvements as a result of training.

Therefore, the potential trainability of TL coincide with the interest of this research in terms of examining the feasibility of soft skills training in association to linking HR to BP. Further, the potential for transferability and transformability of soft skills as evidenced by the literature, give credence to investigating whether a training program consisting of self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and transformational leadership as selected representations of HR, is linked to BP. Whereas this section focused on training and transformation with regard to HR soft skills, the next section considers training and the public sector.

Training and the Public Sector

While this section maintains a focus on training commensurate with the research interests of empirically examining the effects of Human Relations (HR) training on business performance (BP), there is a movement away from training in relation to transformational discourse as with the previous section, toward the deliberations of training within a primarily public sector (PS) context. Thus, this theme's literature focus informs the particularities of the PS that impacts training including, the nuances embedded in its nature, its institutionalized perceptions regarding training and the PS's conceptualization of performance, particularly in relation to training in general and HR training specifically. Additionally, the section examines variables such as employee attitudes and motivation as well as issues of public sector training relative to the practice of HRM. Accessing the targeted understandings through scrutiny of relevant literature, begins with gleaning foundational understanding of the nature and value of public sector training.

Public Sector Nature and Value: Implications for Training

The nature and importance of the Public Sector (PS) in St. Lucia is similar to those around the world, in that it caters to facilitating government's work for the public by means of policy, redirecting taxes for non-commercial non-profit goods and services as well as trust services or the prudent stewardship of state resources for all citizens (Spicker, 2009). Among the key elements implied about the nature and value of PS in relation to this research are its interests in nationally beneficial instruments of performance improvement and social enhancement, along with its trending "pseudo-business" orientation of business-like practice paradigm, for non-profit and non-commercial purposes, which justifies the applied nomenclature of PS organization as "business" (Lynn 2006).

Notably, Schraeder, Tears and Johnson, (2005), offer that public sector environment and practice are becoming increasingly similar to the private sector, although Martikainen, Autere and Nurmela (2006) conclusively emphasize that performance objectives and approaches in the PS are dissimilar from those of the private sector. Further, they underscore that structures in the PS dictate its orientations, acknowledging that these characteristic orientations influence all areas of public sector performance, employee behavior and approaches including training (Martikainen, Autere, and Nurmela, 2006).

In this vein and with specific reference to PS training, Rajasekar and Khan (2013), highlight the importance of the PS as a bureaucracy and policy making entity that is impacted by the training and development of its employees. On the basis of these assumptions Rajasekar and Khan (2013), investigate the state and effectiveness of the training function in eleven Omani based government organizations as they seek to raise competencies within the national workforce. The investigation hypothesizes the centrality of training to public sector organizations worldwide and

nationally with its case study research findings strongly evidencing governments as the mandated establishers of programs and policy regarding training.

Public Sector Training Role

Similarly, Taiwanese researchers Chen, Hsieh and Chen (2019) use a pretest-posttest design as adopted by this study, to investigate whether public service motivation is enhanced by public sector employee training, finding that there is a positive correlation between PS training provision and improvement in public sector employee attitudes to service after training. The researchers examine 2057 and 2028 trained participants respectively in pre and posttests on key hypotheses including that, PS employee motivation will increase after training and that increased PS employee motivation is as a consequence of improvement in attitude toward public service work (Chen, Hsieh and Chen 2019). These findings support the importance of the PS as a training provider and that PS training influences individual HR soft skill areas such as motivation, attitude and improved service delivery within the PS. Moreover, Chen, Hsieh and Chen's (2019) study, stimulates discourse supporting the role of the PS as custodians of PS training policy and programs for service improvement and national employee enhancement.

In this regard, the government of St. Lucia, as the country's largest employer, claims responsibility and recognition of the need to improve the quality of public sector services through systematic training and motivation toward national goals as highlighted in St. Lucia's Training and Development Policy (TDP) (2019). As such, The Government through its TDP, accepts to take the lead in establishing initiatives to equip employees with skills, knowledge and attitudes required to achieve the highest performance levels, through its application of policies and the provision of training and development opportunities for all levels of public service employees.

Public Sector Distinctives and Soft Skill Training

However, although the St Lucia government has accepted its importance as a training policy and programs initiator, its training delivered through the establishment of a Public Service Training Institute (Peter, 2016) has been largely technical, not focused on soft skills and there is no implemented policy or program specifically related to HR soft skills TDP (2019). Similarly, in Europe, while the twenty-nine countries making up the European's Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) all accept state ownership of training policy and program, none have developed specifically HR soft skill policies and programs for its public services (SIGMA, 2020). In fact, Curristine, Lonti and Joumard (2007), highlight the absence of an efficiency enhancing blueprint for the OECD PS. However, notwithstanding the absence of an outright consolidated soft skills template, ownership and importance are generally reflected in that the bulk of PS soft skill training concerns are fragmented into various dimensions related to attitude, interpersonal skills, leadership and self-awareness across Public sectors in countries worldwide (Soomro, Shah and Memon, 2020; Kumari and Kumar, 2019).

Significantly, training in general and HR soft skills training in particular, while largely acknowledged as necessary, have been immersed in peculiarities and have not been uncomplicated within the public sector context. For instance, Martikainen, Autere, and Nurmela (2006), find from their study on improving PS performance that objectives and methods of productivity improvement are different from the private sector in that, PS performance is founded on the provision of public goods, social security and suppressing opportunism. While Interestingly, Ajmal, Tuomi, Helo and Sandhu (2020), acknowledge a post-facto paradigm in appraising performance based on quality of service within the PS such that quality of service is determined by clients during but mainly after consumption. Notably, the researchers Ajmal, Tuomi, Helo and

Sandhu (2020), remark that while functioning as customer focused businesses, quality of service in the PS is defined by client attitudes, comparing service based on their expectations and experiences of perceived versus actual performance.

Further, in keeping with PS complexities Martikainen, Autere, and Nurmela (2006), in the conduct of their research which derived its data from interviews with 73 high level managers from four Nordic countries, conclude among PS peculiarities that sector performance is not customarily or readily codified but quality of service is assessed on the basis of client experience and expectations. Additionally, Martikainen, Autere, and Nurmela (2006), identify PS structural underpinnings particularly in terms of bureaucratic encumbrances and the inequity of incentivizing mechanisms, to be problematic for performance improvements at all levels, in contrast to the private sector.

Public Sector and Soft Skill Inter-dependability

Thus, the peculiarities of the PS seem to bear commonalities worldwide (Mbijiwe and Venkataiah, 2013). Interestingly, recommendations to manage PS particularities internationally have also shown commonality with those proposed in the current study including, establishing relevant social objectives for PS workers, assessing public service delivery on perceived quality and defining measurable indicators of service performance (Martikainen, Autere, and Nurmela 2006). Despite the potential feasibility of these recommendations they contend with characteristically enshrined PS challenges but are optimistically workable notwithstanding the contentions, since they provide appropriately targeted non-technical responses toward harnessing the relevant abstract PS embedded issues (Jinju and Vijayan, 2018). Thus, Van Thiel and Leewu (2002), assertively advise that PS interventions must take into account inherent characteristics

including the development of systems capable of handling contested and multiple indicators of performance.

Thus, while several literature contributors (LBTC,2019; Kumari and Kumar, 2019; Jinju and Vijayan, 2018) confirm the importance of training in the public sector as performance, social and service quality enhancers, there is increasing focus on the public sector environment giving consideration to various aspects of soft skills training as influencers of these enhancements (Pickles, 2019; Nation, 2017). In this regard, Soomro, Shah and Memon (2020), investigate nine public sector universities in Pakistan to determine the mediating role of employee attitude on the performance of the institutions. The study was prompted by the poor performance of PS universities with indications that their performance is possibly tied to characteristically PS features manifesting in improper application of HRM practices, political influences as well as poor recruitment policies. Notwithstanding the influence of PS environment on performance, Soomro, Shah and Memon's (2020) study finds a clear positive correlation between HRM factors, particularly employee attitude and performance.

Significantly, Soomro, Shah and Memon's (2020) findings reinforce the link between HRM, HR soft skills and organizational performance but additionally point out that all types of private and public sector businesses need stronger dependability on HR related areas to achieve competitive and performance advantages. This points to the need for training in HR for the PS. However, while relevant employee attitudes are managed by more compliant forging approaches in the private sector, training successful HR qualities for the PS, may be dictated by sector driven attitudes and otherwise heavily dependent on individual attitudes toward training as well as associated HRM practices (Curristine, Lonti and Joumard, 2007).

Public Sector Individual and Stakeholder Dependence

Generally, PS employee attitudes toward work are not driven by the burden of private sector profit making therefore, employees' commitment to work excellence is reliant on individually sustained motivations to serve selflessly, or as a matter of ethical, conscientious duty (Hall, 2017). Further, employee attitudes to work in the PS are also influenced by the apparent lack or absence of sanctioning powers that are facilitated by deficiencies in accountability and transparency mechanisms (Shah and World Bank, 2007), which place more dependence on the individual as a custodian of PS effectiveness and performance, while concurrently vesting the outcomes of PS training more heavily as determinants of the individual (Mbijiwe and Venkataiah 2013).

Against this backdrop, Mihaiu (2013) exposes the challenge of measuring PS performance and confirming PS activity outcomes as individually dependent. Accordingly, Mihaiu's (2013) study on measuring PS performance presents a problematized context which attempts to balance transparency and accountability for performance boosting inputs, with intrinsically loose measurement mechanisms of the PS. Admittedly, Mihaiu (2013) attributes the difficulty of defining and measuring PS performance as a result of the complexity of its roles, additionally noting that most studies base PS performance definition and measurement, on external stakeholder interpretations, similar to the approach of this study.

Public Sector Performance and Soft Skills Training

In this vein and in acknowledgement of PS peculiarities, relevant literature supports the overarching notion of mutually positive outcomes resulting from the interactions between training and the PS. Congruently, De Waal (2010) in questioning what needs to be done for achieving high

performance in the public sector, proposes a high-performance organizational framework and posits that among the factors for success are excelling in core competencies pertaining to the intrinsic PS purpose of dedication to clients and increasing workforce quality. These factors point to the need for strong emphasis on interventions focused on employee skill building directed toward client well-being and the enhancement of employees through training and development, as avenues of organizational development for the PS (Jinju and Vijayan, 2018).

Further, Deshpande and Munshi (2020), more directly examine soft skills training and its impact on performance in service organizations, finding that soft skills training are more readily amenable to service organizations. The study enlists 600 participants from a range of service organizations including notable PS services such as post offices and hospitals in Belagavi India and uses a Likert scale questionnaire to measure the impact of a soft skill training program on performance (Deshpande and Munshi, 2020). Elements of the questionnaire extracted opinion centered responses from participants based on Kirkpatrick's evaluation model. Overall, Deshpande and Munshi's (2020) research, highlight the suitability of soft skills training to service organizations and the potential impact on PS performance, noting that soft skill training produced a 23% positive variance, indicative of soft skill training's instrumentality in performance enhancement (Deshpande and Munshi, 2020).

Public Sector Perception and Experience as Assessment

Although bearing indirect implications to training in general and HR soft skills training in particular Minelli and Ruffini (2018), offer noteworthy support to perception based PS performance evaluation by examining stakeholder complaints as an instrument of performance improvement. To this end, Minelli and Ruffini (2018), taking the approach that complaints are a

conceptualized component of performance and service quality, use their study to investigate how public authorities utilize citizen complaints as instruments for the improvement of overall PS performance (Minelli and Ruffini, 2018). The longitudinal empirical research engages studied cases from the same geographic area in Toronto, China, Italy and Scotland, with author administered how and why questions. The study finds that complaints are potentially powerful tools albeit imperfectly calibrated as legitimized PS performance improvement indicators. Latently however, Minelli and Ruffini's (2018) study serves dually as it implicates complaints as a possible outcome of training deficiencies and highlights dimensions of the societal interplay between the public sector and citizenry.

Notably, although studies and literature (Uwizeyimana and Maphunye, 2014; Ingrams, Piotrowski and Berliner, 2020) mark a global shift in public administration practice, from Weberian bureaucratic stringencies to a New Public Management (NPM) of uncomfortably blended adhocratic flexibility (Cowan, 2011), the primary goal of dispensing services for social good remains. Along with this, the assessment of the quality of delivered PS services continues to rest on the perceptions of experiences of clients about their performance and the interventions employed to shape these perceived experiences. Thus, PS HRM practice despite being contextually ubiquitous, relies heavily on manipulating, maneuvering and treating the individually intrinsic variables of human resources, including soft skills and training needs in order to achieve PS objectives (Sistare, Shiplett and Buss, 2009).

Further, discourse from research reports by the Partnership for Public Service (PPS), a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to improving governmental effectiveness in the USA, provide strong support for client impact on an organization's improvement based on their experience with service quality and the influence of self-derived HR skill matters. For instance,

one PPS (2019a) report notes that while there is increasing client services improvement in the private sector, there is concurrently and consistently decreasing positive citizenry rating of PS service experiences, leading to general lack of trust in governmental agencies.

In research supported by the hypothesis that improved client experiences lead beyond client satisfaction to organizational benefits, PPS (2019a) revealed from their focus on improving citizen experience with government agencies, that attention to improving client experience advanced the achievement of PS goals and positive perceptions of performance. PPS (2019a) case study oriented research focused on key service areas and agencies including security, passport, social security and tax collection processes, using online and face to face client feedback through surveys and questionnaires. Importantly, the PPS research report concludes that focusing on client experiences aids organizational improvement particularly in terms of goal achievement, and citizenry needs fulfilment.

Another report PPS (2019b) reinforces the value of client perception regarding the PS, observing the criticality of client perspectives in the improvement of PS services and by extension PS performance perceptions. The report suggests that intelligence gathered from data using client surveys and other feedback instruments on client perceptions are critical for informing organizational actions which may include training interventions.

Public Sector Enhancement and Key HR Soft Skill Trends

Notably, McDonald, Conant and Marshall (2020), in considering the development of a non-partisan model for developing PS leaders, propose a schedule of required training competencies that rely heavily on HR skill acquisition. As such, McDonald, Conant and Marshall (2020) submit that most high performing organizations possess a culturally intrinsic leadership

model, offering the Public Service Leadership Model (PSLM) as applicable for developing PS employee performance potential. The PSLM emphasizes two uniquely relevant governmental core values that PS sector lead employees should hold in terms of being stewards of public trust and commitment to social good. To this end, the PSLM frames four categories of competencies namely, becoming self-aware, engaging others, leading change and achieving results (McDonald, Conant and Marshall 2020).

Interestingly, each category of the proposed PSLM primarily emphasizes HR soft skill elements as necessities for PS enhancement particularly similar to the interests of the present study. For instance, the category of self-awareness requires qualities of self- reflection, integrity, emotional intelligence and continuous learning. The category engaging others requires the qualities of building relationships, collaboration and empowering others. Additionally, leading change bears the requirement of the distinct leadership quality of influence while the category of achieving results notably requires the quality of concern for customer experience (McDonald, Conant and Marshall 2020).

Relatedly, Jacobsen, Boellingtoft and Andersen (2016), lend to the present study in the conduct of their research examining the impact of leadership training on employee perceptions of leadership. Using a field experiment approach, the study engages a mixture of 474 public and private sector Danish organizations including tax agencies, schools and banks, comprising a total of 4,782 participants. The participants, all subjects of pre and post training surveys, are randomly designated to either a control or one of three experimental training groups, which focuses on the perceived effect of either transactional or transformational training modules (Jacobsen, Boellingtoft and Andersen, 2016).

Although the study focuses on leadership training, it makes several important contributions. Among them are that leadership training potentially enhances employee performance based on their perceptions of particularly combined transactional and transformational outcomes. Also, the study highlights the applicability of soft skill concerns and leadership training across sectors including public sector interests and draw attention to the importance of leadership training as beneficial to all employees as a boon to their perceptions of related training enhancements and performance outcomes (Jacobsen, Boellingtoft and Andersen, 2016).

In supporting the focus on training and its developmental benefits in the PS, Mbijjiwe and, Venkataiah (2013) lament what they sum up to be a tendency worldwide and in the Kenyan PS educational system, to focus on technical skills training even within the practice of HRM, calling the approach a failure, as opposed to what they term HRD skills more in keeping with HR soft skills. Mbijjiwe and, Venkataiah (2013), using a descriptive research design study 5,009 employees from seven departments and directorates spanning basic education to adult learning, as well as, quality assurance, policy, planning, support and field services.

After ANOVA analysis of questionnaire data, the research concluded that there is a deleterious inconsistency in the administration of HRD training posing a hindrance to employee performance against the mandate for PS employees to deliver expected performance (Mbijjiwe and, Venkataiah, 2013). These research findings support the idea of the irrelevance of public organizational type or location but strengthens the link between trained employee development and performance, particularly in the area of HR soft skills and specifically in relation to PS organizational outcomes.

Public Sector HR Soft Skills Training: The St. Lucian Context

Accordingly, St. Lucia's PS HRM practice as a developing nation, is similarly influenced by PS evolutionary progression, purposes and outcomes as other parts of the world. However, being both developing and formally colonial, St. Lucia grapples comparable to other formally colonial developing countries with PS structures and practices not entirely dedicated to its peculiarities. Notwithstanding, these vestiges have facilitated foundations for pursuing internationally convergent practices since part of the benefits of the colonial past is the training of PS workers and development of civil services as evidenced in the writing of Mbijjiwe and Venkataiah (2013) and their corresponding interest in the "changing global public administration and its theoretical and practical implications for Africa". Along with the helpful benefits of training and operationalizing of civil services the characteristics HRM and civil service practice are modeled in both form and experiences after the departed developed countries (Mbijjiwe and Venkataiah, 2013).

As such and expectedly, St. Lucia's engagement with training in the PS and public service organizational goals, is largely influenced not by its immediate circumstances but by the trending forces of developed countries (CDB, 2018). Thus, the HRM function has not grown extensively beyond traditional personnel practice. Training, particularly of HR soft skills, is fragmented into itemized areas such as leadership and emotional intelligence similar to developed countries but not as a consolidated holistic focus on HR as a large scale PS deliverable. Evidence of this is highlighted in the World Bank's (2012) administrative and civil service reform research which examines areas necessitating change in the PS.

The research, in its administering of questions relating to the HRM function focuses on matters of personal data storage, reliability of the organization's Human Resource Management

Information System (HRMIS) and accessibility of records. Questions on training seem to be perfunctorily represented in two items revolving around receiving and relevance of training within the past year (World Bank, 2012). While these questions obtain responses showing average to less than favorable responses, the more important issue of a mismatch between PS HRM practice and PS training objectives are revealed in the results.

For instance, with regard to receiving training of any type only 38% of respondents indicated positively, suggesting that the majority of more than 60% of PS workers did not receive training during the past year. Moreover, pertaining to the relevance of training, less than 50% of participants consider training to be applicable to their jobs (World Bank, 2012). Notwithstanding that these results do not pertain specifically to HR soft skills training, they potentially point to the inadequacy of training for satisfying PS organizational performance outcomes. This notion is revealed in responses to the question of how up to date participants think their ministry or department is in terms of international developments relating to the functions of the entity. The majority of respondents 57% consider their department to be only fairly up to date, 32% considering the department not up to date with a mere 10 % considering their department to be up to date. Again, these findings potentially indicate a lag in performance in keeping with global practice and PS purposes.

Albeit, St. Lucia in its Green Paper on Public Sector Reform (GPPSR), expresses governmental concerns of meeting its mandate of managing state affairs, in what it deems an ever changing domestic and global environment, along with expressing a need for change in its ways of doing business (GOSL, 2012). Further, the document notes the need for measures to promote PS performance and challenges the non-transparent post-colonial tendencies while suggesting a shift in culture from administration to performance management approaches (GOSL, 2012). To

this end, the GOSL sets out several objectives relevant to this discourse in seeking determination on how to improve performance of ministries and departments as organizations, as well as how to improve performance of sector employees. Included in the objectives are addressing issues related to performance indicators, development of interpersonal skills, improving customer service particularly in terms of client expectations, institutionalizing of complaints redress and training of frontline staff.

In keeping with present research interests, this section explored literature relating to the public sector and particularly HR training around the world, across organizational types and within the St. Lucian context. The exploration gives impetus to the hypothesis that HR soft skills training is an important variable in affecting and assessing the performance outcomes of organizations. Further, client perceptions of experiences play a potentially significant role in highlighting training deficiency such that these perceptions can be institutionally harnessed as indicators of performance. Significantly, organizational performance seems dependent on individually derived abstractions including motivation and attitude. However, HR soft skills training in the form of self-awareness, interpersonal skills, attitude and leadership, are valuable for improving business performance. Thus, the following theme focusses on business as social change agents.

Business as Social Change Agents

One important element of this research is consideration of the potential of business being used as an agent of social change (SC). In as much as the study empirically investigates the feasibility of a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP) as an intervention for improving business performance throughout St. Lucia, assumptions are hypothesized that training delivered within the context of business are transferrable with similar benefits to the social context,

making business a conduit and agent for SC. Thus, while the previous theme explored training in relation to the public sector (PS), this theme shifts focus to how the transfer of that training through the agency of the PS, potentially facilitates an addition to the mandate of government's responsibility to the social wellbeing of its citizens. The theme considers conventional roles of business and approaches to social impact as well as examines the implications for soft skills training as mediating in the alleviation of social ills. Further, the implications of culture on the potential for SC are explored in relation to Hofstede's dimensions of culture (Hofstede, 1983). The theme begins by offering the foundations for understanding social change.

Understanding Social Change

In sociological literature, social change (SC) is observed as cultural, institutional and functional transformations (Soken-Huberty, 2020). Other general definitions (Dunfey, 2019; Harper and Leicht, 2018) agreeably imply social change as a significant alteration in society's behavioral patterns, norms and values, to the extent that over time, the consequences to society are profound. Accordingly, the American Sociological Association (ASA) highlight Sociologist's preoccupation with understanding the processes supporting alterations to the structure and culture of societies and social groups, over both long or short timeframes (ASA, 2020). Thus the sociological embeddedness or dependence on social processes and the interplay of individual, cultural or structural dynamics as determinants of SC, fuels discourse on both the processes and instruments that produce these changes. As such, Form (2019), offers that SC refers to the altering of social structure by mechanisms identified in value systems, cultural symbols, social organizations or rules of behavior.

Thus theoretically, social change is conceptualized on three main foundational approaches, evolutionary, functional and conflict, which are all influenced by other predominant ideologies. Accordingly, Form (2019) posits that evolutionary SC theory borrows from prevailing 19th century Darwinian ideas on biological change and see SC processes as evolving into the norms of known social structure. On the other hand, the functional approach draws from the theory of structuralism which supports the existence of basic societal structures such as family relationships and division of labor, which dictate social behavior (Form 2019). As such the functional view takes on a more existential approach as opposed to evolving social phenomena. Alternatively the conflict approach builds from Marxist theory focusing on tensions between social classes which catalyze change. However, the conflict approach goes further to suggest that conflict is inevitable and that managing conflict produces social integration and change which reduces instability. However, notwithstanding the varying foundational basis of the approaches each depends on interaction of either internal or external mechanisms for effecting a SC consequence.

Interactionism

As such, a starting point of particular interest for the consideration of effecting SC, suggests that it begins partly with the ways in which human beings interact with others (Soken-Huberty, 2020). Thus, regardless of the foundational perspective SC is largely dependent on the interaction between elements, whether these interacting elements reside within one entity as may be possible with the evolutionary and functional approaches, or whether they are dependent on opposing external forces as with the conflict perspective (Wilterdink, 2020). By way of example, interactionism as a basis for enabling SC is exemplified in Matsueda, O'Neil and Kreager's (2020) study which formulates the problem of integrating theories of the self and rational behavior,

positioning them as indicators of how embedded individual decision making is within social relations structure.

More directly, Matsueda, O'Neil and Kreager (2020) argue along with Mead's (1934) theoretical postulations, that identity and the assumption of social roles guide individual problem solving tendencies that concretely incorporate social relations with social actions, while abstractly internalizing these social relations by assuming the role portrayed in the general actions of others. The researchers, using tests on longitudinal data to derive a symbolic interactionist theory pertaining to youth theft in Denver USA, find essentially that the interactions between the self and other social relations, influence individual decision making and the potential adoption of other socially influential models of behavior (Matsueda, O'Neil and Kreager, 2020). These findings lend support to the notion that interactionism forms a facilitating mechanism through which employees transformed by training within an organization, "deposit" the results of business training interventions, thereby potentially effecting social change.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Tensions and Contentions

Thus, there is significant interest and evidence of business functioning as agents of social change (Stephan, Patterson, Kelley and Mair, 2016; Baddache, 2018). However, although traditionally driven SC interventions take on socio-economic overtones much in the vein of Marxist class conflict equality issues, or fallout from the industrial revolution and technological advancements (Wilterdink, 2020), the economic element of SC has been largely generalized and not deliberately fostered on the intentioned efforts of business (Klein, 2009). In fact a reactive, often antagonistic interaction seems to prompt movements toward SC in which business seeks to derive benefits from their "responsible" efforts to effect changes for societal well-being in the

name of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Klein, 2014; McWilliams, Siegel and Wright, 2006).

Accordingly, McWilliams, Siegel and Wright, (2006), infer from their research interest on the strategic implication of CSR that corporations act in response to pressures from employees, governmental and other social groups in strategically beneficial ways to themselves and not necessarily through altruistic motivations alone. The researchers describe a range of perspectives on CSR implications, noting managers' and executives' interest in the consequences of CSR. The various perspectives are gleaned from academics and practitioners in the field represented by 32 papers obtained from a call for papers and then analyzed at a workshop including cross disciplinary discussants and authors.

One theoretical perspective sees CSR as integral to the firm and its differential strategy, thus positioning CSR as a strategic investment, producing returns that may not be merely linked to products and economics but to image preservation objectives (McWilliams, Siegel and Wright, 2006). Further, concerns of neutrality, a case in which firms disadvantageously receive the same level of profit in structurally equitable environments regardless of size, are evident in business decision to practice CSR. Additionally, sustaining competitive advantage is a key concern of firms and causes reluctance in practicing CSR which is seen as deleterious. Writings by Thacker (2020) and Kielmas (2019) cite a range of hindrances and irregularities with firms' CSR practice in terms of implementation costs to profit ratio, "greenwashing" or misrepresenting unchanged production processes as environmentally improved and competing with their own substantive business interests. Thacker (2020) notes the challenge of implementing CSR despite its importance, while working in favor of both business and society in creating goodwill.

Business and Social Change

However, despite the merits and demerits of CSR, which has been described as losing its efficacy, Klien (2014) strongly suggests an urgent present need for meaningful SC, along with the recognition that the potential for business to be used as instruments for SC is attracting growing attention among researchers. For instance, Stephan, Patterson, Kelley and Mair (2016), engage in research to determine how market-based business can be oriented toward driving positive social change (PSC). In an attempt at recasting how organizations relate to society, the study focuses on assimilating research projects based on stimulating PSC in the form of transformational processes that promote societal wellbeing. The researchers posit that transformational processes can be stimulated by market-based organizations for alleviating such challenges that may come with public health, education, inequality and other social ills. Importantly, they define PSC “as the process of transforming patterns of thought, behavior, social relationships, institutions, and social structure to generate beneficial outcomes for individuals, communities, organizations, society, and/or the environment beyond the benefits for the instigators of such transformations” (Stephan, Patterson, Kelley and Mair, 2016, p.1253).

Importantly, Stephan, Patterson, Kelley and Mair’s (2016) definition moves beyond the self-serving business implications of CSR and aligns more seamlessly with the interests of this research which hypothetically considers business as a potential means of alleviating social ills through the instrumentality of transformational training. Moreover, the researchers propose a PSC framework suggesting that deep level PSC strategies involving intrinsic motivation, social capital development and empowering structures, lead to pervasive durable and embedded, slowly evolving and increasing efficacy over time (Stephan, Patterson, Kelley and Mair, 2016).

Notwithstanding the interest and the confirmation that business is a strong contender for effecting SC, the literature is limited and mostly mismatched in terms of strategies for accomplishing transformative PSC. In this regard Van Leiden (2015) offers that planned SC representing deliberate attempts to alter social situations and strategies used to solve social problems, must match the conditions in which they occur. Unfittingly however, the conventional approaches utilized for dealing with social problems in the vein of this research make scant appearances in the literature. Instead, Van Leiden (2015) suggests several strategies in dealing with social ills, which range from coercion, persuasion and re-education, to rational, facilitative, legal and violent strategies. None of the strategies proffered align with the idea of SC as a product of the interactions with transformed individuals as a result of organizational interventions.

Public Sector Organizations as Social Change Agents

In spite of the diversity of conventional SC strategies that do not align with business being deliberately strategic suppliers of transformed individuals to society as a means of social change, some (Bies, Bartunek, Fort and Zald, 2007; Nconsta, 2010) contend that organizations, particularly non-governmental organizations and governments, should shift their strategy from a CSR approach to a social change investment (SCI) strategy. A SCI strategy on the part of NGOs and Governments sees social change as a product of proactive investment that is not business returns focused or merely supporting the initiatives of others but deliberately initiating strategies more inclined to individual and socio-economic development (Nconsta, 2010). This suggestion places governments and public sector organizations squarely as natural agencies of SC in keeping with their primarily service provision orientation and not for profit mandate (Buffett and Eimicke, 2018).

By extension, Box (2007) indirectly highlights the notion of the PS as a SC agent. He focuses his paper on PS practitioners who he claims have become consumed in the affairs of being economically efficient in the public administration environment. However, Box (2007) makes the point that PS practitioners are well placed to address matters such as social equity and they can do so through the administrative discretion they possess and through strategies within the ambits of the PS. In the case of social equity for instance, Box (2007) suggests the usage of legally available organizational resources by the PS practitioner to enable access to goods including education, decision making and infrastructure. Although not directly stated, these offerings imply that the PS through its practitioners can legally devise appropriate interventions through their agency for the alleviation of social ills.

St. Lucia's Social Change Context

As such, some of the social ills facing St. Lucia that may be considered candidates for PS derived SC treatment reside in the areas of homicide, suicide and violent crime, with 2017 figures reaching 30 per 100,000 population for homicides (Pasquali, 2020). Interestingly, the sources of these social ills rest in flawed interpersonal relationships as evident in the significant numbers of partner killings and suicides in relation to gang attributed crimes as posited by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (Hardy, 2014). Notably, the response by St. Lucia's government to the social ills presented focuses on strategies addressing the gang related and other criminally influenced social ills, with the enactment of anti-gang legislation, to the exclusion of inter-relational causes. St. Lucia government's strategy for effecting SC regarding social ills of this nature is similar to responses by governments in other countries which either exclude relational strategies or superficially implement them (Choi and Park, 2019).

Examples of these relationally exclusive approaches are prevalently observable in the literature (Guerrero and Urbano, 2020; Choi and Park, 2019; Hardy, 2020). For instance, the United Kingdom's Home Affairs Office in highlighting a new approach to fighting crime, suggest the government's strategy of local accountability, professional discretion, community engagement and efficiency improvement of the police (May, 2010). Apart from community engagement which merely hints at inter-relational action, no strategy directly points to the use of significantly soft skill approaches, particularly those derived from intentional organizational training for conscious SC purposes.

Soft Skills Intervention for Soft Skill Social Issues

Notwithstanding the gaps in the literature concerning governmental soft skill strategy as a SC mechanism, the value of HR soft skills as a relationship enhancer (Barnard, 2019) thus bears potential for mitigating the relational social issues with which the research is concerned. As such, Barnard (2019) in describing soft skills as personal attributes that determine the degree to which persons can interact well with others, suggests that these skills facilitate the formation of healthy relationships, conflict management strategies and otherwise socially acceptable behavior, essential to workplace, organizational and "socio-personal" life, meaning an individual's selected patterns of interactivity in relation to non-business social contexts.

Conversely, the effects of HR Soft skill deficits, particularly in terms of self-awareness, interpersonal skills, attitude adjustment and transformational leadership, are largely framed within the organizational context by several (Kinsey, 2019; Bain, 2013) and deemed to be deleterious to productivity, harmony, conflict management and collaboration. However these organizationally contextual framings of HR soft skills only provide indirect signals of its implications to the social

context. Whereas HR skills for social purposes are fragmented into itemized areas of consideration such as communication, empathy and emotional intelligence as opposed to a holistic body of HR soft skills knowledge (Tounsi, 2017).

Thus, in terms of crime for instance, Gates, Lippman, Shadowen, Burke and Diener et al (2016), suggest empathy as a specific skill for violence prevention. In their USAID report on key soft skills for cross-sectoral youth outcomes, Gates et al, (2016) observe that violence prevention requires the cognitive ability of an individual to assume the perspective of another, identify their emotional state and share emotional experiences. Further, Gates et al (2016) highlight among necessary social skills, positive self-concept, self-control and higher order thinking skills as important to violence reduction.

Importantly, they detail the contributions of each soft skill to violence prevention such that, positive self-concept equates self-awareness which enables resistance to violence and the ability to cope with the vicissitudes of life. Additionally, Self-control, as the capacity to regulate oneself is closely linked to violence prevention (Diamond, Gonzalez, Jennings and Piquero, 2018) in that, it fosters the ability to control impulses, delay gratification as well as regulate behaviors and emotions (Gates et al, 2016). Moreover, Social skills are considered as interpersonal skills that allow for pro-socially positive interactions with others and responding non-aggressively to emotions and conflict in challenging social contexts.

Along similar lines but more in keeping with the HR soft skills interventions of this research, Gallagher and Parrott (2016) investigate self-awareness as an intervention for alcohol related aggression toward women, in men who are heavy drinkers. The study set out to empirically investigate intervention techniques specific to aggression reduction and accomplish this using 94 male participants 21 years and older who drink heavily. Randomized testing of experimental and

control groups after the administration of questionnaires confirm that men receiving self-awareness intervention manipulation act less aggressively toward women when inebriated than the control group receiving no self-awareness intervention (Gallagher and Parrott 2016). While these confirmations auger positively for self-awareness training to serve as an anti-aggression measure, Eurich (2018) asserts that Self-awareness builds stronger relationships, promotes effective communication and reduces the likelihood of lying and dishonest behavior as reflected in effective interpersonal skills.

Challenging Soft Skills Intervention

Unanticipatedly, while noting the prevalent use of interpersonal skills training for preventing crime and behavioral problems among youth, Taylor, Eddy and Biglan (1999) posit that such training has found empirically weak isolated support as an effective intervention. Accordingly, Taylor, Eddy and Biglan (1999) derive their postulation from a randomized review of controlled trials evaluating the efficacy of training programs in interpersonal skills as an abatement intervention for behavioral problems on its own. Instead, a multidimensional care system is proposed on obtained evidence, which includes family therapy and classroom based interventions particularly for younger children, with interpersonal skills training utilized in a supporting role (Taylor, Eddy and Biglan, 1999).

In spite of the apparent downgrading of interpersonal skills training as a standalone option, to a supporting role in reducing youth aggression and deviant behavior, the disclosure does not discount the potential contribution of interpersonal skills to SC on relational matters and inadvertently promotes it as a valuable element in combination with other potentially curative interventions of HR soft skills such as self-awareness, transformational leadership and attitude

adjustment. In fact, given the high value placed on interpersonal skills within the organization as a promoter of workplace harmony and performance (Kaori, Makiko and Hideo, 2019), it reasonably implies that interpersonal skill enhancements made within an individual are also made portable to non-business contexts (McCaslin and Kilrea, 2019).

Culture, Soft Skills and Social Change

In this regard, Hofstede's international survey of 117,000 IBM employees covering 76 countries from 1967 to 1973, leading to his development of the dimensions of culture, lends insight to linking business phenomena to cultural inclinations, which may imply business influence as both a product of culture and shaper of socio-personal tendencies relative to HR soft skills (Belyh, 2019). The dimensions are labeled as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short term orientation and indulgence versus restraint (Kim, 2017).

Thus, among the six established dimensions, particular interest revolves around the cultural characteristic of indulgence versus restraint, since it depends on individual ability to exercise discretionary behavior in relation to others. Accordingly, indulgence versus restraint refers to the extent to which individuals exercise control over their desires and impulses. Weak control is considered indulgent while a strong sense of control and adherence to established social norms is accepted as restraint (Belyh, 2019). Thus, culturally indulgent societies present with relaxed allowances for the free gratification of basic drives and natural human desires while restraint supports the suppression of gratification through social norms (Steers, Nardon and Sanchez-Runde, 2016).

Therefore, the implication of indulgence versus restraint as a cultural dimension is that business and socio-personal interactions are potentially highly dependent on interpersonal skills and related soft skills. Congruently, Tounsi (2017) offers that countries are demonstrating increasing reliance on soft skills along the lines of indulgence versus restraint concerns. In this regard, Tounsi (2017) notes the United Kingdom's emphasis on interpersonal skills, collaboration, self- management and decision making among its most important soft skill needs. Similarly, Hong Kong and China rank interpersonal communication skills and leadership skills among its most desired soft skills, while Nordic and Baltic countries focus on the acquisition of greater negotiating abilities (Tounsi, 2017). These offerings highlight the highly interrelation and relationship building necessities across countries at varying levels and the demand for constructive, non- violent and minimally impulsive behavior among citizenry.

Moreover, the relational nature of the social ills in focus particularly, homicide and violent behavior, speak to requirements of individual self-control, delayed gratification and reduced impulsiveness as are implied in the dimension of indulgence versus restraint (Tkachenko, 2017). While determination of St. Lucia's dimensional orientation in this regard is absent from existing country comparison models and literature (Hofstede Insights, 2020; Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010), indications are manifested in the type of social ills represented, for placement in the indulgence versus restraint dimension and attendant HR soft skill interventions focused on development of interpersonal skills to mitigate against the expressed social ills (Tkachenko, 2017).

Relevant to the correlation between the cultural dimension of indulgence versus restraint and social interactional outcomes, Guo, Liu, Li and Qiao, (2018) study the influence of the dimension on prosocial behavior. They consider pro-social behavior as people's willingness to sacrifice their personal interests inclusive of time, money, energy and self for the benefit of society

and use Gallup's World Giving Index (CAF, 2019) for measuring prosocial behavior in relation to indulgence versus restraint. The results of the study indicate a positive link between indulgence and prosocial behavior, suggesting that people of indulgent countries, China in this case, are more likely to behave prosocially toward each other. However, this finding does not confirm that behavior in indulgent countries is not based on impulsivity which may be extended to other areas of action. Further, while a country may be predominantly indulgent or restraint oriented the impact of other dimensional factors may produce various responses based on the strength of their influence. For instance, Guo, Liu, Li and Qiao, (2018) find that higher levels of individualism improves the degree of indulgent prosocial behavior exhibited, while a higher level of indulgent behavior weakens the negative impact that a long term orientation dimension has on prosocial behavior.

In keeping with the influence of national culture on abstract, soft skill related behavior, Kim (2017) focuses research attention on the influence of national context on public service motivation in relation to the dimensions of culture. The investigation considers public service motivation from the level of the individual as affected by national culture. Employing data from the 2005 International Social Survey Program (ISSP, 2018), the study finds an association between national culture and public service motivation but particularly that masculinity and indulgence are positively related to individual public service motivation whereas individualism is negatively related (Kim, 2017). Again these findings reemphasize the point that dimensional interactivity influences degree of behavioral outcomes, prompting Kim (2017) to suggest the need to solidify the relationship between national culture and individual motivation through further research. Notwithstanding, the research lends basis to the potential for organizational and cultural

interactivity and potential implications for social ills and soft skills within the non-business social context.

As such, this theme examined from among the scantily available relevant literature, business as agents of social change. The theme points to the potential for social ills reduction as a result of individuals transformed by organizational training, applying the results of their training to the social context. The theme considers foundational approaches, suggesting that whether they are evolutionary, functional or conflict based (Form 2019), are dependent on interactions which necessitate the implementation of appropriate interventions to arising social change issues (Barnard, 2019). Of significant value to the discourse are the contentions held within CSR that may lead business to self-serving tendencies as opposed to taking on the undivided responsibility for social good. In this regard the public sector is viewed as a natural mandated facilitator of unrestrained social good (Buffett and Eimicke, 2018) and a potential channel for the supply of transformed individuals to society.

Further the theme explores cultural implications in specific reference to the public sector and its impact on personally derived factors such as motivation, finding that national culture does influence public sector employee motivation, notwithstanding that the degree of this influence is demanding of additional research. The dimensions of culture proffered by Hofstede (1983), also potentially bear implications for addressing social change issues specifically in reference to indulgence versus restraint. This dimension emphasizes the interrelational and prosocial behavior that may be attended by soft skills training interventions facilitated by business. This theme closes the literature review section and sets the basis for the following section which focuses on methodology and conduct of the research.

Summary

This section reviews literature facilitating an empirical investigation into the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP) on business performance improvement in St. Lucia. The literature promotes feasibility of the study by presenting both evidential contributions of the phenomena investigated, along with uncertainties and gaps in relation to the areas of concern. Overall, the literature signals a potentially positive correlational link between trained HR skill acquisition and business performance (BP) improvement (Walsh, 2017). These literature indicators extend to the secondary interests of business being agents of social change on account of the transformational nature of organizationally acquired HR training and resultant portability to external contexts.

As such, the review is segmented into key focal areas as dictated by the research interest according to Human Relations (HR), training, business performance and St. Lucia's context, with relevant attendant subthemes. The review rationalizes and establishes the use of training transfer theory and proffers a complementary theoretical framework foundational to the research's intents, providing the study with meaningful basis and guide for ensuing literature exploration.

Thus initially, the theoretical framework acknowledges HR as embedded in both Human Resource Development (HRD) and Human Resource Management (HRM) practice. This congruent comingling of disciplines support the framework in that it facilitates relevant training that is transferrable (Jordan, 2016), transformational (Muhammad and Kaur, 2010) and portable (Grohmann, Beller and Kauffeld 2014) while allowing discourse associated to improved performance, personal development and social change purposes. The framework is further supported in the literature as amenable to the HR training areas of self-awareness, interpersonal skills, attitude adjustment and transformational leadership that fall into the category of soft skills.

In this regard, several (Agarwal, 2018; Muir, 2019; Walsh, 2017) see soft skills as valuable, if not critical for organizational performance and personal development. Thus, Human Relations as an inadvertent derivative of Elton Mayo's Hawthorne studies (Reddy, 2016), focuses on the non-technical or soft skills aspect of HRM and is therefore individually derived, abstract and under the individual's subjective control (Doyle, 2020). Thus, while HR soft skills are deemed important to organizational improvement, its abstraction and subjectivity dependent nature, raises concerns about its validity, ability to be harnessed and measurability.

Along the lines of measurability, while there are uncertainties and arguments against the strength of the link between HR soft skills and performance improvement, the literature holds evidence suggesting that rationalistic measures are not suitable for the measurement of non-rationalistic phenomena and are therefore flawed in the measurement of soft skills (Power, 2004). As such, measurements including perception, as is used in the case of this study to determine performance improvement, appear to bear greater feasibility for assessing HR soft skill's value as a performance enhancer. Advisedly, the preferable use of mixed method approaches are deemed appropriate for supplementing the inadequacies of a singular positivistic or Classical Management measurement orientation which is deficient in capturing the strong researched links between HR and BP (Singh, Darwish and Potocnik, 2016; Rintari, Gachunga and Senaji, 2018).

Additionally, in clarifying the connection between HR and BP the literature indicates training Govil and Usha (2014), particularly soft skills training, is a significant contributor to organizational performance improvement on account of its individually transformational capacity (Huang, Ford and Ryan, 2017). Although the trainability of soft skills is questioned on the basis of its unquantifiability, evidence suggests that these competencies are trainable and further lead to transformation of the individual (Hindiarto, Hidayat and Riyono, 2020). By extension, there is

an apparent direct link between improvement in job performance and soft skills training which is declarative of the confidence in the trainability of soft skills and its capacity to grow organizations, enable job success and increase performance while facilitating the achievement of both quantitative and qualitative returns on investments (Chamorrow-Premuzic, 2018; Hanson 2018).

Another key point of elucidation emanating from the literature is the portability of HR training across contexts. In this regard, Soft skills training, because of its dependence on subjectivity and its transformational ability is considered portable since it is inextricably carried within the recipient (Huang, Ford and Ryan, 2017). As such, an individual who is transformed by training carries that training intra and inter-contextually as opposed to the merely transactional actions of a non-transformed individual. Thus, transformational soft skills such as self-awareness, interpersonal skills, attitude adjustment and transformational leadership are non-contextual notwithstanding that they may be gained within the organizational context.

Therefore, an important contribution from the literature in relation to the concerns of this research is in response to the potential for business to be used as agents of social change. Given the notion that transformed individuals can transport their beneficial transformations made within themselves across contexts (Mertens, 2017), business by their deliberate efforts can become conduits through which social change behavior is produced by soft skills training. Thus, becoming agents of social change. However, contentions exist among businesses who find it challenging to avoid the self-serving tendencies evident in CSR initiatives, rendering them unsuitable for effecting social change since it generally requires a non-profit seeking focus (Klein, 2021).

To this end, public sector organizations with which this study is focused, are seen as naturally appropriate for driving social change initiatives based on their governmental mandate

for stewardship of public resources, service orientation and not for profit agenda (Spicker, 2009). Thus public sector driven soft skill training interventions place the sector in a position to both improve its organization performance nationwide, serve as a model for private sector practice and contribute to the alleviation of social ills. As noted in the literature, public and private sector practices are growing in resemblance, as such matters of performance improvement and social change receive focus although both sectors are dissimilar in terms of objectives and approaches (Martikainen, Autere and Nurmela, 2006), while at the same time justifying public sector organizations being labelled as business.

Thus it is also noted that the public sector as business is subject to potentially performance debilitating effects of motivational and soft skill deficiencies but because of its highly bureaucratic nature and policy making responsibilities, is able to impact the training and development of its employees (Rajasekar and Khan, 2013). This suggests that HR soft skills training as a wide scale performance enhancing mandate remains within the means of government for exploration as an instrument for national organizational and social improvement as is the interest of this study.

Also revealed, is the dependence on interactions for effecting change. Thus, self-rationalistic behavior connected to decision making in individuals is largely determined by relations within the social structure (Matsueda, Oneil and Kreager, 2020). This interactionism based thinking is critical since it serves to indicate how interactions provide a mechanism through which individual transformations are potentially transferred as products of organizational interventions and how these interactions impact decision making and selected behavior.

Relatedly, interactionism is highlighted on the cultural level as signaled in Hofstede's (1983; 2010) work, which offers the dimension of indulgence versus restraint as the degree to

which citizens of a country are impulsive or self-controlled. This dimension finds a basis for the study in terms of the interrelational nature of social ills with which this research is concerned, including homicides, suicides and violent crime as manifested in St. Lucia (Pasquali, 2020). Thus the culturally driven perspective is instructive since it connects potential nationally embedded social structures with behavioral tendencies resulting from interactions to and with each other. Moreover, the dimension with its focus on impulsivity or alternatively self-control, essentially points to the need for the engagement of soft skills and the extent to which individuals are prepared to demonstrate these in social interactions.

As such, the case is therefore strengthened that soft skill based interventions are potentially best suited for addressing soft skill issues, particularly as a relationship enhancing strategy (Barnard, 2019). However, although the public sector is best positioned for establishing and applying such interventions, there are significant gaps in the literature indicating deliberate efforts by governments to deploy specific, national soft skill strategies to alleviate social ills thereby effecting change and addressing performance improvement issues.

Instead, the literature reveals a fragmented, unconsolidated and tentative approach to HR soft skills within the practice of HRM and HRD. In as much as there is considerable acknowledgement and evidence of the value of HR soft skills, its “unscientific” origins, immeasurability by rationalistic methods, subjectivity dependent nature and general lack of certainty about its outcomes, lead to tokenistic confidence and absence of wide-scale holistic programmed interventions (Zandan, 2019).

However, in general the literature informs several of the assumptions and concerns of this research. For instance, there is an evidently apparent link between Human Relations and business performance improvement, notwithstanding the lack of clarity and control over its outcomes,

which is often perpetrated by inappropriate measurements (Singh, Darwish and Potocnik, 2016). Additionally, perception as a measure is potentially feasible for assessing performance improvement, since it operates in the domain of the subjective abstract (Burton, Sheather and Roberts, 2003). Further, public sector business, can potentially act as social change agents, given the notion that training is transformational and portable to extra-contextual circumstances (Mertens, 2017). This idea presents research for determination within the St. Lucian context for the workability of HR soft skills as a social ills suppressant.

Thus the literature justifies the approach taken to empirically investigate the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP) for improving business performance in St. Lucia. Hence, the following section deals with the methods used in response to answering the research questions which include, HR soft skills training in self-awareness, interpersonal skills, attitude adjustment and transformational leadership as well as the use of stakeholder perception as a performance improvement measure.

Chapter 3: Research Methods and Data Collection

This chapter focuses on methodological issues in keeping with the themes discussed in the previous literature review chapter. As such, the chapter provides methodological orientation and data collection approaches employed in empirically investigating the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP) on business performance in St. Lucia. Primarily, the methods used facilitate clarifying and establishing a firmer link between Human Relations (HR) and business performance (BP) particularly, how training in HR as soft skills, can facilitate BP improvements. Secondly, the research and methods are designed to support exploration of the potential for businesses to be used as agents of HR related social change, through the transfer of HR based training provided to employees.

Research Approach and Design

As a result of its multidimensional interests, this study engages a mixed method approach to achieve its purposes. A mixed method approach employs the systematic, synergistic integration of both qualitative and quantitative data within a single investigation and facilitates a more holistic, complementary analysis of the results (Wisdom and Creswell, 2013). Generally, a mixed method approach is used when seeking to increase validity, test frames of reference, acquire varying perspectives from analyzing the same data and to combine a multiplicity of observed phenomena (Kpinak, 1999). Thus mixed-method research as utilized in this study, is identified by designs that combine or integrate quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches such that it could be considered a distinctive approach particularly suitable for the specific demands of the research (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007). As such, based on the guidelines of the expressed

theoretical framework, this study's research design represents both a specifically dedicated tool and the way in which the research is conducted (Schoonenboom and Johnson, 2017).

Instructively, Wisdom and Creswell (2013) while considering the integration of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in the study of patient centered medical home models, highlight among their five uses of mixed methods, two which bear appeal to this study. These uses are demonstrated in employing quantitative and qualitative data sources for validating findings, labeled as convergent design, while employing qualitative data for the explanation of quantitative findings, is termed an explanatory sequential design.

Agreeable to the specific purposes of this study, convergent design entails comparing findings from both types of data in such a way that separate, side by side or joint discussions could be made with allowances for converting qualitative data into quantitative representations (Wisdom and Creswell 2013). This convergent design approach facilitates the gathering of personally experienced data from participants while also allowing access to convertible data from quantitative instruments that support highlighting the dimension of quality. Thus the two data types provide validation for each other and create a firm basis for drawing conclusions concerning attempted research interventions (Erzberger and Prein, 1997), as is the case with this study.

Additionally, the explanatory sequential design entails the use of an initial quantitative instrument phase followed by a qualitative instrument phase, in which the latter is informed by data from the quantitative phase (Wisdom and Creswell 2013). For instance, findings from quantitative data derived from questionnaires, inform the use of qualitative tools such as focus groups for understanding how personal experience and actions match or influence initial findings (Wisdom and Creswell 2013). Corroboratively, Johnson and Christensen (2017), offer a complementary design labeled as quan-QUAL or qualitatively driven sequential design, in which

the research is epistemologically and philosophically qualitative but leads with quantitative instruments initially, in keeping with facilitating the purposes of the research.

Philosophical Considerations

The research approach and ultimate design are influenced by the adoption of congruent ontological and epistemological orientations. Accordingly, from an ontological perspective, which studies the science of being and the nature of reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), the present investigation tends toward interpretivistic inclinations which attach meaning and understanding to human behaviors and activities (O'Reilly, 2009), ultimately forming the basis of their reality. In this case, reality is interpreted based on how stakeholders give meaning and understanding to their perceived experiences with an organization.

Consequently, this study holds a relativist ontological position such that human reality is created relative to subjective experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Since a relativist ontology is immersed in subjectivity, the realities produced from an experience are individual and therefore multiple (O'Reilly, 2009). Accordingly, the research recognizes the potential for varying representations of truth regarding the phenomena under study and therefore enlists approaches and designs that capture predominant versions of those realities as informants of its interests. Supportively, epistemological orientations synchronistic to subjectively derived realities as valid constituents of knowledge are used to underpin the research approach and design.

Hence, epistemological alignment is guided by qualitative directions that point to the acceptance of validity in subjectively derived knowledge and awarding credence to individually constructed knowledge. As such, the epistemological foundations of this study also support constructivistic dimensions which uphold that meaning is created from the interactions between

subjects and objects, in which the subject constructs individualized versions of reality based on interaction with phenomena external to themselves (Moon and Blackman, 2017). Accordingly, the perceptions of clients, subsequent to their interactions with organizations, are considered valid knowledge in agreement with this research's epistemological leaning.

On the basis of its epistemological inclinations and the multiplicity of ontological realities from which acceptance of "truthful" data is to be derived, the study adopts a pragmatic approach to achieving its purposes. Pragmatism permits that all necessary approaches toward understanding a problem are employed (Moon and Blackman, 2017). As such, a mixed methodology is utilized as a pragmatic approach to addressing the varying concerns of the study. For instance, in terms of data collection, structured questionnaires are employed to capture data on quantities of clients on their qualitatively based perceptions, while facilitating quantitative comparisons in the post-training phase. Also, focus groups are utilized to assess employees' experience, the degree of personal transformation resulting from this experience and their willingness to act on the influence of their training. Thus a strictly "either or" quantitative or qualitative approach would not work well to capture valid information. A more pragmatic approach that employs what is necessary to understand and validate the type of required data is therefore engaged.

In similar vein, the integration of dichotomous perspectives is adopted by the research with its possession of both inductive and deductive elements, in which the inductive components are those which aim to develop theory and deductive elements which aim to test theory (Streefkerk, 2019). Accordingly, inductive reasoning moves from specific to broader generalizations whereas deductive reasoning operates conversely from broad to specific (Streefkerk, 2019). As such, since there is no existing data on the use of business as agencies for the alleviation of social ills as a result of their HR training practice, the research takes on an inductive reasoning character while at

the same time deductively testing the theory that training in HR soft skills improves performance in determination of the feasibility for establishing a NH RTP. However, the lines between inductive and deductive reasoning are somewhat blurred in that theory testing and theory development are occurring concurrently and interdependently within the research thus, supporting the pragmatic and mixed approaches of the study.

Thus, the stance of the research is founded in the nature of its concerns. These concerns are most reliably and validly explored, as enabled by the philosophical and methodological orientations adopted for the study. As such, qualitative concerns immersed in unquantifiable soft skills and dependability on perception, evade capture from purely positivistic, naturalistic or otherwise rationalistic approaches to measuring these phenomena. Likewise, determination of numerical pervasion of phenomena such as perception, require quantitatively supporting approaches and philosophical underpinnings that are aligned with ensuring validity in the measurement of the respective data. Notwithstanding contentions regarding the effective integration of methods as derivatives of philosophical orientations (Denzin, 2010), this research holds the position that a pragmatic approach to philosophical and methodological approaches are aligned to the nature of each component of the phenomena under study.

Thus reiteratively, the key purpose of the present study, focuses on empirically determining whether implementing a NH RTP would promote nationwide business performance improvement in St. Lucia and more deliberately accenting the relationships between HR and BP improvement in general. Among the study's purposes, is to explore the potential for alleviating the deleterious effects of national HR skill deficits on BP, by administering HR specific training to all employees of the public sector. Moreover, the study serves to highlight the importance of HR soft skill acquisition to socioeconomic concerns as well as serve the latent purpose of modelling a potential

strategy through which businesses are used as agencies for transferring HR training to the wider society for addressing HR related social ills. To this end, subsequent to the conclusion of the present introduction, the ensuing sections of the chapter include discussion on the population and sample of the study, research tools, ethical considerations and data collection. The sections commence following, with the research design.

Design Overview

As such, on the basis of the predominantly and intrinsically uncountable elements presented in the study interests, the research adopts a three phased, mixed method, qualitatively driven approach to manifesting and addressing the targeted issues. More explicitly, variables such as perception, willingness, soft skills and training transfer are not directly numerically measurable and are more suited to qualitative measurements (Erzberger and Prein, 1997). However, numerical measurements are useful for establishing quantitative assertions about the status of qualitative phenomena (Kpinak 1999). They are useful for verifying and initializing enquiry into the existence of phenomena (Erzberger and Prein, 1997).

In this regard the three-phased design approach entails a pre-training phase, a training phase and a post training phase. As such, the pre-training phase enlists the use of a questionnaire, polling exiting clients about their perception of the business's performance, based on their recently concluded transaction. This approach establishes a numerical or statistical representation about the characteristically qualitative perception of quantities of clients regarding the existing state of business performance within the specific organization.

Subsequently, the training phase engages employees from purposively selected public service agencies in an intervention that emphasizes training in the HR soft skill areas of Self-

awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership (SAIL). This second phase emphasizes the transfer and individually transformational underpinnings of the theoretical framework and resides fully within the qualitative domain.

However, the post-training phase integrates the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to corroborate, verify and establish correlational evidence, regarding the phenomena under study (Johnson and Christensen 2017). As such, a post-training exit poll is conducted with randomly selected clients determining their perception of business performance on the basis of their immediately concluded transaction. The post-training client perceptions are compared with Pre-training perceptions as a quantitative determinant of the variance in client perception about the respective business, before and after the training intervention. Additionally, in the post-training phase, focus groups are used to determine the experiences of employees such that transference, transformation and willingness to work in favor of successful interactions with others, for the benefit of improved business outcomes, have been effected as a result of relevant HR training.

Therefore, these design objectives are aligned with the overall objectives of the study in determining NH RTP feasibility for BP improvement as well as its hypothetical assumptions, theoretical framework, research questions and the guiding definitions of HR and BP. HR is defined as an individual's focused efforts toward self-development and self-regulatory behaviors for the benefit of interacting successfully with others. Improvement in business performance is considered from both client and employee perspectives and refers to improved positive perceptions of clients after interactions with employees, as well as the demonstrated awareness of HR qualities by employees, supporting the attainment of business goals.

Thus, the research design provides responses to the research questions, satisfies the demands of the theoretical framework and clarifies hypothetical assumptions carried in definitional implications of the relatedness between HR and improved BP. To this end, the pre and post-training poll comparisons facilitate a statistical means of quantitatively establishing the evidence of a HR to BP relationship and measuring extent of affectation and degree of variance in client perception of business performance, before and after employee HR training.

In addition, the focus groups serve the purposes of the research in that they gather qualitative data from the experiences of employees with HR training that corroborate and indicate correlations between perceptions, performance and individual willingness to act, on the part of both clients and employees. Further, the focus groups facilitate responding to the deeply immersed transfer and transformational assumptions supported by the theoretical framework. By extension, the focus groups enable responses which pursue inquiry as to the potential efficacy of institutionalized training's transferability and transformability for addressing extra-contextual HR associated social issues.

Several studies including Hindiarto, Hidayat and Riyono (2020), Jacobsen, Boellingtoft and Anderson (2016) and Chadha and Sharma (2018), have employed a phased approach as the most appropriate for similar mixed method research focused on qualitatively oriented soft skills. Notably, Hindiarto, Hidayat and Riyono (2020) in attempting to confirm the trainability of soft skills engage pre and post testing in an experimental design which compared the differences in scores between the two tests in relation to a control group and the changes effected by an intermediate training intervention.

More closely, Jacobsen, Boellingtoft and Anderson (2016) in determining the perception of employees regarding the impact of leadership training, administer pre and posttest surveys to

randomly designated training groups focusing on the perceived effect of transactional or transformational training programs. Similar to this study, Boellingtoft and Anderson (2016) engage the use of a randomly administered quantitative instrument to compare before and after training intervention, qualitative perceptions. This offers support to the appropriateness of the present phased approach to mixed method research which leads with quantitative instruments, separated by a qualitatively oriented intervention and validated by a combination of quantitatively focused comparison and qualitative focus group interviews.

Supportively, research by Chadha and Sharma (2018) bear stronger resemblance to the design employed in this study with their use of a three phased approach involving quantitative initiation and data comparisons with qualitative instruments in a post intervention phase. Particularly, Chadha and Sharma (2018) investigated the efficacy of training on tourism graduates' ability to develop necessary soft skills for success as professionals in the industry. Their study led with self-assessment questionnaires, consisting of primarily close ended questions on eight essential HR soft skill areas. Subsequently, a training phase on the relevant soft skill areas facilitated the third phase in which comparisons were made to preliminary data. However, in this phase questionnaires included a component of open ended questions facilitating qualitative analysis (Chadha and Sharma 2018). Ultimately, notwithstanding the results of the study which highlighted improvements in soft skills as a consequence of training, of more significance presently, is that the three phased descriptive research design of the study, proved valid for achieving the purposes of the investigation.

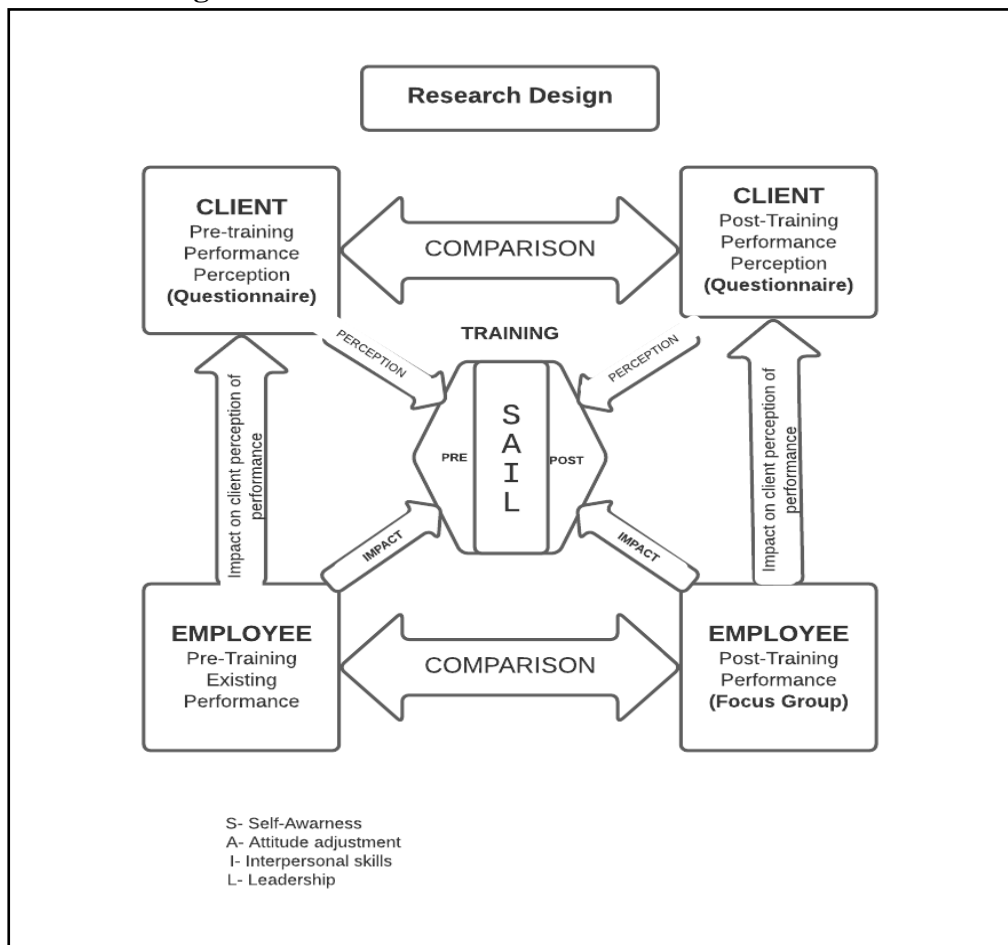
Design and Strategy

As such, this study assumes a descriptive sequential research design on the basis of the “how” and “what questions that it addresses (Toby and Kampen, 2018) and its phased data collection strategy. Also the design includes a latently explorative element (Salkind, 2010) on account of its facility for informing future research into agency potential as conduits for social change interventions. Thus, the pre and post training descriptive sequential design research polls two hundred and twenty clients in total using simple random sampling. Forty-four clients from each of five participating governmental agencies are issued structured self-completed questionnaires, immediately after transacting business with the respective agency. The questionnaires consist of close ended and Likert scale questions which each selected participant over 18 responds to in a designated area for privacy purposes. Participants are initially verbally solicited, informed about the research and guided through the process. In this first phase the objective is to gain client perspective on the performance of the business based on existing employee HR behavior. This approach allows for statistical analysis of the collected data and is conducted one week before the training phase.

In the training phase, a total of 40 participants, with eight from each of the five participating organizations undergo a one week, 40 hour training program in SAIL. The 40 SAIL trainees are purposively selected based on frequency of interaction with clients according to their job roles and under advisement from their managers. The selected employees represent a combined population of 800 employees of the five departments. These include the Vital Records Services Division, The Immigration department, The Accountant General’s Department, Department of Economic Development, Transport and Housing as well as The Land Administration Division. The training is delivered by the researcher in two cohorts consisting of 20 employees each at the government’s

training facility, while focusing on the transfer and transformational underpinnings of the intervention.

Figure 2
Research Design



The post-training phase consists of two main activities in the form of focus group interviews and a repeat of the pre-training client exit poll to 44 randomly selected exiting clients from each agency. These client participants undergo the exact processes as in the pre-training phase, one week after the training phase, except that they are not the same clients. The results of the pre and post-training phases are compared to determine changes in client perception about organizational performance. Additionally, the second activity in this phase engages the use of two

employee focus groups. Each focus group comprises 20 employee training recipients in a one and a half hour long discussion on their experiences with the training intervention and their willingness to demonstrate defined HR behavior. The focus groups allow for assessment of transformational and transfer effectiveness as well as thematic analysis of the collected data.

Population and Sample

The research design strongly considers population and sampling issues with reference to context, intents and nature of the phenomena under study. Contextually, the government of St. Lucia (GOSL) remains the country's largest employer, with a total workforce of approximately 9,500 persons. Employees range from 18 to the retirement age of 55 with qualifications ranging from a minimum of primary school education for lower level jobs and up to post graduate qualifications for administrative and technocratic functions (GOSL, 2019). According to the World Bank Group (TWBG, 2000), only two percent of employees function in higher level management capacities. Notwithstanding the range of qualifications, these are not standardized commensurate with job roles and employees' movement within the sector are "pseudo-meritorious", in that non-qualified persons may move based on experience, longevity within the service or political favor.

Moreover, there are no testing mechanisms for obtaining psycho-metric measures for prospective candidates' entry to the service, particularly regarding HR soft skills. As such, training in necessary soft-skill areas is provided adhocly after onboarding, with no focused, consistent effort to orient workers in these areas, since the HR soft skill to performance link is currently vague and "loose" at best. Thus characteristically, government agencies and employees are regarded as complacent, non-performing and without possession of soft skill qualities that drive the impression of clients. In essence, public servants appear to practice their own individualized brand of service

based on personal motivations and the public sector as a whole is generally regarded as an inconsistently performing, semi-dysfunctional governmental enterprise. Within this context, employees are not seen to be ‘pressured’ into high performance through effectively sanctionable institutional measures or aptly targeted training, taking on a persona that inadvertently integrates with the status quo and demonstrably characterizing them as largely untrained in potentially performance enhancing soft skills.

The public sector’s employees are distributed over ten ministries and departments and hail from constituencies across the island. However, while the population referenced in this research are drawn from across the island, only five ministries are selected for this study. Accordingly, ministries are purposively selected against a grounded theory backdrop, on the basis of the level of their employees’ direct interaction with clients in the delivery of their service. Also, the selection of ministries allows for convenience of sampling since, clients’ responses as to their perception of interaction with the business, are more readily accessible immediately after transactions with the particular agency.

To this end, the ministry/departments and respective employees include:

- The Accountant General’s Department – Cash Unit
- Immigration Department - Passport Office
- Transport Division - Licensing Unit
- Civil Status Registry – Vital Records Services
- Electoral Department - ID Card Services

These five departments drawn from the five ministries, yield a combined total population for this study of approximately 800 employees. While a representative sample of 40 employees with eight from each unit are used to facilitate the training and focus group components of the research. The

specific employees include tellers, cashiers, customer service representatives and front office attendants who are directly related to customer interactions. Both clients and employees of these five departments have expressed frustrations and disgruntlements throughout the years and staff as well as clients have assumed sometimes uncomfortable postures and impressions resulting from interactions. These interactions are captured in the Green paper on public sector reform (2012), as productivity reducing behavioral patterns, insensitivity to customer needs, inflexibility and slothfulness in applying strategies to improve service delivery.

The Accountant General's Department (AGD) falls under the Ministry of Finance and has as its primary mission to courteously facilitate the sound, efficient and effective management of public funds for the benefit of stakeholders. The AGD also envisions being the premiere financial institution for the exemplary delivery of government's fiscal services to the public, public agencies and the political directorate (GOSL, 2020). To these ends, the AGD facilitates daily public traffic at its offices as a representation of the government's "banking" services. Thus, the cash unit and its tellers are most directly involved in interactions with clients and are most likely to fuel agency perceptions from clients, based on these interactions. The employees of the cash unit are between the ages of 18 and 40 who have had little targeted soft skill training except for job specific customer service training.

The St. Lucia Passport Office (SLPO) is a unit of the Immigration Department which is within the Ministry of Home Affairs. The SLPO is responsible for the issuance of passports to locals and persons desiring to obtain citizenship in St. Lucia via its Citizenship by Investment Program (Bayat, 2020). The unit is staffed by a mix of police attached to the Immigration Department who manage the sensitive legal aspects of the process including security and civilians

who interact with the public in the initial and final stages of the application process. Again, no specialized HR soft skills training is provided to either police or civilian attendants at these offices.

Similarly, the Transport Division's Licensing Unit, facilitates the payment of all vehicular licensing transactions, driver's license acquisition and vehicle registrations. The ministry's mission and vision promote a desire to create a sustainable socioeconomic growth environment through infrastructural pursuits and development of regulatory frameworks that caters to the diverse needs of stakeholders, with a professional cadre of employees (GOSL, 2020). Although the ministry hints at social interests and satisfaction of stakeholder needs, it predominantly emphasizes the technical aspects of its mandate. Thus, employees of this department, in particular the Cash Unit, performing the role of tellers, attendants and cashiers, are employed from the general pool of public servants performing these roles and not necessarily trained in HR soft skills notwithstanding their immersion in a technical environment. These offices are therefore characterized by long lines for service, long waiting periods and employees who employ personalized dispositions for handling disgruntlements.

In terms of high pressure and disgruntlement, the Civil Service Registry and its Vital Records Unit, have faced immense challenges with client satisfaction and service delivery, which placed the "performance image" of the department into question (Harris, 2013). In spite of the department's mission, which captures the intention to promote innovative solutions in the handling of vital records and services to families, with attention to correctness and timeliness, the agency has been under public scrutiny for inaccuracies and significant delays in the delivery of documents (Harris, 2013). The department has undergone major changes both physically and operationally in an attempt to rectify these issues. Although the St. Lucia Human Rights Report (2018), highlight the timely processing of documents by the department, particularly birth certificates, the residual

effect of prior circumstances facilitates skeptical and strained interactions between employees and clients of the department. The employees largely serve as attendants to applicants for vital records documents.

Included among the participants for this study are attendants from the Electoral Department's Identification (ID) Card Unit. This Unit plays a critical role in the issuance of both national ID cards and non-electoral cards. According to the St. Lucia Electoral Department (2020a), these cards are necessary for voting at elections, obtaining passports and birth certificates, as well as travelling, medical use and business transactions. Thus, as a matter of objectivizing these requirements the department seeks to ensure the comprehensive registration of every eligible citizen, enabling their democratic rights. Further, the department envisions the cultivation of confidences in the electoral and other processes through impartial and professional practice of its workforce (St. Lucia Electoral Department 2020b).

While these departmental objectives are expressed, the sensitivity and life impacting significance of the ID card acquisition process often produces client anxiety, especially among those whose circumstances may not be straightforward or those who may have encountered less than favorable experiences at related agencies. For instance, it is necessary to obtain a birth certificate at the Civil Status Registry, as part of the requirements for obtaining an ID card. Often there are crowds and extended delays at the department which places pressure on attendants to adopt coping dispositions and emphasizes the potential need for HR soft skill training.

Generally, all the departments and employees are selected based on their commonalities in terms of direct service to the public and the opportunities for exercising HR soft skills based experiences, sensitivities and pressures of the job role. Accordingly, citizens consider matters of finance, civil registration, passport, licensing and national ID acquisition, of utmost importance

and therefore adopt dispositional tendencies that influence interactions with employees. These employees in turn, develop individualized dispositional responses to clients, in the absence of focused training, which potentially influence their perceptions about agency performance. Thus the population and sample for the study are characterized by the commonalities highlighted and shaped by interactions within the public sector.

Sample Specifics

The sample for the study is drawn from two strata. Namely, employees and clients, each representing its own population dimension of public sector employees and public sector clients respectively but combining to represent the perception and performance improvement concerns of the public sector as a whole. Thus, the combined sample of 260 of which 40 are employees and 220 clients are selected as representative of both population subgroupings. These subgroupings are 800 employees of the targeted participating departments and an unknown quantity of public sector clients from an in-country population of approximately 170,000.

Although the study's sampling technique is purposively inclined, it engages supporting statistical techniques to guide the determination of its sample size. Thus, the sample size is determined using statistical tables for population sizes by Yamane (1967) based on the formula $SS = (1.96)^2 \times .5 \times (1-.5) / (.05)^2$. In this formula 1.96 represents a Z score or confidence level of 95%, with a standard deviation of .5 and confidence interval or margin of error of +/- 5% (.05). Accordingly, with a population from the combined total of the five participating organizations of approximately 800, a sample size of 260 participants is deemed adequate.

Interestingly, a study by The World Bank Group (TWBG, 2000) on administrative and civil service reform in six Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) territories including

St. Lucia, employed a total “ideal” sample size of 750, which was divided pro-rata among the six countries. While the study included examination of some aspects similar to this research such as perceptions of donor agents, worker efficiency, employee morale, training and performance, it determined its total population from a combined OECS public sector total of 21,694 employees. From this figure, 5,982 represented the public service population of St. Lucia in the year 1999 and an ideal sample size for this number on the pro-rated basis was 160, of which only 125 responses were received. Thus, using the TWBG (2000) sample size as a gauge for this research according to the formula utilized here, a sample size of 260 for a subpopulation size of 800 allows for significant saturation, confidence and validity of data at analysis.

Moreover, while the combined representative population of the five departments is approximately 800, the population of each participating departmental unit within the study is considerably small, with each numbering less than 50 persons. As such according to the sampling formula adopted from Yamane (1967), a population of 49 requires a sample size of 44 persons. Hence, a client sample of 44 for each of the five representative units, is deemed adequate for achieving the necessary validity of results from the data collection process.

The sampling method for this study is primarily purposive. As such, this non-probabilistic, qualitatively aligned approach, uses the researcher’s judgment in selecting participants that suit the purposes of the research (Etikan, 2016). In this case, participating public sector agencies and employees are selected based on their level of direct interaction with the public. Accordingly, as a nonrandom technique, purposive sampling is not reliant or constrained by prescribed numerical quotas of participants but depends on finding participants who can deliver what needs to be known (Etikan, 2016). As such, 40 employee participants representing eight from each of the five departmental units are selected on the bases of their experiences and knowledge regarding the

research concerns. This number, though not based on prescription is considered adequate for gaining saturation during analysis of focus group interviews and management of the interviews.

Additionally, the employee sample includes primarily women who are more readily assigned the highlighted work roles within the public service, or who as a matter of traditionally established gender roles gravitate toward these areas of work. All participants possess a minimum of secondary to post-secondary education and up to the Bachelor's level. Moreover, client participants ranging in tenure of three or more years are engaged, so that their knowledge and experience with the targeted data is sufficiently entrenched in their patterns of practice. Thus the population and sample are aligned with the data objectives, material and instrumentation of the research's tools.

Research Tools and Instrumentation

This study utilizes questionnaires and focus group interviews as the key tools for gathering data, along with participant training evaluation feedback emanating directly from the training component of the research. Notably, several studies (Hand and Slocum 1972; Chen, Hsieh and Chen 2019; Ajmal, Tuomi, Helo, Sandhu, 2020) pursuing generally similar HR aims to this research, engaged instruments and approaches that are not directly applicable for usage in this study. For instance, among the closest studies is Hand and Slocum's (1972) research which sought to evaluate whether managerial training in human relations could change attitudes and by extension organizational effectiveness, enlisted Fleishman's (1960) Leadership Opinion Questionnaire (LOQ) as a two dimensional measure of leadership attitudes among managerial trainees.

However, the measures focused on concern for human relationships at work and concern for the job. Distinguishably, this research transcends the human relationship and job concerns,

relying instead on a four dimensional measurement focus on client perception about business performance, employee personal adjustment for the improvement of others, the potential for business to be used as an agency for social change and the determination of feasibility for the implementation of a NH RTP. This makes Fleishman's (1960) LOQ and similar "pre-packaged" research specific tools, inadequate for use in this research.

Similarly, Chen, Hsieh and Chen (2019) while employing a pretest-posttest design to investigate the relationship between public service motivation and its enhancement through training, use a case study of onboarding in Taiwan along with pre and post training questionnaires specific to their research questions and contexts but unusable for the interests of this study because of its specificity and targeted data. Likewise, Ajmal, Tuomi, Helo, and Sandhu (2020), in their quest to consider the application of soft skill aspects of Total Quality Management (TQM) to the public sector, employed semi-structured interviews that were dedicated to the cases under investigation. Again, notwithstanding the resemblance of interests between this and other cited studies, the specificity of each allow only for the design of dedicated tools and do not lend appropriate data gathering tools for this research. In this vein, the tools employed in this study are dedicated to effecting reliability and validity of data specific and relevant to targeted outcomes.

Questionnaire

Thus, the research employs a specifically dedicated structured questionnaire focused on client perception of the business's performance and the experience of clients with the business. The questionnaire contains sixteen questions, with the first fifteen being close ended and requiring orally approached clients to place an 'X' next to a mainly YES or NO response, in agreement with their perception or experience with the business and to ensure that their responses are restricted to

these research interests. The sixteenth question is divided into a six part tabular format, using a five point Likert scale rating from very poor, valued at one, to very good, assigned a value of five. While question sixteen continues the focus on perception and experience of clients, each of the six sub-questions solicits an overall rating. This overall ratings approach serves as an integrated mechanism for ensuring internal consistency, validity and verifying congruity of responses for questions one through fifteen. Additionally, five of the first 15 questions are focused on indicating client perception based on psychological consideration, eight on client perception based on social interaction and three on both psychological consideration and social interaction. The ratings matrix of the sixteenth question, contains indicators for overall perception, including psychological, interactional and shared, with an allotment of two sub-questions as indicators for each factor.

As such, matters of internal and construct validity, which allows that the combination of items within a questionnaire, accurately represent the intended underlying construct, are addressed with the engagement of factor analysis principles. Thus, the intention is that the combined total of questionnaire items elicit responses that sufficiently indicate perception and experience of clients. Accommodatingly, explorative factor analysis accomplishes the detection of correlated variables underlying a data set, such as the items of the questionnaire in use for this research. In opposition, principal component analysis which offers a commonly used alternative for questionnaire testing, assumes that all variance within a data set is shared. However, factor analysis facilitates less “valency” and thus more reliable evaluation of questionnaires (Costello and Osborne, 2005).

Generally, a guideline for the application of factor analysis principles, suggests that the greater the sample size responding to each item, the greater the potential for confirmation of the imputed factor (Field, 2009). Moreover, a ten to fifteen guide in terms of quantity of respondents per item is required for adequate evaluation of questionnaires according to factor analysis

principles. Thus in this case, each item exceeds the number of required respondents by more than 100%, since the expected response rate is over 40 participants per public sector organization and over 200 in total. This also helps to corroborate the adequacy of sample size when considered in conjunction with the Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, which assists in forecasting whether a sample size is large enough for reliable factor extraction (Field, 2009).

Thus, the aim of exploratory factor analysis principles as adopted by this research is to ensure significant or strong loading in each distinctive factor while minimizing to an almost zero loading for all other potential factors with a highly acceptable cut off point in the upper level of the .33 to .55 range (Swisher, Beckstead and Bebeau, 2004) as suggested by the KMO and which this research's questionnaire meets and surpasses.

Additionally, identical questionnaires are used in both the pre-training and post-training phases of the study, one week before and one week after training. Clients exiting relevant businesses are engaged for approximately ten minutes in completing the "Public Service Performance Survey" (PSPS) questionnaire, in a designated minimally distractive area of the premises. Clients respond to questions seeking to determine their perception of the business in general and the perception of the business based on their experience, as indicative of business performance. As such, the PSPS is aligned to research questions RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 and hypotheses H1, H2 and H3. Thus, the questionnaire items are posed to draw out these perceptions and experiences focused on, eagerness to engage with the business, impressions of the institution, ease of interaction, treatment by employees, helpfulness of employees, nature of transaction and prior interaction.

The pre-training questionnaire scheduling phase is arranged for a commencement date of January 4th, 2021 to last five days while the post-training questionnaire phase was arranged to

commence January 25th, 2021 also proposing to last for five days, at an estimated rate of one day for each public sector organization. Employees are not apprised of the PSPS and partially “blind” study approach is used to avoid biases and change of behavior by employees (Salkind, 2010). Accordingly, training sessions are arranged to span the weeks between the pre and post questionnaire phases.

Training

The training phase commences at the end of the PSPS questionnaire first phase. Human Resource Management (HRM) officers, assigned by the Permanent Secretary of the Department of the Public Service (DoPS), arrange the selection of 40 employee participants with a breakdown of eight persons for each of the five participating public sector departments. The participants are selected primarily on the basis of their degree of interaction with the public. Additionally, the training is conducted using a government of St. Lucia owned facility with the capacity for a cohort of 20 participants in observance of Covid-19 distancing and other related safety protocols. Thus, all selected participants from each of the five departments are grouped into two separate mixed cohorts of trainees. In each cohort, 50% of the department’s representative participants attend to ensure minimum disturbance to work flows and human resource deficits.

The training phase spans one week, split between the two groups. Sessions are of a duration from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and focused on two topics per day for two days, with an additional half day at the end of the program involving a summary, evaluation exercises and focus group interviews. After an initial introduction and orientation session, training participants are allowed to read and sign the required informed consent forms, indicating their desire to proceed with participation in the research as a whole, which includes training and focus group exercises. The

sessions are incorporated into a dedicated soft skills training program, focusing on self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership (SAIL).

Thus, the SAIL training program is utilized as a tool for assessing participant intent to change and apply personal transformations brought about by training, toward business performance improvement and is strongly aligned to research question RQ4 and hypothesis H4. This is in keeping with the research determination of an NHRTP for the improvement of business performance in St. Lucia. Accordingly, the SAIL program is developed on the basis that self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership, are the key essential drivers of individual change and performance improvement with regard to soft skill training (Dishon, Oldmeadow and Kaufman, 2018; Murphy, 2017; Sood, 2016).

Notwithstanding the strong confirmation that these four areas comprising the SAIL program are necessary soft skill training targets for promoting individual change and performance improvement, no suitably applicable training program containing all for elements is readily identified. Instead, several closely related approaches (O'Rourke, 2009; Sahoo and Mishra, 2019; Sutton, Williams and Allinson, 2015; Taufik, Fadli and Putri, 2019; Sood, 2016), are configured to offer incomplete or extraneous inclusions to satisfy the objectives of the particular study or purpose for which it is designed. As such, the SAIL curricular assembles and delivers a combination of topics relevant to the objectives of this research. In this vein, the SAIL program is developed and administered accordingly through a mixed modality of lectures, discussions, PowerPoint presentations and in-session activities.

Subsequently, at the end of the researcher administered training program, trainees are required to give a written “adopt and drop” statement, indicating two personal changes they intend to adopt and two personal behaviors they intend to drop, as a result of the training received. Further,

as a government supported research, the training is subjected to evaluation through the DoPS In-Service Training Evaluation Form. This form includes items which require participants to respond according to their intent to apply the training, applicability of training to the job, commitment to applying training to the job and overall perspectives of the training. The DoPS evaluation forms are administered independently by the department's Training Director and without the input of the researcher. The forms are subsequently made available to the researcher for analysis. As such, these training data sources are qualitatively analyzed in conjunction with the focus group analysis.

Focus Group

Additionally, a total of two focus group interviews are conducted with one on the final day of each cohort. The appropriation of focus groups is driven by the research questions RQ4, RQ5 and hypotheses H4, H5 which significantly revolve around the impact of employee training on client perceptions of the organization, employee awareness of the impact of HR soft skills on the organization and employee willingness to make personal adjustments for organizational purposes. As such, these questions are best addressed by employees "consuming" targeted HR training and acquiring the trainees' in-depth subjective responses (Lavrakas, 2008), in keeping with the qualitative dimensions of the study. Accordingly, the focus groups assist in drawing out trainee intent to apply, trainee perceptions of the value of HR soft skills to performance improvement and trainee willingness to undergo personal transformation for the benefit of others.

The focus group participants are the previously purposively selected trainees who have immediately prior, concluded their SAIL training. Thus, the focus group participants whose original selection is in part based on their level of interaction with clients, are positioned to respond to their experience with training as well as demonstrate intention to apply the training that would

be assessed by clients in the post-training questionnaire phase. Although focus groups are usually conducted using eight to twelve persons to ensure manageability and sufficient extraction of data (Lotich, 2011), the composition for this study includes the potential maximum of 20 participants representing each training cohort. This number is conveniently feasible to capture sufficient representation of inter and intra-departmental feedback at one time, as well as provide enhanced manageability on account of the rapport and dynamics established within the cohort during training. Additionally, the interview schedule is designed for “loading” and probing of feedback having an emphasis on experience with training, intention to apply training and corroboration of the training evaluation feedback with subsequent post-training client interviews.

To this end, the focus group is facilitated by an experienced postgraduate lecturer serving as moderator and the researcher as note taker. Preliminary guidelines are provided including the approximately 60 minute duration of the session, the need for free independent disclosure, single speaker allowances and side conversation restrictions. Further, confidentiality and anonymity reassurances are issued by the moderator and participants are reminded of their ability to exercise non-consequential withdrawal from the discussion at any time or not respond to uncomfortable questions. Both focus group sessions are conducted at the training venue and participants are placed in a semicircular or horseshoe arrangement to facilitate conversational flow and remove positional seating advantages that may hinder free expression or promote dominance (Greenberg, 1976). The focus group sessions are recorded and transcribed for further analysis and facilitate final stage, post training data collection comparisons.

Thus, following the focus group sessions the research moves into the final phase of data collection with a second administration of the PSPS. The data from this phase is comparatively analyzed in relation to the pre-training data, in an effort to establish relationships and valid

explanations for the phenomena under study (Adiyia and Ashton, 2017). This phase uses the identical PSPS questionnaire as the first phase and is essentially a repeat of the pre-training procedure. The distinction in the post-training PSPS phase is that trainees are required to be on duty during the collection period. This is to assist in ensuring that clients exiting the business engage in interactions with trained employees. However, in as much as the data collection approaches are utilized for achieving the broad goals of the study, operational definitions of the variables, serve to inform measurement of the variables of interest derived, from the data gathering approaches.

Operational Variables

Thus reiteratively, this study assesses the feasibility of implementing an NHRTP for the improvement of business performance in St. Lucia and hypothesizes primarily that there is a positive relationship between HR, particularly HR soft skills training and BP, particularly BP improvement. While the study is more heavily weighted qualitatively, it adopts a mixed study approach to cater to the quantitatively significant aspects of the data. Hence, appropriate mixed orientation operational defining of variables and detailing of constructs are necessary. Importantly, given that the major purpose of the PSPS questionnaire is to perform as a comparison tool for the pre and post-training data, it serves to facilitate quantification of perceptions about business performance and allow for the comparison of quantity shifts in participant's perception after training.

Thus the key operationalized variables for the study are HR training and Business performance, where HR training is identified as the independent variable embodied in SAIL training and business performance as the dependent variable, measured by shifts in compared

numbers after training and the perception of participants. Accordingly, perception is operationally defined as the expressed psychosocial interpretation of an individual based on psychological consideration or social interaction with a business. For instance, on the PSPS questionnaire, an individual expressing with a response of “yes” or “no” to questions about the pleasantness of their experience doing business with an institution, interprets their experience and expresses it in the restricted form of a “yes” or “no”, answer which is converted to discrete numerical data (Bevans, 2019). These responses are summed for each question and each participant, to attain total number of responses. The responses are categorized into two areas of nominal psychosocial variable interpretations namely, psychological and interactional, which are used as predictor variables for perception of business performance.

Notwithstanding, the data from the PSPS questionnaire in terms of items one to fifteen is on the nominal level, question sixteen as well as training and focus group data, include ordinal and interval levels. These levels facilitate the mixed orientation of the study in that they allow both qualitative and quantitative operations. Thus, question sixteen of the PSPS questionnaire uses a Likert scale measure of participant overall perception in relation to itemized responses and designates one “overall” category for each grouping of categorized question items in the one to fifteen responses.

Ethical Considerations

This study is undertaken in keeping with ethical guidelines and approval from Unicaf University’s Research and Ethical Committee (UREC). As such the study employs principles and measures for the protection of all participants including their rights to privacy, honesty and

informed consent. Also, the researcher endeavored to ensure utmost professionalism and integrity in the conduct of the research and details these efforts following.

Initially, access is gained through the completion of university prescribed and approved gatekeeper documents. In this case, the gatekeeper letter is sent to the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Department of the Public Service (DoPS), which is the governing body for all public sector departments, having authority for granting research access and coordinating the required HRM related logistics. Subsequent to DoPS approval, key HRM officers are assigned by the PS for each of the five proposed departments in the study. These officers engage in the selection of participants for the study in relation to discussed criteria with the researcher. This process of participant selection by the HRM officers ensures the avoidance of researcher bias in the selection of participants and maintains participant anonymity until the actual training.

Further, employees who represent both trainees and focus group participants, are informed at the start of training concerning relevant details of the study. This is done in an introductory orientation after which participants are invited to read and sign, university approved informed consent forms. Participants are informed of the voluntary nature of the study and are given the opportunity to withdraw without penalty. Participants are ensured anonymity outside of the researcher and that their information is coded to prevent identification.

Similarly, client participation is anonymised such that names are not required and no indicators of identity are included on their questionnaires. Clients are also provided the option not to respond to any offensive or uncomfortable question. Or, to withdraw without consequences or explanation along with the deletion of collected data, in case of such withdrawal. These measures are used to facilitate confidentiality and anonymity among other approaches to preventing harm.

Although the nature of the research is such that physical harm is not anticipated, its data gathering process occur during the Novel Corona Virus (Covid-19) pandemic. As a result, the hands of all questionnaire respondents, along with materials including pens pencils and clipboards holding the questionnaires, are sprayed with 70% alcohol before and after every use. All protective measures including mask wearing and social distancing, are observed when collecting data in all departments. In regard to the training and focus group sessions, a large venue is accessed to accommodate a cohort of 20 participants arranged with recommended social distancing requirements of six feet apart. Spray sanitizers are strategically placed for access by each participant during the sessions and the room is sanitized after each of three scheduled breaks.

Additionally, these safety measures are tailored to provide highest protection to the participants in terms of Covid-19 and still maintain compliance with appropriate standards in keeping with the research design. Thus, while ideal focus group size is usually recommend to be between eight and twelve (Lotich, 2011), breaking the participants into smaller groups with more sessions, would put participants at greater risk by increasing their exposure over a longer period of time. However, Guest, Namey and McKenna (2017) support that two focus group sessions are sufficient for capturing over 80% of data and that focus group sessions with greater than twelve participants are permissible, given necessary management and scope for data gathering. In this case, the larger number of 20 with a minimum number of strictly training focused questions, affords both group management, sufficiency of data gathering and ethically important risk mitigation for participants.

Among other ethical considerations is the role of the researcher in this study. In this regard, having designed and delivered the training in accordance to research objectives, the researcher assumes a minimized role of discreet note taking and uses an unknown moderator to minimize the

influence of familiarity to participants. This removes pressure from the participants to give emotionally biased responses in favor of the familiar trainer or restricted so as not to negatively impact the emotions of the trainer. Conversely, not conducting the focus groups allows for greater objectivity and avoidance of bias in the conduct of the study. Transcriptions are also inputted with letter labels of “F” for female and “M” for male and a number to identify the contributor during the analysis process, such as F1 or M2. Again, this measure is to ensure anonymity and reduce “halo effect” biases (Allen, 2017).

As a final measure to ensure ethicality, participants are scheduled to reconvene for post research debriefing while clients will learn of study results via published electronic and print media as well as public seminars on the study. A comprehensive post-study report is also scheduled for the DoPS.

Data Analysis

This study employs relevantly mixed methodological approaches in the analysis of its data. These approaches include descriptive statistical analysis and thematic analysis. The data for this study is primarily qualitative non-numerical data, although data from the PSPS questionnaire is analyzed to establish quantities of respondents regarding perception variables and is therefore configured to facilitate quantitative analytical processes such as correlational analysis for data validation. However, data from training feedback and focus group discussions are largely qualitatively analyzed as such, each data collection instrument is analyzed according to its function and purpose with suitable analytical approaches.

PSPS Questionnaire Analysis

Therefore, the PSPS data is primarily used to gain statistical information that is compared to similar statistical data in the pre and post-training phases of the study. The aim is determining numbers of clients holding particular perceptions about businesses' performance. Accordingly, responses to each question of the PSPS is entered in a Microsoft Excel 2013 spreadsheet. Excel allows for descriptive analysis, tabulation of responses to individual independent variables as well as graphical and statistical representation of data to be comparatively analyzed.

Thus, from questions one through fifteen all the responses are entered with assigned letter tags. The most prevalent response options of YES or NO, occurring in thirteen questions are assigned the letters Y to represent YES and N to represent NO. One question requires a possible response of NEUTRAL and is assigned the letters NE. Question fifteen requires responses to the possible options of "Valued", "Just another client" and "Like a burden", which are assigned the letters V, C and B respectively. This system allows for ease of entry, tabulations, "eyeballing" the data initially as well as statistical, graphical and descriptive analysis within Excel as applicable.

Subsequent to tag assignment the data is analyzed using the 'count if' function in Excel 2013. This feature allows for the counting of item occurrences within a set of mixed data. In this case the data set is formatted according to participant responses entered horizontally across the rows, from row two to the total number of respondents, while questions one through sixteen head the columns, starting at column B. Column A identifies the department from which the data is collected and attaches a number to the respondent. Thus, the "count if" formula is devised with the necessary parameters such that for example, COUNTIF (B2:B255,"=N") to indicate a NO response and COUNTIF (B2:B255,"=Y") indicating a yes response. This formula allows for quantifying the response to each question.

Further, while question sixteen utilizes the same “count if” approach, it retains the numerical values given by respondents on the Likert scale from one to five. Thus, every occurrence of a number item from question sixteen A to sixteen F, is counted to determine quantities of the particular response to each part of the question. In addition to having itemized question response totals, the PSPS questionnaire responses are also subject to analysis of categorized totals in six categories. These categories are arranged in keeping with the overall ratings solicited in question sixteen and are labelled as interaction with the institution, quality of service received, impressions after transaction, feelings after experiencing the institution, ease of interaction and overall impression. The totals for each category from the two groupings of question one to 15 and question sixteen A to F are compared for corroborating internal consistency of responses, pre and post-training questionnaires and facilitate descriptive analysis. Accordingly, the analyzed data in both the itemized and categorized data are descriptively represented using bar graphs and charts, frequency tables and pie charts (Dhand, 2015).

Importantly, apart from the highlighted general analysis approach, the research adopts a more targeted approach to analyzing the data in relation to key hypothetical statements and research questions regarding business performance. This provides the basis for correlational analysis of the training feedback and focus group data. Particularly, questions five, nine and sixteen “F”, are used to determine quantities of client’s perception regarding overall business performance only. Thus, in order to determine overall business performance, configurations of responses are used in seven combinations, where in question five a selection of option YES indicates a positive impression. No indicates a negative impression and NEUTRAL indicates having neither a positive or negative impression. Question nine has the options YES and NO which when combined with

question five options, indicate status of perception, which is reflected and corroborated by question sixteen F's ordinal level Likert scale options.

For instance, question five asks “Before coming, were your impressions of the business positive?” The options for answering this question are YES, NO or NEUTRAL. Question nine asks respondents to consider whether their perceptions after leaving the institution is the same as before they came, with the response options of YES indicating no change and NO indicating a change. While question sixteen F, solicits an overall rating on the client's perception of the institution. By way of example, clients who respond with YES to question five and YES to question nine, are pointing to a positive impression of the business with no change in perception after engagement. However, this is expected to be reflected with a response of GOOD in the overall ratings option in question sixteen. Thus total number of “good” and “very good” scores equals positive perception. Whereas, total number of “neutral” to “very poor” scores, equals negative perception. Shifts in perception are indicated by quantity changes in each variable dimension and total overall perception in pre and post training PSPS data comparisons.

Table 1
Expected Client Response Combinations

QUESTION/RESPONSE COMBINATION & PERCEPTION INDICATION	EXPECTED OVERALL CLIENT RESPONSE
5Y+9N= change	VG
5Y+9N= change	VG or Poor
5N+9N= change	Good or VG
5N+9Y= change	Poor or VG
5NE+9N= change	VP to VG
5Y+9Y= no change	Good
5NE+9Y= no change	G or VG

Training Feedback and Focus Group Data Analysis

Thus, this study engages qualitative data analysis processes using thematic analysis for its training feedback and focus group data. Thematic analysis offers flexibility for both explorative and inductive studies in which themes could be both pre-assigned and emergent (Mortensen, 2020). It entails the process of toggling between the complete data set, coded portions of data being analyzed and analysis of produced data. As such, after transcription of focus group data, both training feedback and focus group data are entered to QDA Miner Lite v2.0.8, which is a qualitative data analysis software. Initially, the data is perused for familiarization purposes and then coded with pre-assigned codes, which are augmented with further data examination. Themes are drawn from the data in alignment with the codes, then reviewed and descriptively named accordingly. Although the training feedback and focus group data are merged for holistic qualitative analysis purposes, they each contribute specific codes and themes to the overall analytical process.

In this regard, a total of 33 training evaluation forms are submitted and are thematically analyzed in specific relation to RQ4 and hypothesis H4, which both consider the extent to which individuals are prepared to be selfless in favor of others. Thus, the forms are assessed for instances and indications of willingness to apply training as well as “other-focused” behavior. Related codes are assigned to data derived from the form and only questions six, 15, 20, 24 and 26 are selected for analysis. Since the forms consist of preformatted indicative questions such as commitment to applying learning (question 24), willingness to use training immediately (question 6) and usefulness of training (question 15), the responses are coded in accordance with focus group codes, thus requiring the forms to be analyzed subsequent to the focus group analysis.

Similarly, the “drop and adopt” (DA) participant feedback, is analyzed in conjunction with the focus group and training evaluation forms. The DA feedback cards signal employee intent to make personal changes in favor of others and supports RQ4 and H4. Thus, in highlighting what they aim to change and or practice, participants are also indicating their willingness to make personal adjustments. The 36 DA cards, totaling 72 responses, are coded in accordance with focus group derivatives and are used along with the training evaluation forms to both validate and triangulate focus group data. All data are accordingly coded, categorized and themed, using an exploratory approach in which data is pinned to pre-assigned codes along with an inductive approach in which additional codes emerge.

Table 2
Pre-assigned codes and relationships

Pre-assigned Code	Related RQ	Related Hypotheses	Related Focus Group Question
Exposure to training	RQ1	H1	To what extent did you have organized Human Relations training before now? What are your general thoughts about Human Relations training?
Need for training	RQ1	H2	How relevant do you think the recently concluded training was to you? How relevant do you think the recently concluded training is for the organization?
Intent to apply	RQ3	H4	How prepared / willing are you to apply your training for the enhancement of public perception of your organization?
Intent to share	RQ5	H5	How widespread do you think Human Relations training should be within the public service?

Intent to adjust	RQ4	H4	How much of your training are you willing to adopt as part of your everyday lifestyle both in and out of work?
Business Benefit	RQ1/2	H1/H2/H3	How prepared / willing are you to apply your training for the enhancement of public perception of your organization?
Personal Development	RQ4	H4	Has this training changed you in any way? If so how?
Interpersonal Relations	RQ5	H4/H5	<p>How aware have you become regarding your impact on others as a result of this training?</p> <p>How has this training impacted your relationship with clients?</p> <p>How has this training impacted your relationship with internal customers?</p>

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodological processes tools and mechanisms enlisted to examine the question of whether a NHRTP is feasible for improving business performance. The chapter establishes a mixed methods approach to addressing the research's concerns. While the mixed approach employs both qualitative and quantitative techniques, the study adopts a more qualitatively weighted orientation (Johnson and Christensen, 2017), using focus group discussions as its primary tool for determining training impact on employee performance and questionnaires to quantitatively determine the perception of clients about business performance, before and after training.

As a matter of final analysis, individual variables from all data sources are descriptively analyzed, correlations and variances established, in variable to variable level analysis using a two way ANOVA test (Glen, 2021), particularly for PSPS questionnaire comparison and in relation to training. Focus group discussions are thematically analyzed using a combination of pre-assigned and emerging codes. The data is examined to confirm pre and post-training quantitative client perception shifts and the impact of HR training on employee behavior. Thus, the analysis makes way for the exploration of results in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

This chapter is primarily concerned with the analysis, treatment and interpretation of data, mined with the aim of empirically investigating the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP) on business performance in St. Lucia. As such, while the last chapter detailed the acquisition, proposed analytical approaches and research influencing considerations, this chapter actualizes those processes and deciphers the emergent representations unearthed from the data. Thus, subsequent to the introduction, the chapter follows with discourse on data trustworthiness, reliability and validity of the data, presentation of results and findings, along with an evaluation of the findings. The section closes with a summary and briefly directs attention to the contents of the next chapter. Hence, the ensuing introduction serves to provide an orientation regarding matters of data associated with this research and leads with a reiterative overview of the study's purpose.

Purpose Overview

Thus among its primary purposes, this study set out to determine by empirical investigation, whether implementing a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP) would result in business performance improvement throughout St. Lucia, and more deliberately highlight the linkages between Human Relations (HR) and business performance (BP). Additionally, the study holds among its purposes the exploration of harnessing the potential of HR training as an 'alleviator' of national HR skill deficiencies on BP, particularly within the public sector. Latently, the study serves the purpose of modelling a strategy through which businesses are utilized as agents of social change, via the transference of values embodied in HR training to the

wider society, for addressing HR related social ills. In general, the study highlights the importance of the intrinsic possession of individual soft skills to socioeconomic concerns, and of necessity engages methodologies that cater to deriving its multidimensional purposes. Accordingly, this study employs a qualitative and quantitative mix of approaches to address its expressed purposes. To this end, pre and post training data are gathered using quantitatively oriented questionnaires to determine quantities of participants with positive or negative perceptions about a business. Subsequent to the administration of HR training, focus group interviews are used to determine the impact of the training on the individual and the organization in relation to business performance.

Supportively, the present data analysis is pinned to the foundations of the theoretical framework, which recognizes HR training as transferrable, transformational and portable, while having multidimensional effects on the levels of the individual, employees as a group and social contexts. Additionally, the framework indicates benefits of training that are organizational, personal and societal, all of which are translatable into performance improvement, personal enhancement and social change. Congruently, the data analysis is undertaken against the frame of reference of the research questions and research hypotheses which find agreement with the underpinnings of the theoretical framework and the overall purpose of the study.

Hence, the data analysis is guided by the research questions and hypotheses which are established in accordance with the expressed dimensions and purposes of the study. As such, the five research questions embody elements that reflect the ethos and hypothetical assumptions carried by the study. Congruently, five hypotheses are aligned to the five research questions such that research question (RQ) RQ1 which queries the primary concern of the extent to which HR skills affect BP, is linked to the key hypothesis (H) H1, which premises that HR training improves business performance. Moreover, each alignment of research question to hypothesis is addressed

by specific data sources during analysis. In the case of RQ1 and H1 for instance, all data sources would address this overarching interest. However, in the case of RQ2 and H2, mainly the Public Service Performance Survey (PSPS) data source is employed. Thus, this study sequences the analysis and presentation of data, leading with the PSPS and following with focus group (FG) data, Public Service Training Evaluation Feedback Form (PS-TEFF) and Drop/Adopt (DA) cards employed in the data collection, subsequent to discussing the trustworthiness of the data.

Table 3

Research Question, Hypothesis and Data Source

Research Question	Hypothesis	Key Data Source
RQ1. To what extent do HR skills training affect BP?	H1. Human Relations Training improves business performance.	ALL data sources
RQ2. How impactful is employee HR training on how clients perceive BP?	H2. Human Relations training affects client perception of business performance.	PSPS
RQ3. How would HR training of employees affect client willingness to engage in repeat interactions with a business entity?	H3. Training employees in Human Relations affects the willingness of clients to engage in repeat transactions with a business.	PSPS

RQ4. To what extent are employees willing to undergo personal adjustments for organizational purposes?	H4. Human Relations training affects employee willingness to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others.	FG, DA, PS-TEFF
RQ5. Would national training programs through businesses be useful for addressing HR related social issues?	H5. Human Relations training improvements are transferrable from business to social contexts.	FG, DA, PS-TEFF

Data Trustworthiness

Accordingly, the data is examined to ensure trustworthiness by addressing reliability, validity and other relevant issues that affect overall data viability. As such, each data source is scrutinized individually and interrelatedly to ascertain the strength of its purported intensions and duplicability for future research. In this regard, the PSPS is primarily assessed for indicating client business performance perceptions - H2, repeat business tendencies - H3 and related phenomena in a pre and post training comparative approach. Further, the focus group data provides the targeted indicators of H1, H4 and H5, which are corroborated by data derived from the DA cards and the PS-TEFF, such that there is a cross-corroborative function among the FG, DA and PS-TEFF data sources and between the FG and PSPS. Hence, against this backdrop, the data is treated to ensure confidence and address issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, in addition to discussing the considerations given to ensuring reliability and validity of the data.

Credibility, Reliability and Validity

Public Service Performance Survey (PSPS)

Thus, as an element in the pursuit of trustworthiness, credibility as a matter of ensuring that findings are congruent with reality (Shenton, 2004), is achieved by employing several sources of data and methods for the study in general and multiple triangulation approaches for each data set. For instance, in the case of the PSPS which seeks to quantitatively ascertain client perception about the public sector before and after training intervention, the 16 item questionnaire uses questions one through fifteen to quantify perceptions but triangulates to find the “truth” of those perceptions by using a six item Likert scale for question 16, to determine whether the tallied perceptions captured in questions one through fifteen, are congruent with the overall perceptions captured in the Likert Scale responses.

Thus, despite the totals in frequency and percentages of the component indicators of positive or negative client perception gleaned from questions one through fifteen, these are verified against Likert Scale responses in the six itemized categories of overall interaction (INT), overall quality of service (QOS), overall impressions post transaction (IMP), overall feelings after interaction (FAI), overall ease of transaction (EOT) and overall rating of perception (OPI). Accordingly, perceptions based on interaction such as questions three, ten and twelve on the questionnaire, are summed and measured against the overall anticipated rating in the relevant category of INT on the Likert Scale. For example, a 90% total positive response to the relevant questionnaire items is expected to have an anticipated “Good” to “very good” response on the overall LS category.

Another measure for ensuring credibility rests in the use of random sampling in the data collection process, notwithstanding purposive approaches that emphasized client perception in

regard to transactions with specific participating PS departments. In this regard, above age 18 clients as registered on the questionnaire, are randomly polled on exiting the specific department after their transaction. This ensures that each client has an experience conducting business with the entity and is able to offer immediately derived psychosocial perceptions of their encounter.

Further, this approach provides a means of member-checking since all clients are verifiable and qualified respondents to the PSPS and that representative analysis could be made by department as well as public sector generalizations. Therefore, since member-checking essentially entails the verification of collected data by participants, derived from their experiences (Birt, Scott, Cavers and Walter, 2016), this study's approach employs respondents themselves in capturing the perceptions of their transactions and perform a somewhat guided but self-administered member-check, without the inaccuracies potentially caused by memory lapses and faded psychological impact and mere observation.

Interestingly, the PSPS gives necessity to thickly describing the data since, unexpectedly and contrary to current secondary sources as well as public and private sentiment, the data without deep analysis indicates an exceptionally high (above 80%) positive perception of the PS. Thus, thick descriptions which facilitate deeper contextual interpretations and understandings (Drew, 2019), are utilized in the PSPS data and are explained in the occurrence of the "Covid effect" on business.

As such, the PSPS data reflects a forced adjustment in Public Sector business practice that obtained as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the time of data collection these adjustments included drastic decreases in clients within service areas, encouragement by managers for workers to display greater emotional sensitivity toward clients, clearer processes for accessing services and attention to timeliness in the execution of duties. Consequently, these adjustments placed HR soft

skills under scrutiny, improved the speed of service delivery, paid greater attention to service quality, reduced mistake making and resulted in less flustered employees. Resultantly, client responses are reflective of largely positive experiences which produced largely positive perceptions, explainable by the contextual circumstances as interpreted through a thickly descriptive process which goes deeper than the superficial.

Focus Group and Qualitative Data

However, the need for thick description in the focus group (FG) data is importantly stimulated by the highly positive responses of perception from the clientele and warrants examination from the employee's contextual perspective. To this end, the data sets of the employee participants of the focus groups, latently corroborate the "Covid effect" on recent business practices in the expression of their own need for change toward clients and anecdotal evidence of prevalent dissatisfaction and negative engagements with both internal and external customers, as revealed during discussions in the training process. Thus, the training component of the study, secondarily served as a source for securing in-depth explanations by providing the basis for thick descriptions while simultaneously confirming previously held anticipations of perception, by providing contextual background and circumstantial insight to explaining the data when analyzed.

Further, in terms of member-checking, the FG participants who are also training intervention recipients representing five PS departments, were able to engage in inter and intra departmental verification of the data. Again, this guided self-administered approach allowed the participant to both present and verify the data while it is simultaneously substantiated by departmental and interdepartmental peers in relation to their overall PS experiences (Shenton, 2004). Relatedly, another area of credibility is established in the selection of training and FG

participants. Although the PS departments and employee participants are purposively selected based on suitability of the department to the objectives of the study and degree of employee engagement with clients, there is no direct knowledge of the participants and no involvement in their selection by the researcher. In this regard, head of departments (HODs) were assigned by the Permanent Secretary of the Public Service (DoPS) to make the relevant selections for training and FG sessions. Resultantly, each group of employee participants represented an assemblage of unbiased, objectivized contributors by virtue of their ability to present data corroborated by both work colleagues and PS employees.

Additionally, data corroboration and accuracy is achieved for the training and FG participants by triangulating several data sources. Thus, data derived from the PS-TEFF and DA cards are verified against data gleaned from the focus group interviews. The PS-TEFF and DA cards required participants to document personalized perspectives on research related data both during (DA cards) and after (PS-TEFF) training but before the focus FG sessions. Each data source is assigned relevant codes from the list of pre-assigned codes for the FG. Hence, the DA cards and the PS-TEFF are used to verify the data collected in the FG as well as each other. This approach negates the need for returning to participants to check data representation since the respondents themselves documented several iterations of the same data which is used to crosscheck itself and the FG transcribed data.

Moreover, while triangulation and the overlapping of data serve to strengthen credibility and issues of internal validity, a measure of external validity and transferability is gained from the data for relevant generalizations within the St. Lucian public sector context. As such, although the data was not derived from every department of the public sector, because of the integrated “lumped” approach to the treatment of all data sources from the five ministries and their clientele,

the departmental distinctions are blurred and melds the data into usefulness for wider contextual applicability across the public sector.

Thus overall, the research data is analyzed using approaches to ensure its trustworthiness in terms of credibility, transferability and dependability. Accordingly, it initializes the process considering data from the PSPS which is used in a pre and post training sequence to determine quantities of client perception about public sector departments. The resulting data set is subjected to member-checking about their experiences of interaction immediately after their transaction, providing them the opportunity to document and confirm the accuracy of their own experiences. Additionally, data validity corroboration using Likert scaled item 16, is employed to validate data gleaned from questions one through fifteen. Both pre and post training data are treated identically and compared with each other. These serve as indicators of client perception shifts as a result of training and a factor in the analysis of FG data.

Further, the FG data is used to determine the impact of training on employees and the potential effect of training on client perception, business performance improvement and social ill alleviation. In order to achieve these ends, the data is captured and corroborated by intra and interdepartmental peers who are grouped together for training and FG sessions. Therefore the data is immediately member-checked and assured of accuracy, as it is placed into pre assigned code categories in keeping with research hypotheses and questions. The pre assigned codes are, Exposure to Training (ET), Need for Training (NT), Business Benefit (BB), Intent to Apply (IA), Intent to Share (IS), Interpersonal Relations (IR), Intent to Adjust (AD), Personal Development (PD) and Introspection (IN). These codes are also applied to the DA Cards and PS-TEFF which capture an employee's personal psychosocial positions after exposure to HR training and data expressing the value of HR training to themselves, workplace and social environment. Since the

FG, DA and PS-TEFF data sources are all member derived and treated similarly, they serve to triangulate and authenticate the data as well as provide insight to outcomes that can address issues of confirmability.

As such, in terms of confirmation of limitations, the research recognizes the possible impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the results and by extension, minor irregularities in relation to participants. As indicated prior, the adjustment in business operations to facilitate the implementation of Covid-19 protocols may have resulted in service improvements to clients. These service improvements may have influenced the highly weighted positive perceptions of the clients. However, timelines, mechanisms and uncertainties regarding return to normalcy, did not permit changes to the approach. Nevertheless, this occurrence is treated in the data analysis by attaching significance to minor shifts in the post survey data and using several approaches as outlined to validate the data.

Methodologically, the study is dependent on data capture, pre and post client interaction with the business and pre and post employee interaction after training. This requires that the exact employees who are trained should interact with the clients in the post training phase and that all participants should be predominantly engaging with clients as part of their job. However, this may not always have been the case since the researcher has no control over employee scheduling and employee related eventualities that rested in the purview of the assigned departmental representatives.

While this may have potentially dampened the efficacy of training on the client's perception in the short term, possibly lending to the largely similar results in the post training PSPS, the individual level contribution to business improvement is enhanced, as the effect of training is potentially spread within the organization. Further, the Traffic Department could not be

included for the post training data since, the Ministry was shut down due to a Covid-19 break out, causing withdrawal of participation from training, focus groups, post training PSPS and related data collection activities. Notwithstanding, these possible limiting influences on the data, the results are analyzed and presented accordingly.

Results of Findings

Primarily, the central focus of this study is to gather evidence to respond to research question (RQ) one which enquires as to the extent to which HR skills training affects BP. In this regard, all data sources are used to address this overarching question and related hypothesis. However, dedicated sources such as the quantitatively oriented PSPS are used to address mainly RQ2 and RQ3 while facilitating Hypotheses H2 and H3 respectively. Notwithstanding the useful overlapping of data, qualitative data derived from focus groups, training evaluation forms and drop and adopt cards which indicates employees' personal intention to adopt or let go of aspects of psychosocial behavior as a result of HR training, are utilized to focus attention to RQ4, RQ5 and attending hypotheses H4 and H5 respectively. Thus, the results presented firstly focus on general quantities derived from the PSPS before focusing on the particular concerns of each of the other data collection instruments.

Result Totals - PSPS

Overall, 510 participants took part in the study. Of these, 477 were clients performing transactions within five public sector departments and 33 public sector employees who were recipients of training and divided into two focus groups. Departmentally, the study polled 255 exiting clients in the amount of 51 persons each in the pre training PSPS. In the post training PSPS

a total of 222 exiting clients were polled with the Passport and Treasury departments polling 52 and 56 participants respectively while, 57 respondents were polled for both the Electoral and Civil Registry departments. No respondents were polled for the Traffic department, post training.

Table 4**Research Participation Totals**

Participation	Total #	Total %
Participants	510	100
Clients	477	94
Employees	33	6
Pre training clients	255	50
Post training clients	222	44
<i>N=510 / %=100</i>		

Table 5**PSPS- Pre and Post Training Department Totals**

Department	Pre Training	Post Training	Totals
Civil Registry Dept.	51	57	108
Electoral Dept.	51	57	108
Immigration/Passport Dept.	51	52	103
Traffic Dept.	51	0	51
Treasury/Acc. Gen. Dept.	51	56	107
	255	222	477

Table 6**Focus Group and Training Department Totals**

Department	Group 1	Group 2	Totals
Civil Registry Dept.	04	04	08
Electoral Dept.	04	04	08
Immigration/Passport Dept.	04	04	08
Traffic Dept.	00	00	00
Treasury/Acc. Gen. Dept.	04	05	09
	16	17	33

Result Totals – RQ1 /H1

RQ1 To what extent does HR affect Business performance (BP)?

H1 Human Relations improves business performance.

Regarding the general interest of HR training on BP, the PSPS data revealed that exclusive of the “neutral”, “poor” and “very poor” options, the combined “good” to “very good” overall figures were recorded as 85% in the pre training phase and 86% in the post training phase, representing a one percentage point increase. These figures were in response to questionnaire item number 16F which asked for an overall rating of perception of the institution.

Table 7**Overall Rating of Perception**

Response	Good	Very Good	Total	% Change
Pre PSPS	43	42	85	
Post PSPS	41	45	86	+1
	84	87		

On the dimension of quantifying the percentage differences of “good” to “very good” responses in relation to all overall ratings of question 16 A to F, the data revealed a two percentage point each increase in the areas of overall interaction, overall quality of service and overall impression. Overall feelings after experiencing the institution obtained the highest overall increase of three percentage points while overall ease of transaction showed one percentage point increase. Thus, the data presents an 11 percentage point overall increase in perception between pre and post training.

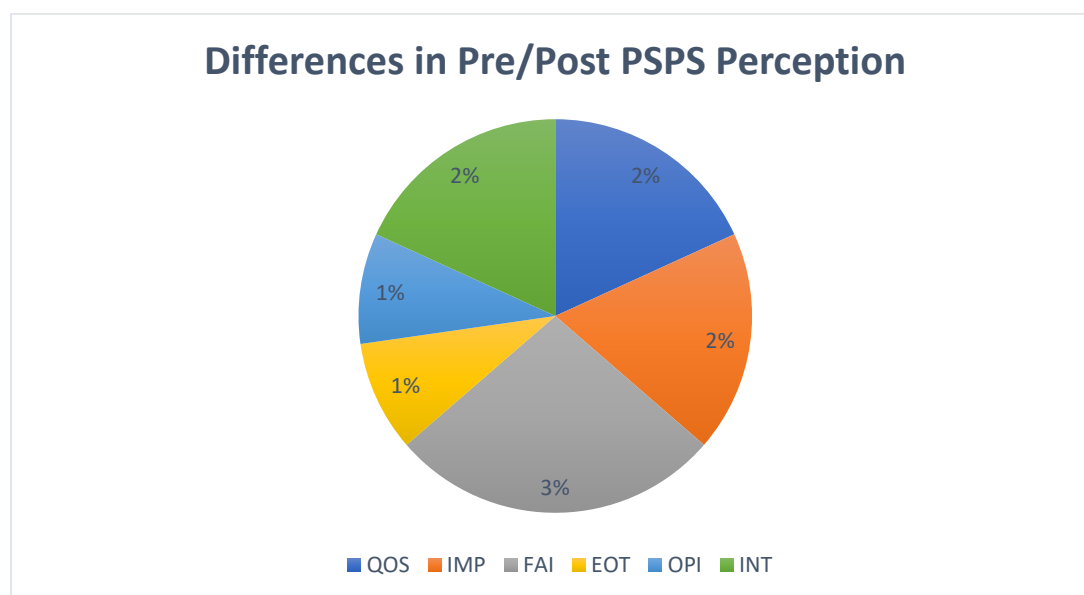
Table 8

Overall Combined Percentage Increase in Positive Perception

Category of client Perception	Percentage Pre Training Perception	Percentage Post Training Perception	Percentage Difference in Perception
INT	83	85	2
QOS	87	89	2
IMP	84	86	2
FAI	79	82	3
EOT	86	87	1
OPI	85	86	1
Total Percentage increase in Perception			11%

Figure 3

Differences in Pre/Post PSPS Perception



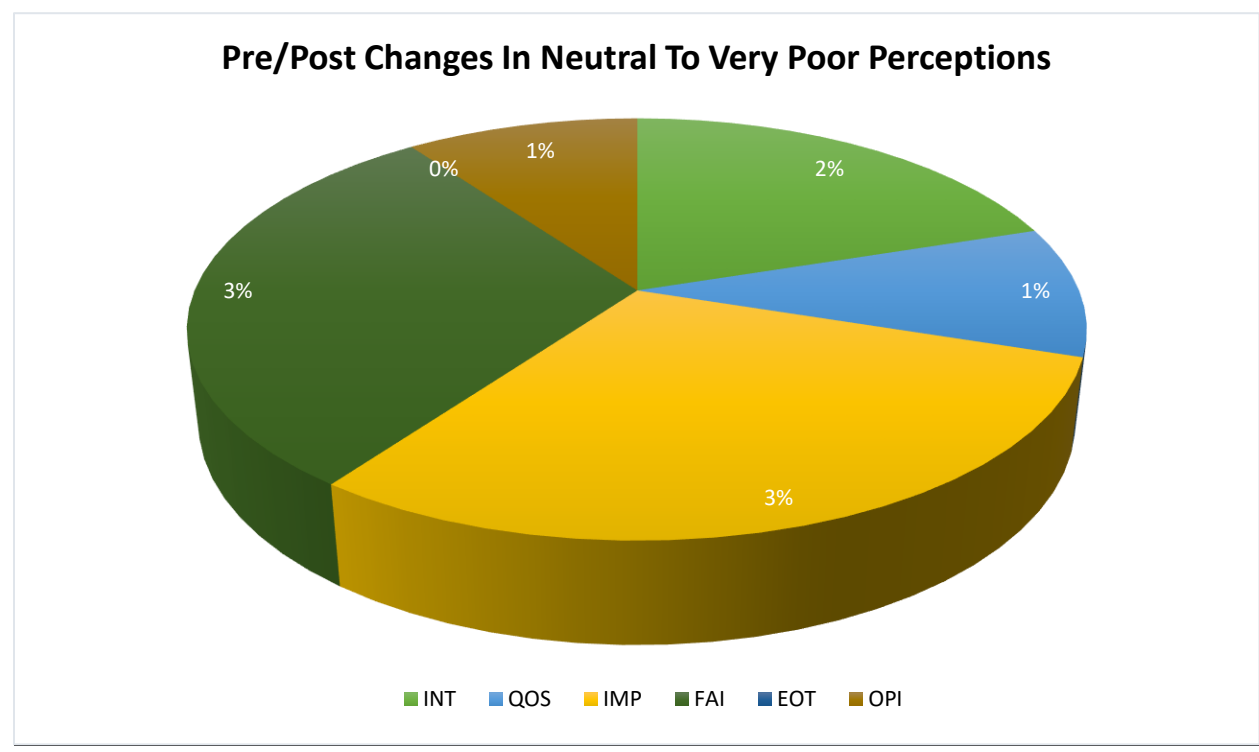
Overall, negative perception showed a ten percentage point decrease with 2% in INT, 1% for both QOS and OPI, 3% for IMP and FAI and no difference for EOT.

Table 9**Overall Combined Percentage Decrease in Negative Perception**

Category of client Perception	Percentage Pre Training Perception	Percentage Post Training Perception	Percentage Difference in Perception
INT	17	15	2%
QOS	12	11	1%
IMP	17	14	3%
FAI	20	17	3%
EOT	13	13	0%
OPI	15	14	1%
Total Percentage Decrease in Negative Perception			10%

Figure 4

Pre/Post Changes in Neutral to Very Poor Perception



Result Totals RQ2/H2

RQ2 How impactful are employee demonstrations of HR on how clients perceive BP?

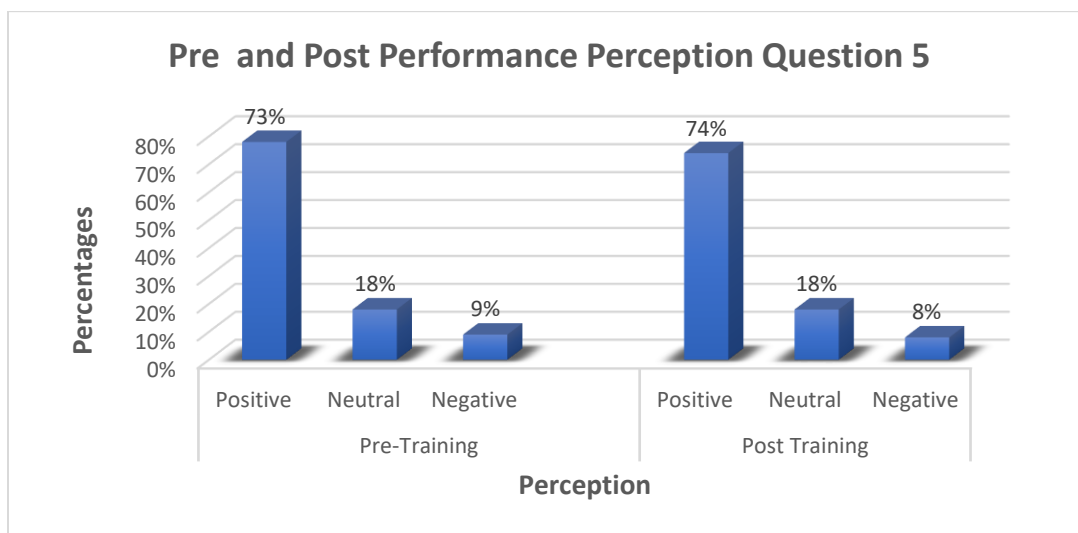
H2 Demonstration of HR behavior affects client perception of business performance.

One of the key measures of business performance (BP) in this study is based on client perception and improvement or shifts in BP as indicated by changes in data quantities captured in comparative pre and post surveys using the PSPS instrument. In this regard positive, neutral or negative perceptions of clients about the business were quantified, finding that before training, an overall total of 73% had a positive perception, 18% were neutral and 9% had negative perceptions about the participating businesses. Post training totals reveal that 74% of clients held positive

perceptions, 18% held neutral perceptions and negative perceptions were 8%. These totals were captured from question five which asks about client impression of the institution before their engagement.

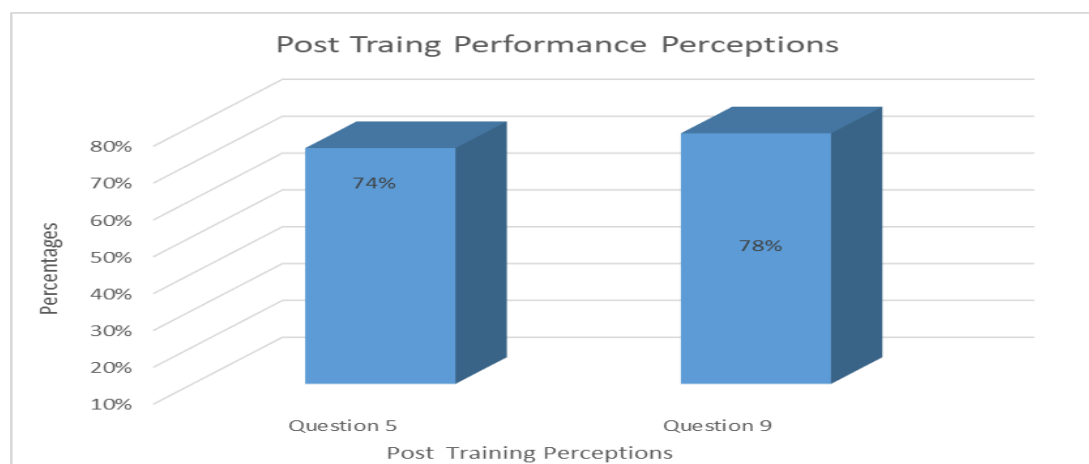
Figure 5

Pre and Post Performance Perception



Positive perception increased and negative perception decreased post training

Further, comparative data from the PSPS questions five and nine, indicate an overall positive perception of good (GD) to very good (VG) with 78% of the responses and increasing modestly upward in positivity by 4% after training. Question five's pre interaction data is compared with the data from question nine which enquires whether pre and post engagement impressions are the same for clients. Statistical data is compared to Likert scale ratings.

Figure 6**Post Training Performance Perceptions**

Post training perception increased for questions 5 and 9

On an itemized level and in congruence with data captured in questions one to fifteen and compared with question sixteen, overall ratings in individual areas of client perception registered generally positive in pre PSPS regarding interaction (INT) 83%, quality of service (QOS) 87%, post transaction impressions (IMP) 84%, feelings after interaction (FAI) 79%, ease of transaction (EOT) 86% and rating of perception (OPI) 85%. The Post PSPS exhibited consistency with marginal percentage increases in most itemized areas and negligible decreases in negativity ratings by 1% where these were higher in the pre PSPS. Neutral scores showed aggregate positive shifts of 8% between pre and post PSPS such that INT moved 1% from 14% to 13%, QOS from 10% to 8%, IMP from 13% to 10%, FAI from 17% to 15%, no shift in EOT remaining at 0% and OPI from 13% to 12% representing a 1 percentage point change from neutrality.

Table 10**Overall Percentage Rating of Perception**

PSPS Response		%GD	%VG	%Total		%NU	%PR	%VP	%TOTAL
INT	16a Pre	37	46	83		14	2	1	17
	16a Post	35	50	85		13	1	1	15
QOS	16b Pre	40	47	87		10	2	0	12
	16b Post	38	51	89		8	3	0	11
IMP	16c Pre	42	42	84		13	3	1	17
	16c Post	42	44	86		10	3	1	14
FAI	16d Pre	36	43	79		17	2	1	20
	16d Post	34	48	82		15	1	1	17
EOT	16e Pre	43	43	86		9	3	1	13
	16e Post	39	48	87		9	3	1	13
OPI	16f Pre	43	42	85		13	2	0	15
	16f Post	41	45	86		12	2	0	14

GD=Good VG=Very good NU=Neutral PR=Poor VP=Very poor

INT=*Interaction* QOS=*Quality of Service*

IMP=*Impression* FAI=*Feelings after Transaction*

EOT=*Ease of Transaction* OPI=*Perception of Institution*

Among the largest shifts in perception by individual item is registered in question 12, which represents a 3% percentage point change between pre and post PSPS with figures of 79% and 82% respectively. A 4% positive shift from 60% in the pre PSPS to 64% in the post PSPS is also registered in response to question 15 which asks clients about how attendants made them feel, whether “valued”, like “just another client” or like a “burden”. These mostly “feeling” based items coincide within one percentage point with the overall FAI Likert scale representation of 79% in the pre PSPS and 82% in the post, showing a 3% difference.

Table 11
Largest Perception Shifts by Question

Question 12	Percentage	Question 15	Percentage	Overall FAI	Percentage
Pre/Post	Change	Pre/Post	Change	Pre/Post	FAI Change
79/83	3%	60/64	4%	79/82	3%

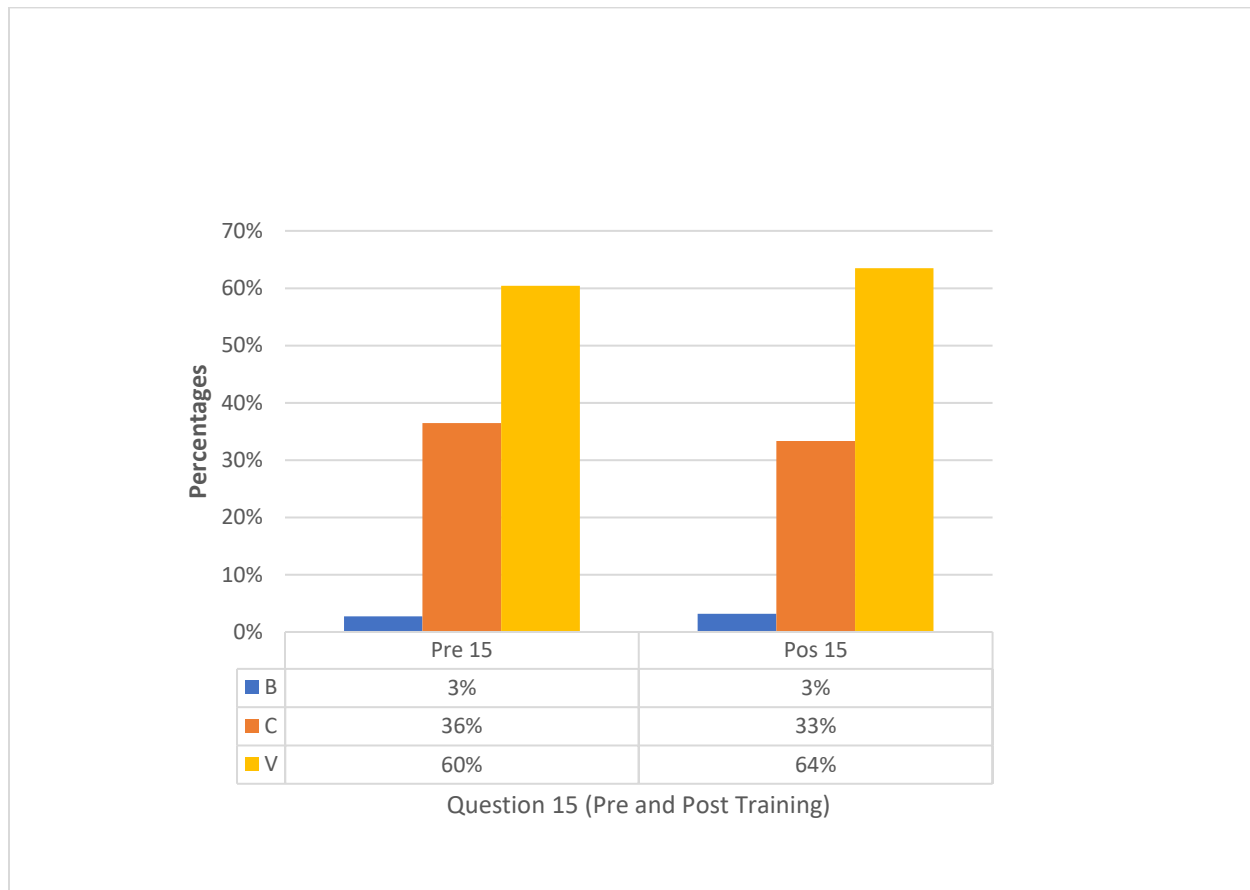
RQ3/H3

RQ3 How would HR training of employees affect client willingness to engage in repeat interactions with a business entity?

H3. Training employees in Human Relations affects the willingness of clients to engage in repeat transactions with a business.

In terms of data on client willingness to engage in repeat transactions with a business, three questions from the PSPS addressed this issue. More directly, question ten asked clients if they would be eager to conduct repeat business with the entity in the future. 88% of clients responded “yes” in the pre PSPS while 91% responded “yes” in the post PSPS. Along the same lines, question 11 asked whether eagerness to conduct future business depended on the service received, to which 88% again said “yes” in the pre PSPS while a one percent increase of 89% responded positively in the post. Still regarding client willingness to do future business, question 12 probes whether future business is dependent on interaction with attendants. To this question, 81% responded positively in the pre PSPS and in the post, 85% responded positively, representing a 4% shift.

Number 15 of the PSPS asks the question, “How did the attendant make you feel?” The options were “valued” (V) “just another client” (C) and “Like a burden” (B). Total percentage responses in the pre PSPS were 3% like a burden, 36% just another client and 60% valued. In the post PSPS responses, 3% said like a burden, 33% just another client and 64% said they felt valued.

Figure 7**How Did the Attendant Make You Feel?**

B=Burden C=Just a client V=Valued

Selected data by department shows total percentages for overall client responses measured against Likert Scale ratings. The results show total perception by department indicating the highest positive OPI registered to the Electoral Department with 96% and the Passport Department showing an OPI result of 20 percentage points difference at 75% while the Treasury and Civil Status Departments show OPIs of 95 and 89% respectively.

Table 12

Civil Status - Percentage Rating of Perception									
PSPS Response		%GD	%VG	%TOTAL		%NU	%PR	%VP	%TOTAL
INT	16a - Pre	39%	47%	86%		12%	2%	0%	14%
	16a - Post	39%	47%	86%		12%	0%	2%	14%
QOS	16b - Pre	41%	49%	90%		8%	0%	2%	10%
	16b - Post	42%	49%	91%		7%	0%	2%	9%
IMP	16c - Pre	47%	37%	84%		10%	4%	2%	16%
	16c - Post	47%	37%	84%		11%	4%	2%	17%
FAI	16d - Pre	43%	41%	84%		12%	2%	2%	16%
	16d - Post	39%	44%	83%		14%	2%	2%	18%
EOT	16e - Pre	39%	51%	90%		8%	2%	0%	10%
	16e - Post	39%	49%	88%		11%	0%	2%	13%
OPI	16f - Pre	45%	45%	90%		10%	0%	0%	10%
	16f - Post	42%	47%	89%		9%	2%	0%	11%

Decrease in positive OPI from 90% to 89%

Table 13

Electoral Department - Percentage Rating of Perception									
PSPS Response		%GD	%VG	%TOTAL		%NU	%PR	%VP	%TOTAL
INT	16a - Pre	39%	51%	90%		6%	4%	0%	10%
	16a - Post	37%	61%	98%		9%	4%	0%	13%
QOS	16b - Pre	35%	55%	90%		6%	4%	0%	10%
	16b - Post	37%	50%	87%		7%	4%	0%	11%
IMP	16c - Pre	47%	43%	90%		8%	2%	0%	10%
	16c - Post	49%	40%	89%		9%	2%	0%	11%
FAI	16d - Pre	37%	49%	86%		12%	2%	0%	14%
	16d - Post	42%	57%	99%		12%	2%	0%	14%
EOT	16e - Pre	41%	47%	88%		8%	2%	2%	12%
	16e - Post	39%	54%	93%		11%	2%	4%	17%
OPI	16f - Pre	39%	49%	88%		10%	2%	0%	12%
	16f - Post	44%	52%	96%		12%	2%	2%	16%

Increase in positive OPI from 88% to 96%

Table 14

Passport Department - Percentage Rating of Perception									
PSPS Response		%GD	%VG	%TOTAL		%NU	%PR	%VP	%TOTAL
INT	16a - Pre	33%	43%	76%		20%	2%	2%	24%
	16a - Post	35%	42%	77%		19%	2%	2%	23%
QOS	16b - Pre	27%	53%	80%		12%	8%	0%	20%
	16b - Post	27%	54%	81%		12%	8%	0%	20%
IMP	16c - Pre	33%	45%	78%		16%	6%	0%	22%
	16c - Post	33%	44%	77%		15%	6%	2%	23%
FAI	16d - Pre	22%	47%	69%		25%	2%	4%	31%
	16d - Post	23%	46%	69%		25%	2%	4%	31%
EOT	16e - Pre	35%	43%	78%		12%	10%	0%	22%
	16e - Post	35%	42%	77%		13%	10%	0%	23%
OPI	16f - Pre	33%	41%	74%		22%	4%	0%	26%
	16f - Post	35%	40%	75%		21%	4%	0%	25%

Increase in positive OPI from 74% to 75%

Table 15

Treasury Department - Percentage Rating of Perception									
PSPS Response		%GD	%VG	%TOTAL		%NU	%PR	%VP	%TOTAL
INT	16a - Pre	27%	59%	86%		14%	0%	0%	14%
	16a - Post	29%	61%	90%		11%	0%	0%	11%
QOS	16b - Pre	49%	45%	94%		6%	0%	0%	6%
	16b - Post	45%	50%	95%		5%	0%	0%	5%
IMP	16c - Pre	37%	53%	90%		10%	0%	0%	10%
	16c - Post	38%	55%	93%		7%	0%	0%	7%
FAI	16d - Pre	27%	57%	84%		16%	0%	0%	16%
	16d - Post	32%	57%	89%		11%	0%	0%	11%
EOT	16e - Pre	43%	49%	92%		8%	0%	0%	8%
	16e - Post	43%	54%	97%		4%	0%	0%	4%
OPI	16f - Pre	43%	49%	92%		6%	2%	0%	8%
	16f - Post	43%	52%	95%		5%	0%	0%	5%

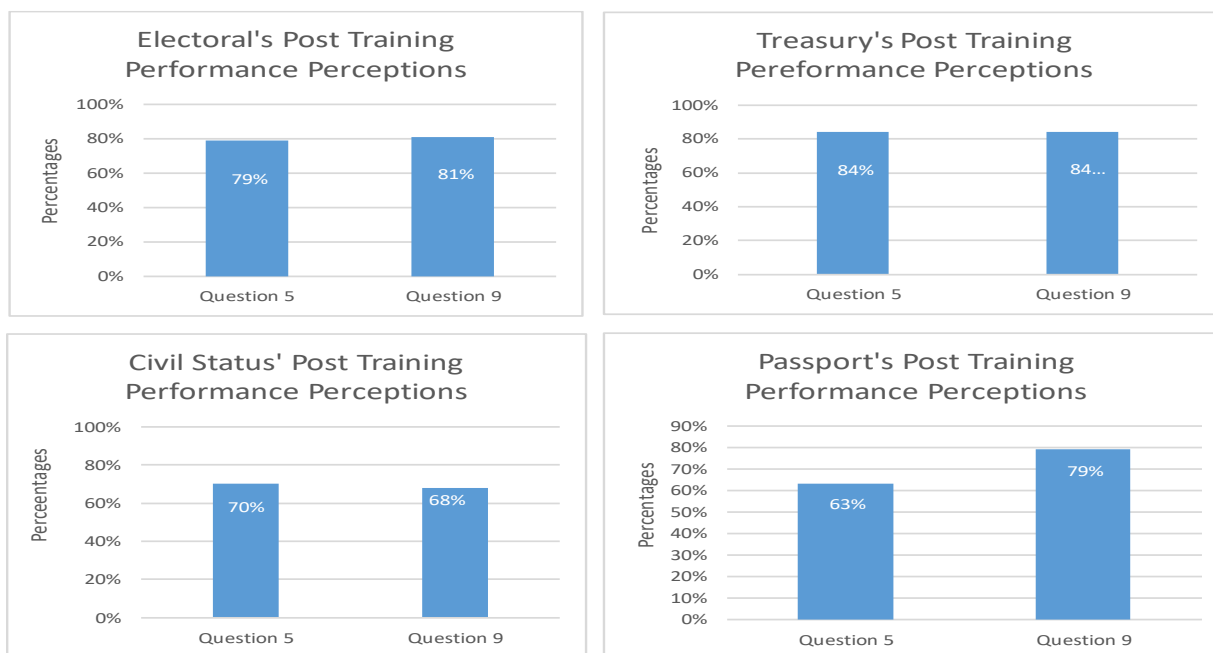
Increase in positive OPI from 92% to 95%

Table 16**Traffic Department - Percentage Rating of Perception**

PSPS Response		%GD	%VG	%TOTAL		%NU	%PR	%VP	%TOTAL
INT	16a - Pre	47%	29%	76%		20%	2%	0%	22%
	16a - Post								
QOS	16b - Pre	47%	33%	80%		18%	0%	0%	18%
	16b - Post								
IMP	16c - Pre	45%	29%	74%		20%	2%	2%	24%
	16c - Post								
FAI	16d - Pre	53%	22%	75%		22%	2%	0%	24%
	16d - Post								
EOT	16e - Pre	55%	25%	80%		12%	4%	2%	18%
	16e - Post								
OPI	16f - Pre	55%	25%	80%		16%	0%	2%	18%
	16f - Post								

No post training data. OPI at 80% pre-training

Comparative data for questions five and nine reveal client perception of performance showing marginal or no difference across departments except for the Passport Department which shows the highest individual department shift of 16 percentage points.

Figure 8**Departmental Post Training Performance Perceptions**

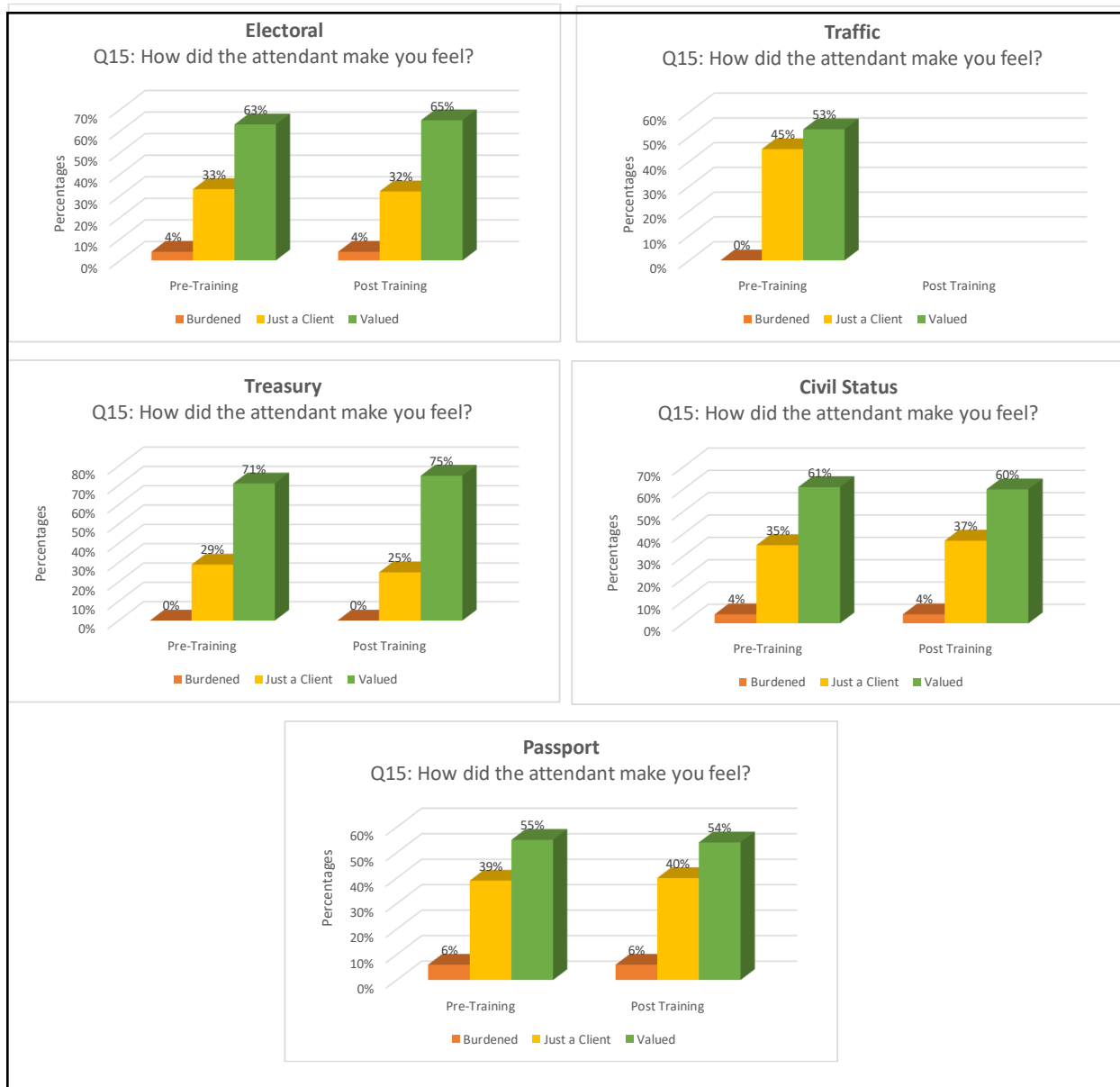
Largest perception shift registered by the Passport Department

Apart from the focused analysis of data segments, the PSPS also yields significant results on a per question level that potentially contribute to various aspects of the study. The data following represents results by individual question as revealed by the PSPS.

Table 17

Percentage of Total Responses by Question

Question	Yes Pre/Post	No Pre/Post	Question	Yes Pre/Post	No Pre/Post
1. Have you ever done business with this institution	80/79	20/21	2. Are your impressions of the institution based on the nature of the transaction?	89/91	11/9
3. Was your present transaction successful	80/82	20/18	4. After leaving are your impressions the same as before you came?	76/77	24/23
5. Did you have a pleasant experience doing business with the institution	73/74	9/8	6. Would you be eager to conduct repeat business in the future?	78/80	22/20
7. Were you eagerly looking forward to doing business with the institution	83/82	17/18	8. Does your eagerness to conduct future business depend on the service you received?	68/67	32/33
9. Before coming were your impressions of the institution positive?	79/78	20/22	10. Does your eagerness to conduct future business depend on your interaction with the attendant?	88/91	11/9
11. Are your impressions of the institution based on how you are treated by attendants?	88/89	12/11	12. If you had a choice would you chose the same attendant to serve you?	81/85	18/15
13. Are your impressions of the institution based on the nature of the transactions?	91/91	9/9	14. Were you offered any unsolicited additional assistance, guidance or information?	54/54	45/46

Figure 9**Attendant Effect on Client Feeling by Department**

Highest effect on client feeling by the Treasury Department

Additionally, as a means of further validating the data, correlational analysis is applied to the findings regarding overall positive perception and overall decline in negative perception. In this regard, Pearson's correlation through Microsoft Excel software, indicate an R^2 value of 0.954

or 95.4% (fig. 10), corroborating the moderateness of the 11% overall positive increase in perception. Further, in terms overall decline in negative perception, correlational analysis also support initial results showing a minus R^2 value of -10.66 (fig.11), corroborating the 10% findings of decreased negative perception.

Figure 10

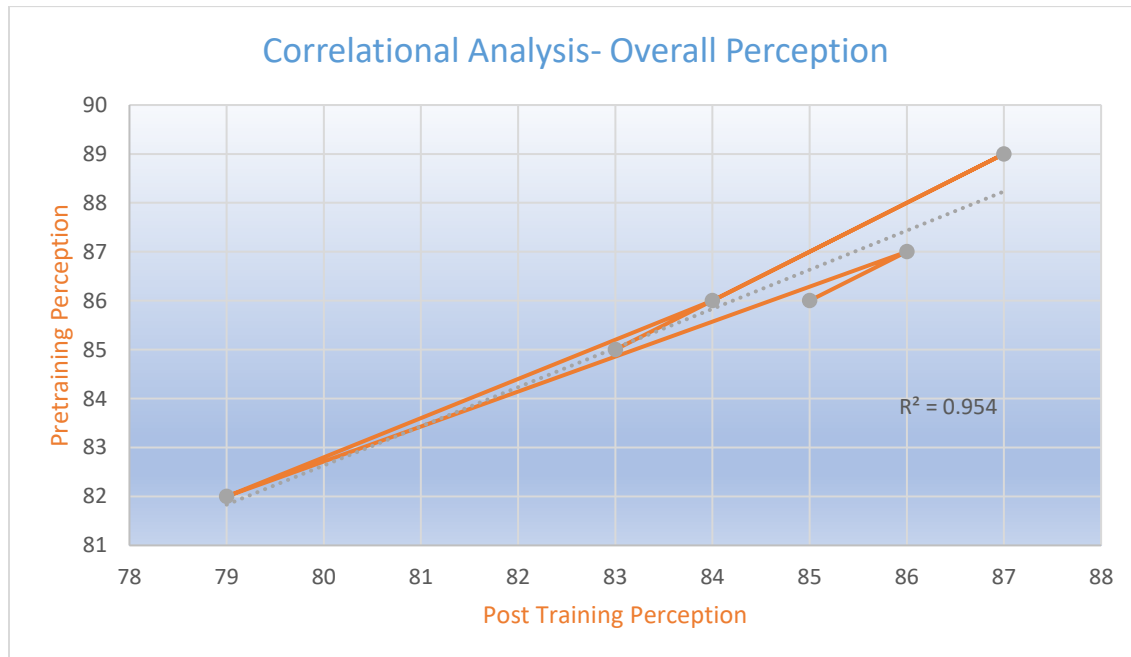
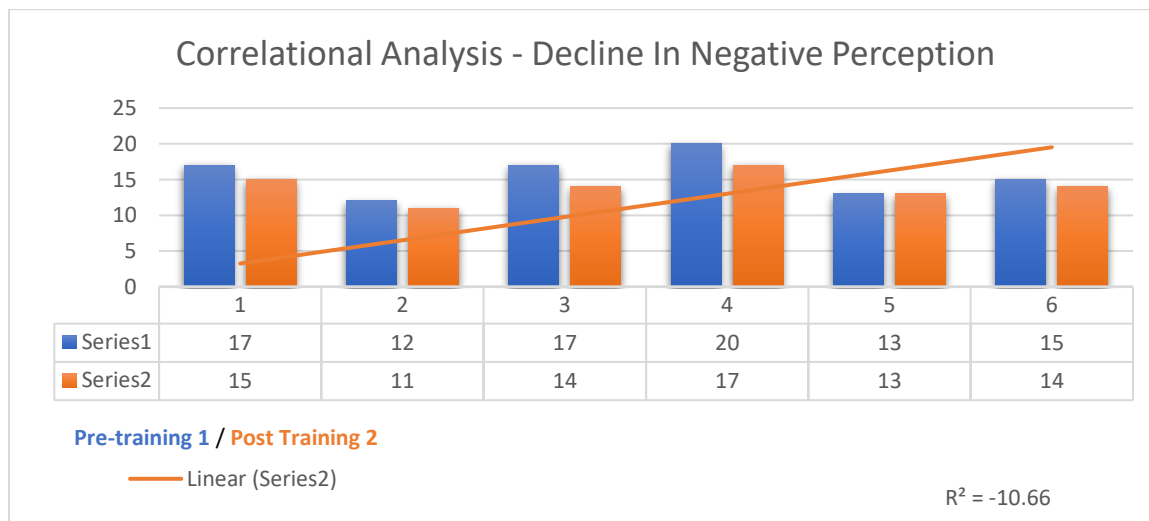


Figure 11



Qualitative Results – Focus Groups PS-TEFF and DA Cards

A qualitative approach using two focus groups (FG), a public sector training evaluation feedback form (PS-TEFF), and drop or adopt (DA) cards are used to respond to the key research question (RQ1), of whether training in HR soft skills improves business performance and hypothesis (H1) assumption that HR training does improve business performance. Notwithstanding, the overarching emphasis given to RQ1, more dedicated use is made of the qualitative approaches in relation to RQ4 and RQ5. The participants of the focus groups were made up of a total of 33 employees, each with approximately five years working experience, from four public sector departments. Group one comprised 17 persons while 16 persons formed group two. Each department fielded four participants per group with the Treasury Department having one additional person in group two. A potential fifth public sector agency did not participate in the focus group aspect of the research because of Covid restrictions, resulting in no representation from the Traffic Department. The data is thematically coded using QDA Miner software, according to nine codes in five categories as presented following.

Table 18
Codes and Categories

HRT Access / Availability	HRT Value	HRT Transfer	HRT Transformation	HRT Self-awareness
Exposure to Training (ET)	Need for Training (NT)	Intent to Apply (IA)	Intent to Adjust (AD)	Introspection (IN)
	Business Benefit (BB)	Intent to Share (IS)	Personal Development (PD)	
		Interpersonal Relations (IR)		

HRT refers to Human Relations Training

Table 19
Explanation of Codes

CODE	INDICATOR	Illustrative Quote Example
Exposure to Training (ET)	Expressions indicating the degree of participant's prior contact with HR training	<i>... "Not in Human Relations but in Customer Service".</i>
Need for Training (NT)	Expressions indicating necessity of HR training for individual and social success	<i>"Human Relations should not start at the work level, but before".</i>
Business Benefit (BB)	Expressions indicating necessity of HR training for business success	<i>... "It gave me a better understanding on how to deal with the customers"</i>
Intent to Apply (IA)	Expressions indicating intentions to act in accordance to learning	<i>... "It definitely taught me what I was doing wrong, what I need to focus on, what I need to emphasize more or what to tweak".</i>
Intent to Share (IS)	Expressions indicating intentions to pass on learned information	<i>... "So let's assist one another even though our Heads (bosses) are not doing it but"...</i>
Interpersonal Relations (IR)	Expressions indicating intentions to use learned information within social contexts	<i>... "we can respect each other, we can respect each other's opinions and still be able to work together pursuing the same goal".</i>
Intent to Adjust (AD)	Expressions indicating intentions to make personal changes as a result of HR training	<i>... "it's a daily thing you work on it, it doesn't happen overnight. So I am actually challenging my own self"</i>
Personal Development (PD)	Expressions indicating personal growth resulting from HR training	<i>... "It is a step further to enhance myself"...</i>
Introspection (IN)	Expressions indicating intentions to engage in personal reflection for the benefit of self and others	<i>... "For me there was a lot of self-awareness – basically check myself, a lot of things that will help relationship wise with my family, and most importantly at work".</i>

Focus Group RQ1/H1

RQ1. To what extent does HR affect Business performance (BP)?

H1. Human Relations improves business performance.

Code- Exposure to Training

In order to address RQ1 and H1 data is drawn from the categories HRT Access/Availability along with HRT Value, while focusing on the codes Exposure to Training (ET), Need for Training (NT) and Business Benefit (BB). In response to interview schedule question one which asked ***“To what extent did you have organized Human Relations Training before now?”*** A total of four out of 33 participants answered affirmatively. “F” represents a female participant and “M” represents a male participant.

F1: “Yes I have...I would say it is basically the same thing”

F2: “I took human relations in the semester at college, it is kind of similar”.

M2: “Yes, I did Human Relations before, with NELU, like him (points to M1)...it was like this one was more informative to me. It’s like I grasped the knowledge better in this class than before”.

One participant appeared to represent the sentiment of the other members who were first timers and had not accessed HR training before.

M3: “Since it’s my first time doing the Program, I am very impressed; I must say it incorporated a lot of subject areas”.

The responses from FG1 and FG2 indicating minimal exposure to HR training is summarized by the moderator with the statement **“So it looks like this was a first time training for a lot of us in Human Relations”.**

Code- Need for Training

Moving to the category of HRT Value and employing the code Need for Training (NT), the related interview schedule question of “***What are your general thoughts about Human Relations training?***” is posed to participants. Most persons appeared to have responded positively to the value and need for HR training, expressing their belief that it should be made more widespread and across sectors.

M2: “I believe Human Relations Training should be implemented even in every school, like it starts from school, up the ladder to the workplace, church, whichever organization because that’s the most important thing in life, to relate with human beings because that’s who we are that’s who we relate with. So I believe it’s a very important training that’s supposed to be implemented in every sector in Saint Lucia”.

Some suggestions included that HR training is needed at all organizational levels, as in the case of F1 who says:

“I think the training should be extended, not only to the blue-collar worker, but as well as the supervisors and managers because in as much as we are taught how to develop ourselves, they need that training as well”.

More specifically many participants seemed to agree that the need for HR training demanded more frequency of application in the workplace as voiced by M4 who says:

“I also believe that it should be held more often. You know like, instead of maybe yearly. It should be a weekly, monthly, - you know something that you just pick persons from departments and it’s always running. It should be like a reminder almost like when you go to school you have briefings, the Principal speaks to you all before class, it should be something like that.

M4 continues by expressing how widespread he believes HR training should be, with F4 expressing similar sentiments. He says:

...”It should start from the politicians (laughter erupts) coming down, because you hear them in the House and the way they address each other and names they call each other, what examples do they set for the lower ones and the front liners [other participants express their agreement with this point by clapping and expressing agreement]. I always had that issue and I also wanted to raise it but now I got the opportunity”.
“If they cannot communicate with each one another, how would we communicate with them? They’re not setting the example, so for us to communicate with them it will be

difficult. So I think this training should be not just for the front liners, but for the entire staff, the entire organization, the entire public service – from top, from the Prime Minister down to the janitor” (F4).

Code- Business Benefit

Continuing under the category HRT Value but with the code Benefit to Business (BB), the participants responded to the question, ***“How relevant do you think the recently concluded training is for the organization?”*** and appeared to generally suggest that the concluded HR training has a significant degree of relevance to the organization. For instance, participant F7 offers:

“I believe that it is relevant to the organization. It kind of relates to what I do. You kind of do a little bit of psychology with this training, you do psychology on the customer, watch how they interact with you, listen to their needs, once you listen and note their expression, you can tell if they are frustrated and you try to help them out”.

Similarly, one police officer with the Immigration Department M1, expresses his feelings in support of the training’s relevance to his organization he says:

“With the Police Force we have our own skeletons. It has to do a lot with trust, efficiency, productivity... and with the training that we get here, there are a lot of things we can curb, a lot of things that we can address and make us what the public want us to be”.

As a follow up, an iteration of the previous question is asked as a measure of verification of responses and probing deeper into the feelings and opinions of the participants as to their perceived benefit of HR training to the organization. This version of the question asks, ***“In what ways do you think the training could be beneficial to your organization?”*** to this, F6 responds with the seeming agreement of most that:

“It gave me a better understanding on how to deal with the customers”.

The expression captured in this response, makes the suggestion that improved customer service is a derived benefit of HR training to the organization. In agreement, but adding the element of communication, F5 expresses her belief that:

“How we communicate with our customers and what I thought was customer service really wasn’t. Customer service is going the extra mile. So what I would not have done before, I will try to do it now – improve on myself, not only for my workplace but for my family as well”.

Again, F3 opined:

“I think that Human Relations training is needed by everyone in all departments because it not only affects you, but it helps you, helps how you relate to customers which increases the productivity of the entire department”.

Focus Group RQ4/H4

RQ4. To what extent are employees willing to undergo personal adjustments for organizational purposes?

H4. HR affects employee willingness to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others.

Code – Intent to Adjust

RQ4 seeks to determine the level of selflessness individuals are willing to exercise in favor of others as a result of HR training and hypothesizes that HR training has a potential positive impact on self-sacrificial tendencies directed at benefitting others. RQ4/H4 are addressed primarily under the category of HRT Transformation engaging the codes, Intent to Adjust and Personal Development along with Intent to Apply within the category of HRT Transfer. In accordance with the interview schedule FG participants were asked, ***“Has this training changed you in any way? If so how?”*** Most respondents seemed to express a new and renewed interest in making personal adjustments and demonstrating awareness of their impact on others. M6 declares:

... "I would be different at work from now on so I know with my difference I would inspire my other colleagues to be different and now they would have this drive to become like me or maybe even better than I am so that the impression that the public has about us would change and we would give them a better service now and we would be more aware of our shortcomings, cause I have realized that I have shortcomings I don't know it all but with the training I have already identified mine and I want to work on it and with this I know now that I am a little more confident going back to work and put this into practice."

Along similar lines, F8 acknowledges:

"This training has definitely sharpened my skills to deal with people, deal with customers, deal with colleagues, and I will definitely impact my colleagues more positively and ensure that I reflect on myself my behaviors, my attitudes and emotional intelligence that is something I will definitely look into serving customers".

Code – Personal Development

Remaining in the category of HRT Transformation, the code Personal Development is used to glean FG data to determine the impact of HR training on personal development. In response to the question *"In what ways do you think the training would be beneficial to you?"* most participants offered contributions acknowledging indications of personal development. For instance, several expressions of personal development are captured in the sentiments of participants M4, F4 and F7 respectively:

M4: ... "So right now it has my problem solving skills heightened"

F4: "I am a little more confident going back to work tomorrow"

F7: "This program has taught me how to communicate with my fellow coworkers".

A further contribution on personal development is offered by F5, who elaborates that:

"I think it's very important to me as an individual in terms of how to deal with everyday situations because it's not only for my department but having Human Relations soft skills, everyday a situation arises. With these soft skills, now I am better equipped as in how to deal with these situations, sometimes how to disarm a customer now I am a lot more confident going back into the workplace. I am a lot more confident now".

Code - Intent to Apply

The code Intent to Apply under the category of HRT Transfer, extracted indicators in the data regarding participants' intentions to put learned information into practice and was in part prompted by the question, ***“How prepared or willing are you to apply your training for the enhancement of public perception of your organization”***. Several illustrative quotes were mined from the data indicating trainee willingness to apply. Such that F4 offers:

“From this training, it will be a work-in-progress, I am not saying that I am going to change tomorrow, but I am going to take what I have learnt and try to incorporate it into my day-to-day activities but not only myself but my colleagues and the customers at large... I will try my hardest to use the skills that have been given to me in this course to have a better effect on myself and the people I work with”.

Further, prompting focus on intent to apply in the form of the question ***“How much of your training are you willing to adopt as part of your everyday lifestyle both in and out of work?”***, yielded indications of majority willingness in this regard, led by M1 who declared: *“All of it”*, echoed by some of the other participants who included, *“every aspect”*. F8 elaborates:

“One of my main issues is being assertive, being too frank with the customers. Some of them are intimidated by me not because of facial expression but because of my direct way of speaking. I have done customer service crash courses before but this is different it is going to the depth of what customer service actually is. I did some self-reflection last night and actually thought about the way that I and my colleagues deal with some customers. This is something I plan to work on and maybe tell them in a more courteous or pleasant way”.

A major expression indicating intent to apply is contributed in a sort of call to action by M1 in the statement:

...”right now we know what is required to help the customer. [Participants express their agreement] With this training we can actually link with one another. If a colleague calls you from another department, do not brush off your colleagues – each one help one. [Agreement – one person indicated that numbers could be exchanged]. So let’s assist one another even though our Heads are not doing it but we have the training and we can incorporate all that training into providing a proper service to the public. [Participants agreed – good recommendation].

Focus Group RQ5/H5

RQ5. Would national HR programs through businesses be useful for addressing HR related social issues?

H5. HR generated improvements are transferrable from business to social contexts.

Code – Intent to Share

In order to address the concerns of RQ5/H5, the data were coded as Intent to Share and Interpersonal Relations under the category HRT Transfer and Introspection, under the category HRT Self-awareness. In general, the participants seemed not only to hold a belief that HR training should be widespread but also expressed willingness to share their organizationally acquired training within social contexts external to the organization. Most respondents voiced their intentions to practice their learning within the context of family, friends and coworkers. Some indications of their intent to share, are gleaned from the data in statements such as:

“... I’m in customer service, so I deal directly with the customer but it’s not only for that, it’s for my personal growth as well, not only in the work place, but for outside, how I deal with my family and people on a day-to-day basis” (F4).

Several participants make comments in similar vein:

“I learnt a lot from what from the information, it kind of helped me to refocus ...so I could actually practice it both in my family environment and at my work” (F6).

“I am going to take what I have learnt and try to incorporate it into my day-to-day activities but not only myself but my colleagues and the customers at large” (F8).

“It is the most important skills that you can ever have. Especially in your relationship, in your workplace, in your family, it helps you a lot, especially how you can relate to people outside” (F1).

Code – Interpersonal Relations

The data mined within the code of Interpersonal Relationships is examined for indicators of the effect of HR training on relationships. Among the questions asked to stimulate discussion in this regard was, ***“In what ways have your thinking and behavior changed in terms of your relationship with others?”*** Respondents widely signaled awareness of positive relationship impact and expressed several comments indicating their sentiments. While some suggested in relation to HRT that *“It would eliminate a lot of the conflict that we are facing in the society”* (F2), others held the following opinions:

“From today going forward it would be very beneficial to my life, my professional life and my relationships, basically all round. It would be very beneficial” (F3).

“It forces you to look at yourself in a way to judge yourself. Am I doing the correct thing? Am I sending out the message that I really want to send out? So it causes you to be more self-aware and to see that you actually need more help with relating to people as opposed to seeing the customer as always the one with the problem”(F5).

“As a police officer, I think Human Relations would assist the police force tremendously, especially in conflict resolution, in being proactive in battling crime that’s one thing maybe the community relations branch of the Police Force could actually use as a tool in telling the schools when they have their lectures that is something that is very relevant in combating crime especially domestic crimes” (F7).

I think it taught me more to consider others. Although someone may be a certain way or act a certain way, I do not know what they went through on their journey but just consider others and do not treat people based on how you feel but treat somebody how I would want them to treat me in a sense. Be the best that I can be toward them (F9).

Code – Introspection

The code Introspection identified data regarding reflective and reflexive thinking stimulated in participants as a result of HRT under the category of Self-awareness. Almost entirely, the participants positively voiced varying degrees of introspection motivated by the training. Most remarked of changes in their thinking and acknowledged and awakening of awareness of their impact on others.

“I find this class was more soul-searching and have me to reflect more than what I did before” (M2).

... “there are certain aspects of my life that I have to work on and it has probably affected persons around me with not knowing that and I reflected on some of it and plan to make a better person of myself” (M3).

“There is always an impact. From now on I will always try to be aware and stay aware that I have an impact on others, even if it is not just at work, in community, in society, I know I always have an impact so I will make sure whatever I do it will be positive impact, somebody is always watching” (M1).

“This training has helped me focus on myself so I can better serve the customer... It forces you to be introspective and to look at yourself – at the workplace how you normally relate to people and then you see how you can improve – sometimes you thought you were doing the right thing” (F4).

RQ1/RQ2

In terms of accessing employee perception of business performance, the interview schedule used two questions to more directly evoke responses to derive the required data. Accordingly the questions asked, ***“What do you think is the public’s perception of your organization and why?”*** and ***“Do you believe that this training could impact client perception of the organization?”*** In general, participants seemed to agree that the public’s perception of the sector is less than positive and most appeared to gravitate to the belief that HR soft skills training would be beneficial for improving both internal and especially client perceptions of their performance. Several impassioned submissions were made in this regard.

M1: The perception that the public has about our Department is not a good one. Reason being it is kind of frustrating normally going back and forth. I really like the point that the other participant made about all of us falling under the same umbrella. We here, all of us need each other for us to do our work. Someone goes to Registry in order to get their birth certificate first before coming to Electoral to get their ID. Sometimes, I do find it is ridiculous that they send some people across for an ID card, then to get a birth certificate because you were born before you get an ID card. Because lack of knowledge, running around all the time, that is what really frustrates the people. And they would not single out they would just say the government, the poor government. It is us public servants...”

F5: I think that is the point of the training, because we look at it like we have to change the public's perspective, but how can we want the public to change first when our Departments are not doing the change at the end of the day from one of us and then it spreads (like Covid). So let's fix our department and then we can look at the public. At the end of the day, we form part of the public, I am sure some of us go to some Ministries and give them headaches the same way and we have our perspectives about them too.

F4: Soft skills so we are supposed to deal with the communication between ourselves and the managers and the different departments and there we falter.

F7: I believe the public's perception of my organization [Registry] is that we on the inside are the ones making the mistakes on their certificates. I believe this is the case, because when they come in, persons (employees) do not really explain to them the reason why the certificates have the errors on them.

F3: On a daily basis we get a lot of negatives. It is negative because in people's minds the public service is inefficient, ineffective and all of these negative words, but I am hoping overtime that changes. It just takes one person to say speak about a positive change in service. What happens is that persons come in with their preconceived expectations.

F6: It is negative because you need a birth certificate for everything – ID, passport, bank – also to get a birth certificate it is a process, they don't like to wait. They don't like to go through the process so the minute they cannot get it the same day we will get a negative energy from them. The public hates my Department because they do not get what they want.

F7: It is negative because there is no improvement no matter how we try. The customers come with a mindset that we want to keep them back.

Drop and Adopt Cards

The Drop and Adopt Cards (DA) were used for capturing inclinations to behavioral changes in employees in response to HR training. Employees wrote brief statements or phrases on 3x3 inch cards, highlighting their primary personal areas of intended change resulting from the training. The written responses from the DA cards were categorized and coded in accordance to the focus group FG. In general, most of the data from DA cards reflected agreement with the codes utilized in the FG. Participants confirmed in a personalized written form, similar sentiments as those derived in the FG. As such, personally critical changes in keeping with learned HR soft skills

training through SAIL, were indicated by every participant (P) relevant to the assigned codes. For instance, participants cited interpersonal relations based behaviors such as *“patience”* (P1) and *“trying to communicate better”* (P15), as behaviors they desire to adopt, while including self-development oriented tendencies such as *“procrastinating less”* (P5) and *“being too aggressive”* (P11) as behaviors to be dropped.

Table 20

DA Cards Response Table – Adopt

Code	Indicative Statements and Phrases Adopt Cards
Need for Training (NT)	<i>“Communication skills. Want to increase my performance at work” (P10).</i> <i>“Want to be able to serve better and easier. Communicate better” (P26)</i>
Business Benefit (BB)	<i>“Try to interact more with coworkers” (P13)</i> <i>“Be more patient with customers” (P4)</i> <i>“Treat all customers equally” (P6)</i>
Intent to Apply (IA)	<i>“Do my utmost to leave a positive impression on everyone” (P8)</i> <i>“Take charge (more vocal)” (P14)</i> <i>“Want to create an impact” (P16).</i>
Intent to Share (IS)	<i>“Encourage others to be more cooperative” (P12)</i> <i>“Interact more with others” (P31)</i>
Interpersonal Relations (IR)	<i>“Emotional intelligence – manage and use my emotions in a positive way at home, work and friends” (P28)</i> <i>“Improved interaction with my work colleagues” (P17)</i> <i>“Improved communication skills” (P26)</i> <i>“Be mindful of my impact on others” (P14)</i> <i>Try to interact more with coworkers (P22)</i>
Intent to Adjust (AD)	<i>“Rearrange my mindset” (P18)</i> <i>“Be a good listener, love more, focus, patience, emotional intelligence” (9)</i>
Personal Development (PD)	<i>“Improve communication skills” (P33)</i> <i>“Self-development- expand and learn new skills, knowledge” (P24)</i> <i>“Being bold. Being able to stand my ground and assertive about what I want” (P12)</i>

Introspection (IN)	<i>"Be more self-aware"(P2)</i> <i>"Be mindful of my impact on others"(P3)</i> <i>"Self-observation / self-awareness"(P7)</i>
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The Exposure to Training (ET) code is omitted from the DA Cards analysis P=Participant

Table 21

DA Cards Response Table - Drop

Code	Indicative Statements and Phrases Drop Cards
Need for Training (NT)	<i>"Stop allowing customers to leave without being fully satisfied"(P7)</i>
Business Benefit (BB)	<i>"Being unpunctual" (P4)</i> <i>"Stop letting client's attitude affect the level of service provided" (P17)</i> <i>"Stop letting customers leave without fully listening and understanding them and thoroughly explaining practices and ensuring that they fully understand"(P3)</i>
Intent to Apply (IA)	<i>"Not listening to people and their thoughts"(P29)</i>
Intent to Share (IS)	<i>"Show others love. Treat others good"(P23)</i>
Interpersonal Relations (IR)	<i>"Not listening to others and not being selfless"(P20)</i>
Intent to Adjust (AD)	<i>"Being confrontational / stubbornness toward others" (P11)</i> <i>"To stop/quit being stubborn" (13)</i>
Personal Development (PD)	<i>"Poor Self-esteem"(P10)</i> <i>"I am trying to let go of grudges"(P25)</i> <i>"Being too sensitive"(P15)</i> <i>"Taking things personally"(P24)</i>
Introspection (IN)	<i>"I am trying to let go of grudges"(P25)</i> <i>"Not loving myself"(P4)</i>

The Exposure to Training (ET) code is omitted from the DA Cards analysis P=Participant

PS-TEFF

The Public Service Training Evaluation Feedback Form (PS-TEFF) is used by the DoPS to evaluate the efficacy of trainers and the delivery of training to the Public Service. This

instrument is useful to the present study in that it provides an unbiased independently constructed instrument to gain participant's feedback in determining the relevance and effectiveness of the HR training received. Five questions are used for the purposes of this study, which includes three Likert scale questions, Q6, Q20 and Q24 and two written short response items Q15 and Q26.

Thus, item Q6 asks ***"I will be able to use what I learned immediately in my current job"***. Most respondents seemed to agree to a high degree of immediate applicability of the training, registering scores of predominantly eight, nine and ten on a scale of one to ten. Similarly, in response to Q20 which asks ***"I will be able to apply what I learned to the job"***, the majority of respondents indicate with scores of eight, nine and mainly ten, that they will be able to apply their learning to the job. Q24 attempts to ascertain commitment and asks ***"I am committed to applying what I learned on the job"***. This item also drew ratings in the upper score ranges of predominantly eight, nine and ten among most participants.

In terms of the written short response items of the PS-TEFF, Q15 asks participants to list the three most useful things that they learned from the training while Q26 enquires as to what additional help participants need in order to be successful in their job. These items allowed participants' feelings especially with institutional relevance and produced several responses that could be coded within the constructs of the current research. For instance, P2 submits in response to Q15:

1. *"How to be more resourceful with clients"* (Code-**BB**)
2. *"Focus on the solution rather than the problem"* (Code-**PD**)
3. *"Not to take things personally"* (Code-**IN**)

Similar coding opportunities were obtained through responses to Q26. Most respondents offered statements supporting HR as an aid to success in their jobs.

P8: *"More training. This training has left me with ability to deal with conflict in the work place and how to work with difficult clients"* (Code- **IR**)

P3: *"I wish that other persons from my Department would participate in this training in order to facilitate the growth and changes in the Department"* (Code-**IS**)

P21: *"I would love to continue more human relations in all aspects taught to enable me to really learn the perks and dive into the depth of the topics and what we encounter throughout our daily lives"* (Code-**IA**)

P10: *"I need to continue to work on myself. Continue to learn about other Departments within my organization in the event I am asked a question which does not directly pertain to my role, I will still be able to answer that question"*. (Code- **AD**)

Thus, the data captured by the PS-TEFF, DA Cards, Focus Groups and PSPS are all gleaned in accordance with the research objectives and are used as the basis for further evaluation next.

Evaluation of Findings

While the previous section engaged in presenting the results of the study, this section focusses on succinctly reporting the meaning of those findings in relation to research interests. Among the study's primary interests is the relationship between Human Relations (HR) and business performance (BP) particularly, the determination through empirical investigation, whether a NH RTP will accrue business performance improvement (BPI) benefits and whether business is feasible as potential agents of social change. In order to explore those interests, the study utilizes complementary instruments, a theoretical and conceptual framework, research questions and hypothetical assumptions to produce the present findings.

As such, deriving initial meaning from the findings draws from the foundations of the theoretical and conceptual framework, the research questions and their related hypotheses. Consequently, several general statements are emphasized in response to the data presented. Firstly, there appears to be evidence of a relationship between HR training (HRT) and business performance benefits. Secondly, there is indication of a more positive than negative influence of

HRT on the perception of an organization and thirdly, HRT has the potential to impact social circumstances.

Thus, this section representing an evaluation of the findings, considers the meaning of the results obtained using the relevant instruments, in reference to the theoretical and conceptual framework, research questions, hypotheses and supporting literature. The section incorporates these elements in its interpretation and leads with a cursory reiteration of the theoretical and conceptual framework, followed by interpretative overviews on a paired research question (RQ) and hypothesis (H) basis, from RQ1/H1 to RQ5/H5.

Theoretical and Conceptual Review

Foundationally, the research is modeled on the theoretical and conceptual pillars of Training Transfer and Transformational Learning, which support the ideas that HR soft skills training possesses the qualities of being transferrable, transformational and portable. In this regard, transferability refers to the nature of training as being convertible into individually and organizationally beneficial behaviors (Jordan 2016) such that, there is a significant degree of positive content transfer of knowledge, attitudes and skills, from one entity to another and from one training context to another, by the trainee (Baldwin and Ford 1988).

Being transformational suggests that HR training stimulates the engagement of recursive reflexivity in individuals such that, they are moved to make changes in favor of applying learned material and making behavioral adjustments. In alignment, portability suggests that the impact of transfer and transformation are inextricable from the individual and are therefore transported to the various contextual settings of the individual, with the potential to affect those contexts.

Supportively, the theoretical and conceptual framework buttresses several claims that are investigated through the utilized research questions and dedicated hypotheses such that:

- HR training is transferable
- HR training is transformative
- HR training is portable
- HR training impacts business performance
- HR training impacts beyond intended business contexts
- HR training potentially impacts social change
- HR training is potentially impactful for widespread business performance, delivered through a NH RTP.

Thus, these theoretical and conceptual framework supported claims, are operationalized and actualized through the paired research questions and hypotheses, used to give bearing to the results.

Findings RQ1/H1

RQ1. *To what extent does HR affect BP?*

H1: *HR improves business performance.*

Overall, though more significantly than apparently overwhelming in several cases, the results reveal congruity with the theoretical and conceptual framework, claims, hypotheses and related literature offerings. Among the key findings in relation to RQ1/H1, is that there appears to be a definite relationship between HRT and business performance. Although the extent of the impact seems modest for this study at 1% (table 7) increase in overall BP and an 11% (Table 8)

positive change on a combined individual variable level, the trajectory of the effect points firmly in the direction of business performance improvement as a result of HR soft skills training.

Importantly, while these positive shifts appear negligible to modest at a glance, they are extremely significant since at the time of data collection, soft skill oriented measures were in operation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. These measures contributed to inadvertent improvements in perceived business performance. Thus, regardless of the extent of the positive movement identified in the results, they signal the strength of the influence of HR training in driving BP improvements, notwithstanding situations of positive BP as generated by the “Covid effect”. Thus, the findings as presented suggests that HR training possesses the potential to transcend prevailing business performance perceptions and circumstances, such that HR training “makes good better” but ultimately supporting H1, that HR training improves business performance.

This finding supports similarly unanticipated outcomes and gives further meaning to the HRT to BPI link as revealed in the literature through the Michigan Institute of Technology (MIT) and Shahi Export Manufacturing of India, whose HRT study on BPI showed a 265% productivity increase (Walsh, 2017). These results were unanticipated by the researchers because of the highly routinized and technical nature of the study related jobs, that did not seem dependent on soft skills for organizational improvement. Significantly, the MIT findings bears resemblance to the findings of this study in that, notwithstanding the circumstances, HRT seems transcendent in that it potentially produces BPI. Companionately, this study’s findings inform both the effects of HRT on BPI as well as the effects of HRT on client perception of BP as is the concern of RQ2 and H2.

Findings RQ2/H2

RQ2. *How impactful are employee demonstrations of HR on how clients perceive BP?*

H2: *Demonstration of HR behavior affects client perception of business performance.*

Hence, the results indicate an overall decrease in negative client perception after HRT of 10%, judging from the increase in post training results, derived from the differences on the combined dimensions of variables in questionnaire item 16a to 16f (Table 17). These decreases in negative perception indicate a positive effect on client perception of BP after HRT. Further, the results register a 4% increase in positive perception in consideration of questions nine and five together and improvement in perception on every item in the overall Likert Scale measure, except for the variable “Ease of Transaction” (EOT).

Thus, (EOT) showed no change in negative perception between pre and post training, remaining at 13%. Perhaps, this suggests that in cases of established transactional routines and procedures, clients’ personal like or dislike for the transaction persists regardless of HRT but their general perception of BP could be positively influenced by HRT. More explicitly, the meaning drawn from this finding is that while HRT positively affects client perception of BP it does not appear to induce clients’ subjective likability of specific transactions. This finding is of significant interest since it speaks to the appropriateness of the theoretical underpinnings for interpreting subjective phenomena.

Thus, based on the tenets of Training Transfer Theory (TTT) which support the idea that soft skill oriented training transfer, is measurable in the perceptions of others as a result of its abstractly facilitative applicability (Blume, Ford, Baldwin and Huang, 2010), the findings are

congruent with the hypothesized assumption that HRT affects BP. Moreover, while the findings theoretically facilitate relevant and targeted soft skill matters, it further highlights the suitability of TTT and its associated multidimensional levels of measurement, in that subjective phenomena can be discerned and considered. This is in keeping with the principle that rationalistic behaviors should be treated with rationalistic principles (Chen, Luo and Qu, 2015), while subjective behaviors, perceptions and performance related HR concerns are more suitably measured through principles based on subjectivity (Singh, Darwish and Potocnik 2016).

As such, the findings of this study give meaning to emergent subjectivity and add another notch of confirmation to other studies that find a positive link between HR related issues and client perception. Such studies include Janda, Trocchia and Gwinner's (2002), examination on consumer perceptions of service quality, Flavián and Guinalú's (2006) study on perceptions of customer trust and Afsad and Javed's (2020) investigation on perceptions of employees regarding corporate social responsibility. More directly however, this study's finding that HRT has efficacy on client perception, raises the potential for stronger consideration of subjectivity to be used as a measurable indicator of business performance. Accordingly, in terms of forging the interests of soft skill concerns RQ3 and H3 examine the findings in relation to client willingness to interact with the business entity in the future, as opposed to focus on the subjective preferences of a specific transaction.

Findings RQ3/H3

***RQ3.** How would employee demonstrations of HR behavior affect client willingness to engage in repeated interactions with a business entity?*

***H3:** Demonstration of HR behavior affects the willingness of clients to engage in repeat transactions with a business.*

Accordingly, the findings indicate among the largest representation for desirability of clients to conduct repeat business with the institution at 91% of participants responding positively, signifying a 3% increase over pre training ratings. Thus, though apparently modest, the results relating to RQ3/H3 are subject to the vicissitudes of the “Covid effect” as all the other research concerns under scrutiny. Notwithstanding, interpretation of the findings despite these challenges, provide clear pointed indication that HRT positively affects client willingness to engage in repeat transactions with a business. This willingness to engage in repeat transactions is supported, though reflected differently, in the results of question 13 which depicts among the largest post training positive increases at 4%, for doing future transactions with the same employee. This suggests that post HRT enhances employee service delivery such that clients are not only willing to engage repeatedly with the business, they are also willing to engage repeatedly with the same attendant.

Accordingly, Janda, Trocchia and Gwinner’s (2002) perception of service quality study and Flavián and Guinalíu’s (2006) enquiry on perceptions of customer trust, both support the findings of this research in that they point to positive outcomes emanating from perceptions of quality of service and the building of trust, based on quality of interaction during provision of service. In the case of this study, the findings indicate that HRT enhances the quality of service delivery and trustworthiness for employees, such that there is both willingness to engage in repeat transactions with the organization and willingness to engage repeatedly with HR trained employees.

Relatedly, the findings are consistent with increases associated with overall post HRT ratings of interaction with the institution and overall feelings after experiencing the institution, both at 4% in responses of “very good”. In similar vein, post HRT responses to question 15 which seek to determine the impact trained employees have on the clients’ feelings, show a 4% increase

in terms of feeling valued and a 3% improvement in terms of feeling like “just another client”. These findings could be interpreted in light of support for H3 that, HR related interventions are likely to enhance the quality of interaction, experience and service with an entity, potentially improving both the perception of performance and the willingness to engage repeatedly with the business in the future.

Interestingly, the findings indicate that there is no difference in pre and post HRT offerings of unsolicited additional assistance to clients, with the result remaining slightly above average at 54% for respondents who were offered unsolicited assistance. This represents the lowest positive score for all questions and may suggest that while employees did not do more than they were expected to do, based on the necessary rigidities and parameters of the transactions, they did what they were expected to do with more attention to HR soft skills as a result of HRT. This could be ascertained since the other related findings point to improved interactions, feelings and service experiences overall. Supportively, this finding is indicative of the transformational properties of HRT as proposed in the theoretical/conceptual framework of the study.

In this regard the findings in response to improvements in service, feelings and experience as well as the necessary stability in the provision of unsolicited additional assistance, highlight the positive transformations made from the perspectives of the employees in consideration of their acquisition of HR soft skills. As such, the framework in use suggests transformational effectiveness to employees and by extension clients and the organization. Thus, on the basis of Transformational Learning Theory (TLT) as a reflexive exercise facilitating changes in individuals and leading to the application of learning for the improvement of social and business contexts, the findings seem to reflect transformations in employees that redound to social and business benefits in accordance to the theoretical/conceptual framework.

Thus the current findings, while supporting H3 and the theoretical/conceptual framework, coincide with Chopra's (2015) pronouncement as to the indispensability of training to employees who are the ultimate determinants of business success. In this case, the willingness of clients to engage in repeat transactions despite the absence of additional assistance, signals the role of HRT on employee transformation and its impact on positive business outcomes. Peculiarly, Smith (1991), offers the caution that soft skills because of their abstraction are considerably more challenging to train than "hard" skills since they are dependent on individual intelligence. However, the findings here suggests that transformative learning appears to improve business appeal notwithstanding the unchanged qualities of routinized hard skill or technical transactions. HRT appears to possess the potential to bypass the barriers of varying personal intelligence levels and hard/technical skill demands which transform individuals and produce business benefits that may include willingness to engage in repeat business.

Findings RQ4/H4

***RQ4.** To what extent are employees willing to undergo personal adjustments for organizational purposes?*

***H4:** HR affects employee willingness to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others.*

In addition to client willingness influenced by HRT, the findings further support employee based transfer and transformations resulting in business benefits in terms of willingness to act. Specifically, with regard to willingness to adjust and make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others, as is the concern of H4, the findings particularly through the focus group, DA cards and

PS-TEFF data, generally indicate a high degree of intent to be personally sacrificial in favour of others. For instance, these intentions are captured in the statement:

... "I would be different at work from now on so I know with my difference I would inspire my other colleagues to be different and now they would have this drive to become like me or maybe even better than I am so that the impression that the public has about us would change and we would give them a better service now and we would be more aware of our shortcomings, cause I have realized that I have shortcomings I don't know it all but with the training I have already identified mine and I want to work on it and with this I know now that I am a little more confident going back to work and put this into practice" (M6).

Thus, in the declaration, "I have shortcomings...I want to work on it", participant (M6) representing the sentiments of most focus group respondents, suggests a willingness to make personal adjustments for the benefit of himself, colleagues, clients and business, as captured in the expression of his desire to be different (transformation), inspirational (Transfer), conscientious about public impression and a "better" provider of service to clients (benefit to others).

Agreeable to the present findings highlighting the impact of HRT on behavioural adjustment in favour of others, Mizerow (2001) posits that a defining characteristic of transformation is its ability to catalyse reflexive, critical thinking and self-directed behaviours such that there are personal changes as a result of engaging with training. Thus, the results here strongly suggest that interaction with HRT stimulates personal behavioural adjustments or sacrificial behaviour such that individuals are moved on their own accord to act selflessly in favour of others. Demonstratively, the findings uphold Mizerow's (2001) pronouncements in that there is evidence of reflexivity ("...I have already identified mine..."), critical thinking ("...I don't know it all...") and self-directedness ("...I would be different at work from now on...").

Further, the findings give meaning to the assumption that HRT has bearing on individual attitude and other subjectively propelled adjustments. In this regard, Sahoo and Mishra (2019) draw attention not solely to the idea that several emergent areas of personalized attitudinal modifications are effected through training but other abstractly oriented and trainable subjective behaviours. Supportively, researchers such as Novianti (2017), Sutton, Williams and Allinson (2015), who engage in studies investigating areas such as self-awareness and emotional intelligence respectively, point to the idea of increasing interest in the widening range of subjectively focused soft skill phenomena, finding a positive relationship between these phenomena and training.

Thus, the findings indicate a heightened sentiment in employees resulting from HRT, demonstrated in expressions of empathy, emotional intelligence, attitude toward others, personal influence and the subjectively imputed psychosocial effects of communication with others. Importantly, the findings support the efficacy of training in self-awareness (SA), attitude adjustment (AA), interpersonal skills (IP) and leadership (LD) together acronymized as (SAIL), in motivating these subjective modifications and enhancing the potential for greater positive attention to others through sacrificial behaviour. As such, indications of the results suggest accord with H4 assumptions that HRT promotes willingness to be sacrificial in favour of others but further facilitates a wedge of consideration for more social thought in relation to H5 assumptions that gains emanating from HRT in the context of business, also find transferability to social contexts.

Findings RQ5/H5

***RQ5:** Would national HR programs through businesses be useful for addressing HR related social issues?*

H5: *HR generated improvements are transferrable from business to social contexts.*

Table 22

Findings Reflecting HRT Impact on Subjective Adjustments

Finding / Result	Meaning/Interpretation	Area of Impact	Source
<i>... "reflect on myself my behaviors, my attitudes and emotional intelligence"...(F8)</i> <i>"Be mindful of my impact on others"(P14)</i>	Willingness to introspect. Increased understanding of self-adjustments in relation to ones effect on others.	Self-awareness	FG DA
<i>... "my attitudes and emotional intelligence that is something I will definitely look into serving customers"...(F8)</i> <i>"Be more patient with customers"(P4)</i>	Willingness to act in favor of others. Increased empathy for others.	Attitude Adjustment	FG DA
<i>... "This training has definitely sharpened my skills to deal with people, deal with customers, deal with colleagues"...(F8)</i> <i>"This training has left me with ability to deal with conflict in the work place and how to work with difficult clients"(P8)</i>	Improved ability to interact successfully and for the benefit of others. Enhanced conflict resolution and communication skills	Interpersonal Skills	FG PS-TEFF
<i>... "I will definitely impact my colleagues more positively"...(F8)</i> <i>"Encourage others to be more cooperative"(P12)</i>	Willingness to apply HRT skills to influence others positively.	Leadership	FG DA

Accordingly, while the study has established plausibility in the transferability of HRT on the basis of its theoretical/conceptual framework, one of its major interests rests in the utility of business as an agent of social change. In this regard, the assumption is made that positive transformations to the individual as a result of training, are portable and carry the same positive benefits via HRT trainees, to social contexts. Thus, given the responses from the focus group, DA cards and PS-TEFF participants, the results suggest potential for business influence on social change. For instance, several responses to DA cards such as: *“Do my utmost to leave a positive impression on everyone”* (P8), *“To stop/quit being stubborn”* (P13) and *“I am trying to let go of grudges”* (P25), all indicate an effort at personal transformation that may transfer into changes in and influences on, social behavior.

However, contrary to the indications of this research, which signal social change impact as a result of institutionally derived HRT and transformed individuals, other research focus dependence on the products of re-education, persuasion, coercion, legal and sometimes violent strategies for effecting social change, particularly HR related social ills (Van Leiden 2015). Thus, these strategies do not take into account the potential for business and individual social ills alleviation as implied by the results. In more direct terms respondents emphasize the potential relationship between business orchestrated HRT transformations and social change in statements such as:

“It is the most important skills that you can ever have. Especially in your relationship, in your workplace, in your family, it helps you a lot, especially how you can relate to people outside” (F1).

“I think it [HRT] taught me more to consider others. Although someone may be a certain way or act a certain way, I do not know what they went through on their journey but just consider

others and do not treat people based on how you feel but treat somebody how I would want them to treat me in a sense. Be the best that I can be toward them” (F9).

“I have an impact on others, even if it is not just at work, in community, in society, I know I always have an impact so I will make sure whatever I do it will be positive impact, somebody is always watching” (M1).

Hence, the meaning derived from the findings is that participants, through their HRT induced transformations and personal adjustments, have both accepted and intend to initiate responsibility to effect social change as the result of a significant, tacit latent effect of HRT. Thus inclusive of the latter, the following summation briefly recollects the key data evaluation highlights and review of the salient considerations regarding the results.

Summary

Accordingly, the preoccupation of this chapter concerned the results and the meaning of those results in relation to the interests of the current research. Among these expressed interests is, making determination based on empirical investigation as to whether the implementation of a NH RTP would serve to improve business performance (BP) in St. Lucia. Significantly, the study seeks to unambiguously clarify pronouncements of connections between HR and BP. Additional interests include exploring HR training as a potential strategy to ameliorate social ills channeled through business as an agent of social change. As such, the data is presented against the backdrop of the theoretical/conceptual framework and in keeping with the research questions and hypothesis. In general, the results highlight that most emerging indications support the assumptions and queries of the hypothesis and research questions, while strongly evidencing a relationship between HRT and BP. Further, the results largely indicate greater positivity of perception by clients and

improved employee performances post HRT. Additionally, the results support the notion that HRT has the potential to impact social circumstances.

Thus, the mixed methods study employs both quantitative and qualitative instruments to gather data in a pre and post training approach. The results are derived from instruments including identical pre and post HRT surveys administered to clients then compared, to determine their quantitatively derived perception of business performance. Additionally, focus groups, DA cards and PS-TEFF forms produce qualitative employee focused data, based on employee exposure to training in self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership (SAIL). These training areas coincide with the theoretical/conceptual framework undergirding the study.

As such, the theoretical/conceptual framework which is foundational to the emerging results, is supported by a triad of theoretical pillars namely, that training is transferrable, transformational and portable. Accordingly, these pillars are considered as being consequential to Training Transfer Theory and Transformational Learning. In this regard, the framework outlines the beneficiaries of training as the organization, clients (individuals), employees and society, while suggesting that training has inter-contextual and inter-entity transferability along with transformational qualities and transportability via transformed individuals. As such, the results presented are representative of the underpinnings of the theoretical/conceptual framework.

On this basis, five relevantly dedicated research questions generate data in alignment with the purposes of the study. Thus, in the case of RQ1/H1, which questions the extent to which HR skills training affects business performance and hypothesizes that training improves BP, the PSPS data shows a minimal but significantly valuable positive shift of one percentage point overall. This shift is regarded as significant as a result of the “Covid effect” which triggered improvements in public sector operations, causing client perceptions of performance to be positively heightened.

Hence, the revelation of the data is that HRT produces improvements in performance notwithstanding conditions and contexts that are already positive.

Congruently, the results indicate overall improvements post HRT, on all but one individual dimension of performance. Along these lines, five out of the six dimensions registered performance perception improvements of between one to three percentage points in the areas of INT 2%, QOS 1%, IMP 3%, FAI 3% and OPI 1%, for a combined total of 10% positive shift overall. Only the area of EOT showed no change either positively or negatively and this may be explained by the built-in restrictions of the transactions which do not allow for easement of the processes. This finding is also significant in that it supports the effects of HRT such that personalized transactional preferences do not overshadow perceptions of performance improvements.

Similarly, the results from all other particularly qualitative data sources, coincide with overall business performance improvements as per the interests of RQ1/H1. In general, the data indicate improvements in the form of benefits to business, on the account of employee transformations consequential to successful HRT transfer and intentions to apply and share learning. In this vein, the results from two focus group sessions relating to the codes “benefit to business” (BB), “Intent to apply” (IA) and “intent to share” (IS), are strongly supportive of the hypothetical assumption that HRT renders performance improvements to business. As such, BB is derived from expressions indicating the acquisition of understanding in dealing with customers, which redounds to BP improvements. Or IA, which is captured in the participants’ declaration that their learning has highlighted areas of performance focus, that are subject to tweaking and emphasis in the workplace, also translating into BP improvements. Again, BP improvements

indicated through the intent to share, is captured in the appeal by employees to assist each other, even in the absence of such promptings for assistance from superiors.

Apart from the BP improvements manifested in potential benefits to business from the FG results, the DA cards and PS-TEFF, also unearth complementary findings. For instance, using similar codes to the FG data, the DA card responses in the majority, find result agreement in the area of BB, with responses indicating employee willingness to be more interactive with coworkers, more patient with customers and more equitable with treatment toward all clients. Further, in terms of IA and IS the results register participant expressions of intentions to show initiative by taking charge and encouraging coworkers to be more corporative, respectively. As such, these expressions are translatable into benefits to the business and by extension represent declared inclinations by employees to drive actions that produce improvements to business performance.

Complementarily, the PS-TEFF as an independent impartial data source, yields results in alignment with all other dedicatedly constructed instruments, in support of HRT as a catalyst for BP improvements. Coded similarly, the data highlights response scores of eight to ten, on a ten point Likert Scale, suggesting respondent willingness for immediate applicability of HRT to the workplace. Moreover, similar scores representing the further commitment of employees to apply their learning, as well as being empowered with the ability to apply learning, is captured in the PS-TEFF results. These responses both corroborate and coincide with the results from the specifically designed research instruments and shares their support for the RQ1/H1 question and hypothesis, as to the extent to which HRT is efficacious regarding improvements in business performance, finding the evidence derived from the study to be in the affirmative.

Also affirmatively, results regarding RQ2/H2 show positive for HRT being impactful on perception of business performance, recording perception increases of four percentage points from

the PSPS after HRT overall. In similar vein, aggregate ratings of individual dimensions of client perception of BP, in consideration of the variables INT, QOS, IMP, FAI and OPI, highlight a 10% reduction in negativity ratings along with an 8% positive shift in perception, from prior neutrality. Significantly, perceptions based on personal interactional experience and feelings, receive among the largest positive post HRT increases of 3% and 4%. Thus, the results suggests that HRT positively impacts clients' perception in terms of eagerness to transact future business based on interaction with attendants. Further, the findings indicate an increased positive perception of feeling "valued" as a client and a general perceived "feeling" of positivity after transaction and post HRT.

Not contrarily, the results pertaining to RQ3/H3 which query the impact of HRT on client willingness to engage in repeat business with the entity and hypothesizes that HRT does have an effect on repeat business, find significant positive increases of between 3% and 4% in post training data. To this end the data reveals that clients are more eagerly predisposed to transact repeat business in general and that their eagerness is notably dependent on the quality of service received after HRT. Thus according to the findings, willingness to repeat business directly corresponds to improvements in the quality of service delivery of employees, expressed in a 4% positive rise in respondents who would opt to transact business with the same employee post HRT. The findings emphasize client willingness to engage in future interactions with business as a plausible product of HRT, which is positively efficacious to the client, the employee and the business.

Further, apart from the PSPS results and facilitation of question/hypotheses one, two and three, the focus groups provide significant results from an employee centric perspective, particularly to the Q4/H4 pairing which examines employee willingness toward sacrificial behavior on account of HRT. Thus the findings highlight the individually transformative potential

of HRT, evidenced by employee expressed intentions to modify their behavior in favor of others including clients, community and organization. Statements declaring intent to be different, desire to inspire, acknowledgment of shortcomings and commitment to apply, indicate via the findings that employees are prepared to make sacrificial adjustments based on introspection, catalyzed by HRT. The results of these transformation driven behaviors evoke interests as expressed in the results, related to Q5/H5.

Accordingly, the findings support theoretical/conceptual framework based assumptions that HRT is individually transformative and inextricable from the recipient such that it is portable to social contexts and potentially amenable to social change purposes. The findings bear out these assumptions with results pointing to participant willingness to amend personal negativities such as holding on to grudges or unnecessary stubbornness. Therefore, these participant intensions imbue value to the notion that transformed individuals are conveyors of socially progressive change behaviors and that organizations by extension are conduits for channeling socially beneficial behaviors into society via HRT.

Thus, the findings appear supportive of the potential for a “business as agency” approach for aiding with matters pertaining to HR social change and ameliorating social ills issues according to Q5/H5 concerns. Further, the results direct attention to the theoretically suggested efficacy of HRT as a transformative tool in that participants express willingness to engage in sacrificial behavior for the benefit of others, in keeping with the interests of Q4/H4. Additionally, the findings regarding Q3/H3 evidences positivity in terms of HRT’s influence on motivating repeat client engagement with business. In this vein, the data signals improvements in quality of service, interaction and individual treatment of clients as contributors to willingness to engage in future business as stimulated by HRT. Complementarily, perception of performance, as another key

concern of the study appears to be positively affected by HRT. This is highlighted in the results in response to Q2/H2 which find perception improvements on most dimensions of performance including interaction, service, feelings and impressions of the institution after interaction.

Overall, the results are indicative of congruence with the overarching interest of the study, embodied in Q1/H1 which enquires as to the extent to which HRT affects BP and hypothesizes that HRT does effect BP improvements. As such, the data generally provides that in most tested dimensions of performance concern to the study, there is a significant positive relationship between HRT and performance. Notwithstanding the seemingly negligible quantitative positive movements in perceived performance, acknowledgement is given to extenuating contextual circumstances brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. These circumstances fuelled HR related improvements to business operations within the target variables of the study. In turn, this heightened business functionality seems to latently serve the purpose of emphasizing the efficacy of HRT in impacting performance improvements, despite prevailing circumstances. Importantly, the results notwithstanding differential magnitude, are sufficiently informative to requirements of empirically investigating the effects of a NH RTP on business performance in St. Lucia. The following chapter considers the implications and related concerns based on the revelations of the results.

Chapter 5: Implications Recommendations and Conclusions

The contents of this chapter are informed by the findings presented in the previous chapter. Accordingly, these findings facilitate the key targeted interests of the research and fuels its resultant implications, recommendations and conclusions. Substantively, the study's undergirding preoccupation is examining and thereby clarifying the relationship between Human Relations (HR) and business performance (BP), while hypothesizing correlational positivity between HR training (HRT) and improvements in BP. Connectedly, the study engages its dedicated concerns through the utility of an empirical investigation as to whether a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP), would improve business performance in St. Lucia. Consequently, the study focuses on HR concerns that span individual, business and wider social contexts. By extension, related emergent issues draw attention to matters of training transfer, individual transformation, business improvement and the potential for business to be used as agents of social change.

Thus, by dint of the findings, this chapter proceeds to detail the implications revealed in the results, propose recommendations based on indicative prevailing phenomena and draw necessary conclusions from the conduct of the study. To this end, the chapter is initiated with a review of the statement of the problem, statement of purpose, methods employed, limitations encountered and ethical considerations at work in the study. This serves as a form of reorientation before delving into further discussion on the areas of focus highlighted.

Problem Statement Review

Predominantly, this research addresses the problem of assessing by means of empirical investigation whether the implementation of a NH RTP would promote improved business

performance in St. Lucia. The study represents a response to a range of nationally reported and presumed HR soft skill insufficiencies, particularly related to individually generative qualities in terms of self-development, interpersonal skills and generalized self-regulatory behaviors. These soft skill behavior deficits are purported to have significant negative effects on business and social circumstances nationally and elsewhere (Reece and Reece 2016, UNODC, 2019), while supposedly being beneficial to business and social contexts when acquired (Aigbepue and Mammud (2012). Relatedly, specific areas of concern for business include poor public perception, income loss, client hesitancy to repeat interactions, discordant workplaces, employee disinterest in organizational growth, individualistic non-sacrificial behaviors and mediocre standards of customer service.

However, although there is a seemingly arbitrary listing of fallout from the apparent paucity soft skills, supposedly arrayed to negatively impact business performance, no significant research effort has been made prior, to assess the degree of positive correlation that exists between HR and BP. By extension, the awareness of HR needs and implied deficiency effects hinted in policy documents (Training and Development 2019), has not resulted in the identification of a national strategic approach for imparting and bolstering the demanded soft skills for socioeconomic gains including, personal, social and business performance improvements. Thus, the research offers an approach for addressing the issues that accrue to generate the primary problem highlighted.

Another problem that the study secondarily addresses, is exploring the potential of using HR trained business as agents of social change. This problem receives consideration in light of increasing concerns of HR associated social ills potentially stemming from individual, interpersonal and self -regulatory skill shortcomings. As such, while there are reported increases

in violent crime, homicides (Romero, 2021), and interpersonal conflict related aggressions, the intentional homicides for instance, do not equate to 100% of combined figures for male and female perpetrators. This suggests that where such social ills are soft skill related, the potential for arresting them through relevant training may serve to reduce such occurrences with widespread delivery through the agency of business. Therefore, along with the problem of addressing national HR soft skill training and business performance improvement, the study further seeks to examine the social applications of HR soft skill training through business as agents of social change, thus forming the foundations for the purpose of the research.

Purpose Statement Review

Hence, the purpose of the study is to facilitate the empirical determination as to whether business performance would improve with the implementation of a NH RTP. The purpose more specifically includes the deliberate highlighting of the connections between HR and improvements in BP, exploring the potential for HR training's utility as a booster to BP, enhancing public sector performance as the largest employer in St. Lucia and modelling a strategy for the use of business as agents of social change. Additionally, the study purposes to highlight the influence of the individual on the group as opposed to a focus on group influence on the individual. This is an important contribution to the field of Human Resource Development (HRD) since it emphasizes individual self-awareness and individual subjective roles on the impact of social interactions and business performance. Hence the heavily HRD intentions of the study encourages the enlisting of Training Transfer Theory (TTT) and transformational learning. These theoretical pillars allow for determining the impact of training on behavior and the conversion of training into transferrable beneficial action.

Methods Review

Accordingly, the study employs a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve its purposes, in the form of a quantitatively oriented public sector performance survey questionnaire (PSPS), for making quantitative determinations about client perceptions, along with qualitatively aligned focus groups, “drop/adopt cards” (DA) and a Public Service Training Evaluation Feedback Form (PS-TEFF). The study is conducted in the three phased approach of pre-training, followed by training and a subsequent post-training phase which is compared with the results before training. In this regard, the pre-training phase focuses on perceived public sector performance of randomly selected clients and records for later comparison, their HR related experiences with participating organizations, upon completing their transaction. The training phase exposes employees, selected based on their high degree of public interaction, to a program of training in self-awareness, interpersonal skills, attitude adjustment and leadership (SAIL). This establishes a basis for collecting data in the post-training phase which is compared to determine the impact of HR training on the targeted variables of the study.

Study Limitations

Since methodologically, the research is dependent on randomly collected data from pre and post-training client interaction with independently selected employees of participating public sector departments, some forfeiture of control is conceded that may manifest as limiting factors to the study. For instance, under ideal conditions the same trained employees would interact with the clients in the pre and post-training phases to more accurately determine the impact of training on employees. However, since the researcher relinquishes selection of employees to departmental authorities and has no control over employee scheduling, clients engage adhocly with trained and

untrained employees. Apart from the employee misalignment after training, not all selected participants are sufficiently heavily interactive with the public as part of their daily function. While this dissipates the positive effects of training throughout the organization, the impact of HR soft skills delivery is not concentrated toward the clients and may potentially dampen the impact of their perceptions of business performance.

Interestingly, the research is designed against a backdrop of and evidence of insufficiencies in HR soft skills within the public sector business environment. However, the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and attendant protocols seem to have driven HR associated improvements such that client perceptions register generally positive in pre and post-training comparisons. This contributes to modest comparative shifts in margins between pre and post-training data which superficially, do not appear to assign strong distinctive impact to HR soft skills training. Also Covid related, is the withdrawal of both client and employee post-training data from one department due to closure. This forced the exclusion of data from the particular department in keeping with ethical concerns and reduction in participants for the study.

Ethical Considerations

This study is conducted in observance of Unicaf University's ethical guidelines and ensures protection of all participants inclusive of their privacy, honesty and obtaining informed consent. As such, gatekeeper access to participating ministries is gained through relevant university prescribed letters to the Permanent Secretary (PS) in the Department of the Public Service (DoPS). The PS assigns departmental representatives who select relevant participants for training and facilitate client data. All employee trainees are allowed voluntary withdrawal or participation in

the study, are invited to read and sign university approved consent forms before proceeding to be trained and assured of anonymity through coded information.

Similarly, client participation is anonymised by the non-inclusion of identifiers on questionnaires and the option to inconsequentially withdraw or not respond to uncomfortable questions. Clients are assured of the deletion of collected data upon withdrawal. Further, data collection for both clients and employees is collected in observance of full Covid-19 protocols including the provision of sanitizers, sanitizing of materials, appropriate social distancing and the wearing of masks. Thus, the research attends to the ethical issues that support its conduct. As such, the chapter continues with the implications of the study as derived from the results.

Research Implications

In this regard, the results bear significant Implications for a range of key targeted areas in terms of HR theory, Human Resource Development (HRD), business practice, social change and policy. Further, the results are supportive of hypothesized assumptions of the study, thus propelling implications for the issues raised in light of their assertions. Particularly, that HR training (HRT) improves business performance (BP), HRT affects client perception of BP, HRT affects client willingness to engage in repeat business transactions, HRT affects employee willingness to be self-sacrificial in favor of others and HRT improvements are transferrable from business to social contexts. Thus, as a matter of primary research interest, the results give implicative bearings to foundational theoretical propositions indicating a link between HR and BP and attempting to clarify the relationship.

Accordingly, one of the major concerns of the research is clarifying the theoretically postulated link of a relationship between HR and performance improvements. Although the

connection is almost ubiquitously and confidently supported by proponents (Singh, Darwish and Potocnik, 2016, Zandan, 2019; Van De Klundert, 2018), the seeming immeasurability, intangibility and presumed ephemeral nature of HR presents its potency as fallacious and mostly unattached to business performance by critiques (Power, 2004; Calvert, 2017; Wijewantha, Jusoh, Azam and Sudasinghe, 2020). However, in overall terms and in every area of measure, the findings support a clear and positive correlation between HR and BP. For instance, overall combined PSPS data highlights a distinct 11% positive increase in performance indicative perceptions from clients. This positive shift in HR induced improvement, though not quantitatively drastic, emphasizes the qualitatively significant power of HRT to impact improvements beyond prevailing conditions, circumstances or transactional concerns.

In this regard, the results assist in potentiating the efficacy of HR and linking it to performance improvements by deriving enhancements, notwithstanding the “Covid effect” phenomenon, which manifests in organizational betterments that push HR intervention performance, beyond existing high standards. Thus, the results suggest that where performance standards are low, the influence of HR intervention improvements would manifest drastically. Alternately, where performance standards are high, HR interventions attain a somewhat clinical “scouring” impact that manifests forcefully to drive performance surpassing what prevails. Thus according to the results, where performance is good, HR produces betterment. This also assists in clarifying the link between HR and BP in accordance with supporting literature.

Explanatory to the findings of this study, Walsh (2017) notes a joint Michigan Institute of Technology (MIT) and Shahi Exports, India based manufacturing company, achieving a 265% return on investment after an HR training intervention. Of particular note is the extent to which there was a lack of focus on soft skills in the company and a predominant focus on technical skills.

Thus, the drastic quantitatively significant performance improvement, appears reflective and in direct correlation to the existent poor HR emphasis of Shahi Exports. The researchers point out the unexpectedness of the results given the routinized technical nature of the work (Walsh, 2017).

Again, this corroborates the findings of this study in that HR soft skills appear to bypass conditionalities and job related peculiarities in achieving its performance enhancement objectives. Accordingly, while the present study shows negligible to no movement in performance perception, relating to ease of transaction (EOT), which suggests the fixed, regulated or otherwise technical nature of transactions, the overall performance perceptions after HRT interventions, improved. Noticeably also, while there is a 10% decrease in negative perception overall there is no shift in difference concerning negative perception on the EOT variable.

Importantly, the seminal Hawthorne studies of Elton Mayo unanticipatedly discovered a strong link between HR and performance (Reddy, 2016) but more so initiated the notion that soft skills transcend variations in contextual conditions in their ability to produce improvements (Gitelman, 1992). Congruently, the findings of this study bear out Mayo's discovery in that performance is perceived to improve in spite of, or as a result of HR intervention, regardless of variability in conditions or the causes of these variations. Ultimately, notwithstanding the obviously quantitative or qualitative impact of HR on an entity, both the literature and findings of this study support confirmation of a clear link between HR and BP.

Hence, the implication for human resource and fiscally sensitive St. Lucia and St. Lucian business is to invest greater consistent focus into HR soft skills as a means of enhancing performance and profitability, regardless of existing conditionalities. Customarily, the intangibility and seeming immeasurability of soft skills make it secondary to hard skill investments generally (Wall and Wood, 2005), with haphazard approaches to soft skill training by Human Resource

Management practitioners locally (NCPC, 2016). These findings could mean that HRM practitioners have a researched basis for readjusting their approaches to soft skill administration and the employment of systematized methods to soft skill application for business benefits.

Moreover, the results provide evidence by virtue of its trans-contextual effectiveness that HR interventions could prove useful for public sector concerns as entities with rigid regulations and job roles but often lacking in instruments to ensure individual employee motivation to improve performance and accountability. As such, this research supported appeal of the HR to performance link, offers HRM practitioners within the St. Lucian public sector, the basis for improving actual and perceived performance notwithstanding its built-in restraints. This is with the revealed awareness that HR interventions are not restricted by sector or job specific circumstances. In essence, the findings lend support to HR theoretical foundations which focus on interactional relationships as being effective for productivity (Perry, 2011).

In this vein, much of the findings give credence in practice, to paying attention to the interactional components of HR soft skills as promoted in the study. For instance, the findings reveal that 50 and 51% of participants rate their overall interaction with the institution (INT) and overall quality of service (QOS) as “very good”, respectively. Combined with the ratings for “Good” the two highly interactional areas of ratings register as 85 and 89% respectively overall. Outstandingly, most clients (64%) reported feeling “Valued” after their interaction with employees, post HRT. Attention to these interactionally based findings serve to bolster practitioner confidence in the adoption of HR interventions as workable in the St. Lucian context and facilitate attitudinal balance in the “people versus material” or the “soft skill versus technical skill” debate that prevalently obtains.

Notwithstanding the form of business focused interactionism promoted by the research, in that participants derive personal and business related meaning as a product of their interactions (Carter and Fuller, 2015), the findings carry profound implications for the theoretical foundations of HR. Fundamentally, as proposed by the Hawthorne Studies, interactions with the group catalyzed the impact and meaning that individuals obtained from relationships, with a group to individual influence emphasis (Reddy, 2016). Accordingly, this emphasis supports a form of deindividuation, in which individuality and its behavioral impact are lost to the group and are subsumed in favor of social and organizational identity imperatives (Vilanova, Beria, Costa and Koller, 2017). Instead, this study alters these foundational proposals and implies practical and conceptual “reindividuation”, which focuses on an individual to group influence emphasis.

As such, the person to group impact focus, is established in the definition of both HR and performance improvement, operating in the study. To this end the definition of HR highlights the individual’s focused efforts toward self- development and self- regulatory behaviors for the benefit of interacting successfully with others. Companionately, performance improvement is identified in the improved positive perception of clientele subsequent to interaction with individual employees and of critical significance, the awareness of demonstrated HR qualities by individual employees that promote business goal achievement. Hence, while these definitions are interaction based, they emphasize HR outcomes as dependent products of individual effort or “personal culture”, representing a collation of the deliberately demonstrated personification of attained HR and performance improvement qualities during interactions.

Thus, the implications revealed in the findings extend to the suggestion of a need for practitioner reorientation and intervention, to target individualized development within the context of group interaction. For instance, the qualitatively derived results of the study indicate that most

employees' intentions to apply (IA), share (IS) or make personal adjustments (AD) as a result of the SAIL HR intervention, have their genesis in introspection (IN) and personal developmental (PD) interests. Statements such as *"...It definitely taught me what I was doing wrong, what I need to focus on, what I need to emphasize more or what to tweak..."* (IA), *"...So let's assist one another even though our Heads (bosses) are not doing it but..."* (IS), and *"it's a daily thing you work on it, it doesn't happen overnight. So I am actually challenging my own self..."* (AD), are all indicative of a person to group direction of influence.

Correspondingly, support for person targeted HR training, is evidenced in the results representing majority sentiments through statements such as, *"It is a step further to enhance myself"* (PD) and *"For me there was a lot of self-awareness – basically check myself, a lot of things that will help relationship wise with my family, and most importantly at work"* (IN). These statements inform practitioner approaches and serve to reorient thinking toward more relevantly designed HR interventions that maximize participant interests, resource investments and content effectiveness. In this regard, Phillips, Phillips and Ray (2020), point to a range of self-emanating areas that dictate the efficacy of soft skill training and return on investment. These areas include, self-evaluation, personal responsibility, positive attitude and proactive learning (Phillips, Phillips and Ray 2020). Reiteratively, both the literature and results imply the need for reconsideration or refocussing from a "deindividuistic" approach to HRT, toward one which recognizes and targets the impact of transformed individuals on their social and organizational contexts.

Equally implicative in the results along with the refocussing of HRT's directional impact from person to group, are several feasibilities for the measurement and evaluation of soft skills training. Among these feasibilities is the potential for utility of dedicatedly abstract approaches for soft skill measurement in keeping with the abstract nature of soft skills. Accordingly, the results

indicate that the abstract to abstract measurement approach, filters out HR variables while offering negligible measurability to technical skills. For instance, in reference to the overall rating concerning ease of transaction (EOT), which is dictated by transactional specificity, the PSPS questionnaire showed no movement in pre and post scores of neutral, poor and very poor, remaining at a combined total of 13%, with no variability in score for each item.

Hence, this draws attention to the possibility that technically weighted phenomena are beyond the scope of measurement for validity of soft skill approaches. By the same token, the non-quantifiable subjectivities of soft skill measurement, challenge traditionally preferred scientifically oriented approaches, which at best offer “strained validity”, since they do not dedicatedly address softer issues (Boon and Van Baalen, 2019). Congruently, Phillips (2007) observes the application of a common approach to the measurement of return on investment (ROI), for both HRM soft and hard skill assessment as well as physical structural assessments, in an attempt to quantify outcomes. However, Chen, Lu and Qu (2015) offer suggestions more aligned to this research in supporting that like phenomena should be measured using like principles. As such, Chen, Lu and Qu (2015) find greater justifiability in considering the idea that rationalism should be measured using principles that are rationalistic and vice versa.

Thus, the findings of this study, which are derived through dedicated soft skill instruments, provide theoretical and practice supporting evidence of a feasible valid approach to measuring HR soft skills. In this case client perception, as a measurable informant of performance beyond customer service experience based on transaction, provides a scientifically appropriate means of almost clinically sifting apart the outcomes of soft skill investment efforts. As such, this is contextually relevant for St. Lucia and its public service, since most related measurement approaches originate from larger external and dissimilar circumstances that do not employ

specifically targeted methods of measuring soft skills. Thus, attention to the “like on like” principle as revealed in the results of this research, allows for more relevantly dedicated calculability of return on investments and a clearer view of the relationship between HRT and performance improvement or, more generally the relationship between HR and performance.

Apart from the foregoing range of implications embodied and generally captured in the relationship between HR and performance as a primary concern of the research and RQ1/H1 concerns, the results fuel further implications in all areas of interest. More specifically for instance, the significant and definite relationship between HR and BPI revealed by the results in response to RQ1’s concerns of extent of effect and H1’s proposal of improved relationship respectively, are implicative of the need for active attention to training methods, measurements and investment approaches in the public sector.

Accordingly, an uncertainty driven, lack luster and tokenistic approach to soft skill training (NCPC, 2016), may produce situations of misdirected training, financial wastage and poor organizational performance image. In this vein, the results evidences both specificity and measurability in unearthing departmental performance variability. For instance, on the dimension of overall interaction (INT), the results show the highest rating of 98% overall positive perception in favor of the Electoral Department and the lowest overall positive rating of 69% toward the Passport Department, on the dimension of “feelings after interaction” (FAI).

Thus, the results and approaches suggested in the research, facilitate identifying and redirecting of training efforts to areas representing evidence of lack or inequitable performance in relation to specific departments. Further, pinpointing and fine tuning training needs focus, not only assists in justifiably maximizing financial inputs to HRT but allows for performance improvement perception image building, throughout public sector departments. Additionally, notwithstanding

public sector orientation, peculiarities and fulfilment of mandates, its service performance is predominantly appraised by clients after consumption (Ajmal, Tuomi, Helo and Sandhu, 2020).

Thus, regardless of the quality of technical service, which is usually policy driven and inflexible, equitable attention to HR soft skill training offers the public sector enhanced potential for accomplishing its designated responsibilities as the nation's largest employer. This is also implicated in the results confirming RQ2/H2's interests in how HRT impacts client perception of training and the proposition that client perception of BP is affected by HRT. As such this provides basis for the establishment of consistent client perception monitoring as a means of assessing the impact of training, similar to client derived feedback systems utilized within the private sector. As such, the results provide the basis for facilitating the adaptation, streamlining and perhaps leadership in practices that promote public sector activities and the public sector as legitimate business, notwithstanding its not for profit and stewardship orientations (Spicker, 2009). This again, through the results, coincides with facilitating the emerging tendency of a resemblance between private and public sector environment and practice (Schraeder, Tears and Johnson, 2005).

Equally implicative are the results relating to RQ3/H3 concerns which examine client willingness to transact repeat business with an entity subsequent to HRT. Interestingly, while the nature of most public sector transactions are required or inflexible and do not offer client option not to repeat, the research and its findings suggest that soft skill training reduces reluctance and preconceived reasons for ill feelings associated with repeated engagement with the entity. While the significantly high 91% overall rating on client feelings after interaction (FAI) signals willingness to repeat, it also heavily validates the potential of HRT as a means of building customer trust and quality of service reception. Thus, attention to questions of client willingness to reengage

the entity, shifts focus from a mainly organizational emphasis of how service is delivered, toward thinking instead of how service is received and how trust is built.

By extension, emphasis on how service is received and trust is built, fall within the ambits of HR soft skills. This implies engaging in a form of mental reformatting of employee attitude toward a more outward looking, “other person” perspective, as opposed to a merely personally beneficial mental orientation. To this end, the research via RQ4/H4 and the results, support that HRT positively affects the willingness of employees to be sacrificial. Thus, from the practitioner and organizational perspectives, HRT efforts seem to require the incorporation of individually transformational inputs that stimulate sacrificial behavior and promote “other person” sensitivity. As such, Sahoo and Mishra (2019) support the trainability of subjective abstract behavior which produces group and organizational benefits as a result of trained, transformed employees.

Connectedly, the results implicate the potential for concerns outside of self-interests to be of benefit to social circumstances particularly social ills. Thus, on the result emphasized evidence of transfer and transformation, the research sets the foundation for exploring the application of HRT benefits to the social contexts. This facilitates a possible tier of additional value to business as a social change contributor and a role apart from its customarily financial and economic based social responsibility offerings (Wilterdink, 2020; Klien, 2019). Thus the findings establish the grounds for a new brand of corporate social responsibility, using organizations as agents of social change, apart from monetary or charitable work. More succinctly, the research and its results set up the basis for facilitating greater consciousness and conscientiousness regarding the role of business to society beyond financial emphasis.

Generally, the results bear implications for several core, manifest and latent aspects of the study including literature, practice, HR theory and the appropriation of HRT as a performance

enhancer. Chiefly, the study's clarification of the link between HR and BP provides confidence in the value of HR as a component of worthwhile business pursuit, particularly within the St. Lucian context of sparsely relevant data. The clarification offers surer evidential footing for the advancement of previously uncertainty weighted and conflicted messages concerning the efficacy of HR. Among these areas of contention is the issue of measurability, which according to the study is effectively achieved through approaches which measure similar phenomena (Chen, Lu and Qu 2015). This approach encourages the adoption or adaptation of compatibly valid instruments for measuring related soft skill matters.

Accordingly, the findings both corroborate and contribute to existing literature by supporting the effects of appropriate measurement approaches, especially for highlighting HRT's ability to by-pass obstructive conditionalities toward the achievement of valid measures. The findings further highlight the effectiveness of appropriately dedicated measurement in identifying soft skill variability across departments. This provides practitioners with the ability to pinpoint and apply targeted training where it is most deficient or needs boosting.

Along with literature contributions, the study challenges the theoretical foundational premise of seminal HR studies which focused on a group to person influence as opposed the individual to group impact which this study emphasizes. This directional focus centers HR practice on the individual and positions the individual and their training derived adjustments as impacting to the group. This also stresses practitioner attention to HRT, relating to personal transformations for effecting organizational benefits.

Relatedly, transformations within the organizational contexts may prove significantly beneficial to social contexts by virtue of the individually transformational appeal of HRT as revealed in the results. This suggests the potential for the emergence of a form of new corporate

social responsibility (NCSR), in which organizations serve as agents of social change through the deliberate strategy of transforming individuals in the social context by transforming individuals within the organization. As such, the transference of organizationally beneficial behavior obtained through HRT may be useful as a promoter of socially beneficial behavior. Thus, while this section examined the implications of the results, the sections following make recommendations based on the findings and implications before drawing necessary conclusions.

Recommendations for Application

Thus, based on the implications of the findings and the expressed interests of the study, several recommendations are offered within the themes of Human Relations (HR) and business performance (BP), training and transformation, training and the public sector and business as a social change agent. In keeping with these themes, the recommendations for application span areas of policy, practice, public sector specificities and corporate social inputs. More specifically, recommendations are made suggesting adoption of equitable HR emphasis as an organizational strategy for BP improvement, readjustments to policy regarding training, reframing public sector performance indicators and proposing greater consciousness in the application of HR interventions as a matter of organizational deposits to social change.

Human Relations and Business Performance

Recommendation #1 - Improve the profile of HR as a BP enhancer

Among the key recommendations resulting from the conduct of this research, is the need to improve the profile of Human Relations as a Business Performance enhancer and adopt equitable emphasis on HR inputs, similar to technical concerns, as contributory to BP

enhancements. According, to the aims of the study in terms of clarifying the HR to BP link, the findings depict a clear and direct positive correlation between HR and BP, with an 11% positive shift overall post training. Thus, there is justification for elevating and more confidently signifying HR's role in an organization's performance improvement strategies. Presently, while there is a seemingly token acknowledgement in the value of HR, it is somewhat loosely tied to lukewarm confidence and tentative outcome expectations in practice (Calvert, 2017; Zandan, 2019; Wijewantha, Jusoh, Azam and Sudasinghe, 2020).

However, the recommendation based on the research findings serve to strengthen confidence in the viability of HR as a credible contributor to business performance and proposes the confident application of related strategies as equally significant contributors to BP success. As such, promoting the viability of HR as an additional performance and profitability inducing business mechanism, suggests the intensification of focus as a booster to economic progress, within high resource demand contexts such as St. Lucia. Again, the recommendation is that HRM practitioners readjust their approaches by adopting HR as a confidently systematized method of improving BP and to equitably improve its profile as a performance enhancer.

Most interestingly and strongly supportive in favor of heightening the HR profile within practice, are the overall findings revealing HR's ability to effect improvements regardless of prevailing high standards. Notwithstanding the positive effects of operational adjustments forced by Covid-19, which elevated perceived standards in pretest performance, the results highlight a 1-11% increase overall in posttest performance perception. Thus, HR presents applicability as an untapped, apparently unplumbed driver of performance perception that operates holistically to boost organizational perceptions of both soft and technical performance (Doyle, 2020; Sahoo and Mishra, 2019). Importantly appealing to practice in this recommendation, is the result derived

observation that when technical skills remain or need to remain constant, soft skills continue to enhance the organization. Hence, adopting the recommendation to equate and particularly elevate HR as an organizational necessity, offers practitioners a constantly employable, pervasive and applicable method for the general improvement and maintenance of organizational performance standards.

Recommendation #2 – Utilize Client Perception as a Valid Measure of BP

Along with prominently equalizing the profile of HR as a contributor to BP enhancement, a further recommendation is made in that greater emphasis should be placed on the importance of client perception as a valid measure of performance. This recommendation is supported in the findings by a noticeably above 80% positive showing in every area of post training perception. Thus, the findings indicate contrary to the preferences of figure inclined means of performance improvement approaches, which attempt to interpret performance as a measure of profitability (Onisk, 2020). Consequently, the supposed incalculability of HR and budget driven return on investments (ROI), lead to preliminary cutting of HR interventions, which do not appear immediately or directly exchangeable for profit (Madsen, 2019).

However, by force of the positive findings and their implications, the research recommends emphasizing client perception as a measure of BP. This places client input as a valid dedicated measure of performance that isolates soft skill variables since it is not expected or designed to capture technically oriented variables. Therefore, practitioners and organizations are offered a strategy for assessing ROI that is distinctive from technical investment returns. Although notably, Hanson (2018), asserts that ROI from HRT is both qualitative and quantitative, citing a 12% increase in worker retention based on skill improvement after HRT. Nevertheless, engagement of

client perception as a measure, removes the dependence from organizational self-determination of performance to client based performance determination.

This shift in performance determination emphasis, allows for realistic evaluation of service efforts from the actual consumers of those services, as opposed to potentially misdirected organizationally presumed service experiences. Accordingly, the notion that perceived performance by clients equates actual performance, is supported by Gio, Vuong, Huan, Tushar and Quan (2020), whose study on the impact of emotional intelligence on turn over intentions, agree in similar vein to this research that individual feelings and emotions have a strong impact on perception of service provision. Thus, instruments that capture data representing the perceptions of clients as obtained from their experiences and resultant feelings about those experiences, are useful determinants of actual organizational performance as interpreted by the clients and highlighted by the study.

Recommendation #3 – Implement Public Sector Feedback Forms (PSFF)

Along these lines public sector departments may implement feedback forms (PSFF) attached to their services that focus primarily on HR measures. This could prove useful to HRM/HRD practitioners since technical processes in the public sector are mostly standardized, inflexible and largely constant. As such, these rigidities may be negatively exacerbated and erroneously reported as poor performance by clients, if soft skill processes are not in place to soften the effects of these built-in stringencies. This recommendation is supported in the findings by an overall improvement in perception in all areas of non-transactional experiences while showing no positive movement in combined “Neutral”, “Poor” and “Very poor” ratings, which remained at 13% in both pre and post training for “ease of transaction” (EOT). Again, this reemphasizes the

selective validity of specifically designed HR tools and the need for instruments dedicated to specific phenomena to ensure the provision of accurate feedback.

Presently, the St. Lucian public sector has no wide scale feedback mechanism for its clients (NCPC, 2016). However, a PSFF as suggested, facilitates targeted public sector service adjustments, investments and outcomes, through continuous and scientifically derived instruments. Further a PSFF enables the isolation of inter and intra-departmental HR performance variability, allowing for the delivery of dedicated attention to specific departmental soft skill deficiencies and informing training needs. Also, a PSFF would serve to reduce local reliance on data from external sources thereby ensuring contextually appropriate, as opposed to generic, externally derived data. This would assist in the effort to increase focus on HR soft skills as a matter of improving business performance and fulfilling the mandated responsibilities of the public sector as a high performing service provider.

Training and Transformation

Recommendation #4 - Employ Person Targeted Training Approaches-SAIL

Along with the suggested use of HR emphasized and client based approaches such as PSFFs in response to performance objectives, the study recommends employing person targeted or individually aimed training approaches as a means of achieving organizational performance goals, through the transformation of individuals. The recommendation is made with the acknowledgement that HR training transforms as a result of affecting personally resident qualities and stimulates personally reflective activity as indicated by the findings. Thus the results indicate individual willingness to engage in sacrificial behavior and make adjustments as products of personal transformation initiated by HRT and driven by introspective processes. Agreeably,

Muhammad and Kaur (2010), find similar results from their investigation on the role of training design on individual transfer, revealing that subjective factors exhibited in the form of readiness and intention to use, are representative of transformations produced by training design based on subjectivity.

Most significantly in this regard, SAIL training is recommended for application as a key tool for HR soft skill training in the public sector, since it focuses on subjectively embedded transformational drivers pertaining to self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership (SAIL). Moreover, SAIL training as used in the study generated results that provide clear transformative abilities on a personal level, expressed in the intent to apply what was learned, intent to make personal adjustments and personally decided intent to share, all fuelled by introspective behavior. Thus, the application of SAIL as a person targeted approach to HRT represents a design that allows practitioners to generate “other” focused behavior in the benefit of business and the client’s perceived performance image of the organization.

Further, while soft skills are inherently personal and training content is generally individually inclined, HR interventions are pitched with the expectation of effecting group change rather than individual change and group impact on the individual rather than individual impact on the group. However, the results suggest that there is need for adjustments in the approach to HRM/HRD training delivery focus such that, individually decided behavior results in personally sacrificial behavior for the benefit of others. This facilitates credence to the idea of an intrinsically, self-derived employee desire for autonomy, which leads to the determination of organizational and productivity outcomes that are dictated by the individual and not the influence of a group (Ostroff, 1992).

Therefore, adopting the person to group direction of influence assists in averting the “Mayoan” inadvertencies of the Hawthorne studies in which the impact of the individual on group behavior was discounted, leading to the eventual acknowledgement of potential for individuals to sway group outcomes (Reddy, 2016). In contention to the diminished importance awarded to individuals in favor of the group in the nascence of the HR movement and in congruence with the sentiments of this study, Wood and Wood (2004), observe that a singular focus on group to individual approaches is potentially disadvantageous to an organization. They argue that this approach presumes unitarist dictates which relegate members to common accord and collective sentimentalities for governance.

Thus, the research findings here suggest that transformed individual effort through targeted HRT, leads to personal decisions that potentially affect business performance outcomes, such that personalized approaches are warranted within the St. Lucian public sector HRM/HRD practice. In practice and apart from its personally developmental benefits, making self-determined personal investment within the person to group approach, allows for individual employees to achieve identity within the entity, take responsibility and assume individual ownership of organizational or group outcomes. However, as a means of facilitating this approach further recommendations are made in terms of public sector training and related policies.

Training and the Public Sector

Recommendation #5 – Review and Readjust Public Sector Training Policy to Include a NH RTP

Accordingly, the findings and consequential recommendations of the study thus far, demand necessary reviews and adjustments of public sector training policy, which will facilitate application of emerging recommendations as well as enable the overarching recommendation of

establishing a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP), for St. Lucia's public sector. Notwithstanding the generally positive outcomes of the study supporting application and benefit to business, governmental or public affairs are driven by policy which must be reviewed and readjusted before implementation (Spicker, 2009).

Although the Government of St. Lucia has established a Draft Training and Development Policy (DTDP) (2019) for its stakeholders, the document takes a general approach to training, indistinctively bundling the consideration of soft skills with technical areas. Thus, notwithstanding the inclusion of HR associated content such as customer relations, leadership and communication, the document does not offer a clearly delineated guide for a system of employee access to HR training or whether HRT needs to be accessed by all public sector employees alongside technical skills as part an overall thrust for improvement. Similarly, Curristine, Lonti and Joumard (2007) highlight comparable conditions within the European Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which has not delineated specific soft skill guidelines within its policies but reflects fragmented inclusion of attitudinal, interpersonal and self-awareness skill development along with other technical areas (SIGMA, 2020).

More specifically, the DTDP does not include a distinctive equitably weighted soft skill versus technical skill training focus, which may be reflected in practice as a form of feigned or tokenistic acknowledgement of HRT, without the grounding of its significance as a BP booster. Additionally, the DTDP does not contain guidelines for addressing the issue of identifying HR soft skill performance variability across departments or the use of soft skills as a measure of organization performance. Still along the lines of measurement, the DTDP makes no policy statement in terms of a system for calculating ROI for soft skills and appears to reflect an adhoc inclination to the distribution HRT among its members. As such, given the findings of this research

which support improvement in public sector performance as a result of HRT, recommendation is made for the review of the DTDP, with the view of readjusting to facilitate rectification of policy deficits and assimilation of further recommendations for public sector performance enhancement, including the implementation of a NH RTP.

Thus, a NH RTP, if assimilated into policy, facilitates several dimensions of HR soft skill redress including improved BP, wide scale employee access to HRT, dedicated evaluation strategies and instruments for measuring cross departmental soft skill needs and return on investment in HRT. More specifically, the implementation of a NH RTP will assist practitioners to anchor their practice in a relevantly, theoretically supported rationale for the administration of HRT and the improvement of BP. In this regard, confidently mandated policy adjustments facilitating and requiring access to all public sector employees legitimizes the application of a NH RTP. Further, the SAIL intervention could be utilized as a person centered HRT strategy for all public sector employees.

NH RTP Structure and Approach

As a matter of systematic wide scale application, the recommendation is that all new entrants to the public sector work force complete the SAIL program during their probationary period, as part of the “onboarding” process and other induction training. This approach ensures new entrants are oriented to the sector and their individual roles in the performance image of their departments. Additionally, the approach assists in permeating the sector with individuals who are transformed in organizationally beneficial respects and who are initiated early, with the values required by the department (Satell, 2019). Accordingly, this strengthens prevailing adhoc inclinations to soft skill distribution and offers a more equitably distributed and strategically

effective means of up-skilling organizational HR abilities. By extension, older workers can be exposed to SAIL training using an ongoing systematically phased approach such that all workers are exposed.

Thus, sector wide training is accomplished over time as a governmental sector initiative in a similar approach to the conduct of the SAIL training program as used in this study. As such, HRM/HRD officers would assume as part of their portfolio, the selection and assignment of trainees to available cohorts of ongoing SAIL training. These suggestions are made on the basis of the results which indicate significantly positive, individual employee intentions overall, to work toward organizational betterment as a result of SAIL training. Importantly, SAIL training as a means of accessing public sector employment could prove critical to performance improvement efforts in the absence of other established non-generic public sector access criteria, as obtains in other countries. For instance, China engages the use of a Civil Service Exam (CSE), which assesses applicant suitability for available jobs and seeks to ensure high levels of performance standards within its public sector (Wu, 2019).

However, apart from being cumbersome, costly and volume demanding, large scale assessment options are not a viable performance improvement method for St. Lucia, since the process could be timely and unsuitable for expediting urgent job placement and attract too many applicants for available jobs (Wiesen, Abrams and McAttee, 1990). Thus, the recommendation to integrate SAIL training into current practice via policy review and adjustments, facilitates a seamless transition to a NHRTP. The NHRTP would augment and work through already established governmental efforts, processes and mechanisms, including the Public Service Training Institute, which has been established to address government's training needs.

These training need fulfilments, represent the government's acceptance and commitment as St. Lucia's largest employer to developing its workers, providing high quality service to stakeholders, being a steward for public resources and contributing to socioeconomic welfare (DTDP, 2019; Spicker, 2009; Lynn, 2006). As such, the recommendation of implementing a NH RTP serves government's interests in obtaining instruments of national benefit that foster performance objectives, business improvements and societal enhancement.

Business as a Social Change Agent

Recommendation #6 - Adopt a New Corporate Social Responsibility (NCSR) approach

In regard to social enhancement concerns, the NH RTP recommendation both offers and positions the governmentally driven public sector to be consciously strategic as an agent of social change, on account of adopting a wide-scale, soft skill imbued training approach. Theoretically, the suggestion is made that HR training possesses the potential to effect improvements in organizational performance and by reason, offers similar potential for effecting social change (McCaslin and Kilrea, 2019; Marathe and Kakani, 2020). Further, personally transformative soft skills are considered inextricable from the individual and portable across contexts (Mertens, 2017), in the present case, from business to sociocultural circumstances.

This suggests that the positive outcomes of HRT are transmissible to the extent that they are able to infiltrate and influence social change, particularly relating to issues of a HR soft skills nature. In spite of these theoretically grounded suggestions, conventionally tailored social change intervention excludes the inputs of organizationally transformed individuals as a conscious and deliberate method of social change strategy (Bies, Bartunek, Fort and Zald, 2007). Instead, organizations opt for a brand of corporate social responsibility (CSR) that focuses on business

returns as opposed to a social change investment (SCI) approach, which focuses on personal and socioeconomic development. Notwithstanding the virtuous intentions of the SCI approach in terms of shifting from primarily business objectives as is anticipated with the private sector, the public sector inherently has a more altruistically expansive social mandate and proposes the adoption of a new corporate social responsibility (NCSR) approach, which uses organizations as conscious agents of social change and not primarily as facilitators of financial or charitable work.

More significantly, the findings of the study reveal transformed behavior in most focus group participants, by their registration of intentions to share, utilize and apply HR behavior beyond the business context. Thus, the recommendation is made for the adoption of HRT as an institutionalized offering toward social change in the form of a NCSR, which emphasizes HR soft skill transmission. As such the Government of St. Lucia (GOSL), as the country's largest employer of over 10,000 workers from a population of approximately 170,000, citizens can potentially serve as an agent for channeling holistically beneficial soft skills into all facets of society for the alleviation or amelioration of HR related social issue deficits. This offers government additional leadership in business and a deliberately strategic role in relational crime reduction, interpersonal conflict resolution and social disharmony.

Generally, the recommendations are drawn from the results of the study, in relation to the research questions and hypotheses as well as informed by the relevant literature. Accordingly, recommendations to improve the profile of HR as a BP enhancer, arise from the interests of RQ1/H1, which seek the extent of HRT on BP improvement. Accordingly, the results confirm a significant impact of HRT on BP, whilst a contending tentativeness and paucity of highlighting this significance is evident in literature and practice. Hence, these observations assist in, fuelling the suggestion to heighten the profile of HR as a means of improving BP.

Additionally, the recommendation to utilize client perception as a valid measure of BP is supported by the findings of the study showing an 11% increase in client perception overall, in response to concerns posited by RQ2/H2 regarding the effect of client perception on BP. Accordingly, client perception is considered a conceptualized component reflecting performance and quality of service (Minelli and Ruffini, 2018). Also the results confirm that client perception proves appropriate for isolating the abstractly oriented phenomena of HR and makes more visible, the distinctions between technical and soft skill variables.

Relatedly, in terms of measurement but drawing from the willingness to repeat engagement query of RQ3/H3, the study further recommends the implementation of a public sector feedback form. This recommendation arises out of the significantly high over 90% positive responses in terms of client willingness to repeat business and the increases post training in “feeling” related experiences with the business. These findings also signify the necessity for trust building (Flavián and Guinalíu, 2006) and the capturing of other experientially induced performance perceptions by clients.

Further, in particular dependence on the qualitatively aligned aspects of the study, RQ4/H4 takes interest in the effect of HRT on employee sacrificial behavior and recommends based on the findings that person targeted HRT approaches should be employed within the St. Lucian public sector context. Supportively, the results indicate a majority shift in positive inclination toward making personal adjustments in favor of others by employees, among other self-sacrificial expressions. These findings uphold the idea that HRT is both transferrable and transformational while being a promoter of behavior that benefits business, group and social interactions.

Along socially emphasized lines, the recommendation to adopt a NCSR approach is offered on the basis of the transportational and transformational strength of HRT as revealed in the

findings. Accordingly, the results suggest high portability among transformed individuals, which coincides with the concerns of RQ5/H5, centering on the trans-contextual mobility of HR trained improvements, from business to social circumstances. Adoption of the NCSR approach moves away from fiscally motivated business benefitting CSR tendencies toward an augmented HR focused approach, which caters to social upliftment derived from conscientiously and consciously deliberate HR inputs to society. This recommended new approach to CSR sets up the public sector as an agent of social change, particularly the alleviation of HR related social ills.

As an overarching public sector mandate the study recommends a review and adjustment of the public sector training policy, to include a NH RTP. This recommendation is embedded in the interests of all of the study's research questions and hypotheses and serves as a key recommendation of the investigation. All of the findings give endorsement to the suggestion in the relaying of positive indications. As a result, these indications warrant the need for policy adjustments to accommodate the implementation of a NH RTP according to public sector procedural mandates. The suggested NH RTP proposes to facilitate the wide scale dissemination of HR soft skills training in accordance with the stated objectives of the GOSL and the interests of this research.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focuses its efforts on empirically investigating whether a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP), would improve business performance in St. Lucia. To this end, several relevant outcomes have been derived and necessary recommendations have been offered in the previous section based on the results. This section focuses on recommendations for future research and offers several key suggestions which are not thoroughly addressed within

present concerns but may hold usefulness to the area of HR, HRM and HRD subsequently. In the first instance, the recommendations include expansion of the study into the private sector but makes further suggestions for research on the potential of virtual HRT, longevity of HRT effectiveness post training and methodological iterations. Additionally, an initial interest of this study is exploration of the potential for use of business as agents of social change. However, this interest is extended more directly into a recommendation for the use of social skills as a crime alleviation strategy. These main recommendations among other suggestions are addressed following.

Expand Research to the St. Lucian Private Sector

While the study fulfils its major objectives in terms of clarifying the link between HR and BP, establishing feasibility for implementation of a NH RTP and contributing to the existing thoughts in its related fields, several inconclusivities and arising interests emerge. One of the most provocatively obvious derivatives from this research in the form of a recommendation for future research is the question as to whether HR soft skills would have similar positive impact in the private sector. This suggested investigation moves beyond the tokenistic acknowledgement awarded to HR in general and in the private sector but considers it from the research grounded implications of this study. For instance, although it is evident from the results that there is a clear link between HR and BP in the public sector context, the strength of the link and the inherent factors that may affect the link in the private sector are not as clearly evident.

Notwithstanding the problems expressed by both private and public sector in terms of employee soft skill deficits that affect productivity, profitability and performance overall (NCPC, 2016), their operational contexts, motivations and reasons for existing are consequentially

different. The contrasting not for profit versus profit or the public interest versus private ambitions of the public and private sector respectively, create distinctive scenarios and dynamics, which may require tweaked or alternative approaches as opposed to general application.

In this regard, while significant acknowledgement is awarded to HRT and its result based ability to “overcome” situational obstacles toward performance improvement, opaqueness remains about the depth of its effectiveness in the St. Lucian private sector. For example, it is unclear whether the expectedly inherent flexibility and agility of the private sector would nullify the enhancement impact of the “Covid effect” in contrast to the positive result showing for public sector performance improvements. More directly stated, it is uncertain whether the effects of HR interventions would present greater disparity in results either positively or negatively, given similar circumstances within the private sector.

Thus, although the results of this research confirm the cross-contextual effectiveness of HR soft skills in general and particularly the public sector, the degree of affectivity in the private sector warrants future research. Importantly, future research as recommended would inform stakeholders such as the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC) or the St. Lucia Chamber of Commerce Industry and Agriculture (SLCOCIA), who have a vested interest in business performance improvement strategies but are tentative, casual or uninformed about the benefits of HR soft skills to organizational enhancements. For instance, in the case of the SLCOCIA, which is the largest member driven private sector representative organization in St. Lucia, several training interventions have been administered in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, geared at ensuring productivity and reducing performance decline (SLCOCIA, 2021). However, most of these interventions and advisories occurring between April 2020 and September 2021, were operationally focused with one generally oriented HR soft skills offering, which was not

dedicatedly offered for its role as a performance enhancer in response to the pandemic. The study also observed these operationally emphasized improvements within the public sector, as reported in the findings.

Thus, while the recommendation for future research would prove useful for private sector embedded institutions such as SLCOCIA, further investigation serves the purpose of highlighting to governmental concerns, the benefits of enabling more widespread national access to HRT. Accordingly, as part of its national mandate, St. Lucia's government on the evidence of future research may adopt policy and facilitative actions that deepen the significance of HR as decidedly integral to widespread organizational improvement processes. By extension, based on the findings derived from future research, government may offer the private sector opportunities to access HRT through its facilities as a means of fulfilling its overall nation building mandate, whether this access is offered directly through face to face arrangements or accommodated through virtual means.

Training HR Soft Skills Virtually

While this study was designed and conducted in a face to face environment which served its purposes, it was impacted by pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic which sometimes forced consideration of alternatives such as delivering the necessary soft skill training through virtual online means. This further raises questions as to the efficacy and possibility of soft skills training online. Although prior research by Jordan (2016) comparing face to face versus online learning modalities for technically oriented content found face to face to be more effective for technical content. However, the recommendation here is for the future study of face to face versus online learning for particularly soft skills content.

Such research may auger well for situations preventing or posing a challenge to face to face learning as well as situations in which trainees can access individually paced asynchronous learning while simultaneously providing respective soft skill benefits to the organization. In terms of expediency, SAIL may be packaged and offered as an online option if future research of soft skills prove amenable to online delivery, having the same positive effects on the organization as face to face training. Thus, while there may be several soft skills training programs available online, they purport to offer business benefits based on the accepted enhancements that soft skills provide in general. However, they are not packaged and dedicated to institutionalization and adoption as a wide scale concerted effort for business performance improvement, or particularly for the public sector.

SAIL Training Length and Duration of Retention

Since this research is time bound, the positive results obtained reflects analysis of data collected approximately one week after training. In this regard, participants' intentions as expressed through the focus group discussions and displays of improved performance, may have been the result of the immediacy of exposure to SAIL training. Further, while approximately one week of SAIL training produced measurable changes in behavior and attitudes, the correlation between duration of training and duration of effective retention, remains unknown. Knowledge of these variables as a matter of future research would inform practitioner decisions beyond the immediately rendered benefits of SAIL training toward how long SAIL training should last and requirements for "refresher" or retraining. Additionally, practitioners would acquire informed means of more efficient calibration of returns on soft skill investments. Accordingly, the MIT/Shahi Industries soft skill training collaboration mentioned earlier, entailed twelve months of

training with an assessment of impact eight months later. This methodological approach yielded a measured ROI of 265% (Walsh, 2017).

Additionally, Hand and Slocum (1972) in their study focused on detailing the impact of attitudinal change on organizational effectiveness, gathered post test data eighteen months after training. The researchers found that training effects persisted over the duration as applicable to their study. However, while both these studies highlight relative longevity of soft skills training, their situatedness within the private sector and interest orientations do not align with those of SAIL training as suggested for the purposes of St. Lucia. Thus, the recommendation for future research in this regard would more closely reveal appropriateness of length and durability of retention for SAIL training.

Culture and Soft Skills Transmission

This study is framed largely within a socioeconomic and business context, remaining in the realm of individual and public sector influences as its variables of interest. As such its outcomes do not take into significant account, the influences of national culture on socioeconomic and business circumstances, as it relates to the effectiveness of soft skill transmission for usability within specifically characterized national cultures. The assumption of HR from its nascence is that it is universal in its applicability and its effectiveness. Perhaps this assumption has encouraged the “group to individual” direction of influence emphasis encountered in the study (Peek, 2020), as well as the ambiguous and tentatively placed confidence in the efficacy of HR. Thus, the insinuation stimulating recommendation for future research is that HR soft skill efficacy may be directly correlated to cultural specificity and that HR application may find greater effectiveness when culture is considered as opposed to generalization of assumed universal principles.

In this vein, Hofstede's dimensions of culture proves valuable since it provides a link between culture and business (Kim, 2017). By way of example, the dimension of individualism versus collectivism, speaks to a cultural tendency to be self-centered as opposed to being group centered. This further implies that cultures with predominantly individualistic tendencies may pose challenges to business practices requirements of selfless behavior in favor of others or for organizational benefits. The potential implication of this in St. Lucia's case for instance, is that the island is quickly moving toward individualistic tendencies, away from a previously collectivistic cultural orientation.

Thus, while HR strategies such as those proposed in this study may be individually focused, they are not solely individualistic in nature and could be misaligned notwithstanding HR's ability to overcome conditional vicissitudes. Hence, future research as recommended would determine the effect of culture on the effectiveness of soft skill transmission, particularly whether cultural and business alignment matters or whether a dulling of soft skill effect occurs as a result of culture.

Soft Skills and Crime Prevention

From the onset, this research held among its objectives, determination of the use of soft skill acquisition as an institutionalized mechanism with the potential for affecting social change. Based on the results, this potential appears plausible and indicators point to a both consciously deliberate and transformationally instilled inclination toward effecting social change as a result of HR soft skill training. Along these lines, the findings reveal a tendency among SAIL training recipients, to be more amenable to behaviors that promote, harmony, self-sacrifice, willingness to avert negative conflict and positive socially constructive inclinations. As such, the study includes in its substantive recommendations, the adoption of a "new" or augmented approach to corporate

social responsibility (CSR), which focuses activity on the added responsibility of business being agents of social change. Notwithstanding the potential observed for business to be used as agents of social change, this observation of potential is on the basis of the evidenced transferability and transformability effected through HRT and not on the foundation of directly dedicated, systematic examination of the subject.

However, the strength of the potential emerging from this study, warrants future research which directly addresses the use of HR soft skills as agents of social change. This is particularly important to HR related social ills that spiral into criminal offences, which could otherwise be arrested by pervasive, targeted HR interventions. In more specific terms, personal soft skill issues such as uncontrolled anger that may escalate into criminalized behavior, leading to injurious or mortal harm to others, may be alleviated by nationwide emphasis on soft skills so that crimes of this nature could be averted. Connectedly, the United Nation's Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in its report on global homicides acknowledges an interpersonally linked categorization of intentional homicide (UNODC, 2019).

Thus, SAIL training with its interpersonal and related skill component, may offer substantial benefits for addressing crime issues. Future research may examine the elements of SAIL as part of a crime prevention/reduction strategy or recommend amendments for achieving those purposes through soft skill training interventions. Apart from general governmental interest as a whole, future research in this area holds appeal for law enforcement, prison services social protection agencies and the Ministry of Equity, Social Justice and Empowerment (MESJE), which facilitates transformative interventions for the wellbeing of the nation's vulnerable.

Overall, five main areas for future research are forwarded, arising from the conduct of the study. While these areas are not exhaustive, they represent derivatives of the findings that warrant

the most significant attention in relation to the objectives of the research and the gaps identified in the study. As such, the contextually public sector emphasis of the investigation stimulates interest in determining the effects of expanding HRT as treated in the study, into the private sector. Further, since this study achieved its outcomes using a face to face methodological approach, future research is recommended to determine the feasibility for training soft skills virtually and assessing the degree of its effectiveness as a virtual option. Additionally, while the study proved effective in clarifying a link between HR and BP, time considerations did not allow for assessment of a correlation between training length and duration of participant retention after training. Thus the recommendation for further research in this regard seeks to assist practitioner action in terms of measuring investment over time and determining retraining needs.

Further, a recommendation for research into the area of culture and soft skill transmission is made, in acknowledgement of cultural specificities which may impact business behavior and challenge the inherent demands of HRT. The suggestion is presented in recognition that aspects of soft skill training, though universally effective may be counter to national cultural tendencies and may need to be tweaked to enhance effectiveness. Moreover, as part of its initial objectives, the study set out to determine the potential of business to be used as agents of social change. In this regard the recommendation for future research focuses on determining the potential for augmenting CSR interests with an institutionally deliberate intention to effect social change, including crime reduction, through the promotion of HR soft skills. These recommendations for future research and recommendations for application are derivatives of the results and along with the overall conduct of the study, form the basis on which the following conclusions are drawn.

Conclusions

The results emanating from the conduct of this study have relevantly informed the implications and recommendations presented in the previous sections of this chapter and form the basis for the conclusions drawn in this section. Accordingly, the study's overarching and substantive messages are the confirmation of a clear and positive correlation between Human Relations (HR) and business performance (BP) and by extension, the justification of support for implementing a National Human Relations Training Program (NH RTP) as an empirically investigated instrument for wide scale Business performance improvement in St. Lucia. Moreover, the investigative efforts leading to the confirmation of these two predominant conclusions, fuel the emergence of several elements of impactful takeaways, that are significant to national interests, policy, practice, theory, HRM/HRD and HR overall. In this regard, the section details conclusions relevant to the national problematized scenario presented in the introduction, Human Relations training (HRT) and business benefits, closing with the value laden messages of benefits to be derived from implementing a NH RTP.

A Clear and Positive Link Exists Between HR and BP

Thus a foundationally critical initial conclusion drawn from the research, is confirmation of a clear and positive correlation between HR and BP. Although the study set out to conduct an empirical investigation to determine whether a NH RTP would improve business performance in St. Lucia, inextricable to the undertaking is the idea that a relationship exists between HRT and BP. This necessitated clarifying the strength of the frequently contested connection between HR and BP as well as examining the influence of training within the fields of HR, HRM and HRD, particularly in consideration of the St. Lucian context within which the research is immersed.

Crucially, the prevailing circumstances of St. Lucia make it imperative that every aid to socioeconomic development be explored as a means of ensuring national resilience, sustainability and survivability. Since St. Lucia is not independently self-sustainable, in the absence of a strong manufacturing or natural resource base, it must depend on external, regional and international interactions along with its own efforts, to secure socioeconomic growth. By extension, this quest to obtain national wellbeing has encouraged exploration of various interventions to promote business and social success (NCPC, 2016), notwithstanding the persistent challenges presented by global pressures, eventualities and rising national crime figures. However, to date these interventions have not been strongly or concertedly directed toward HR as an equitably effective intervention for promoting socioeconomic betterment.

Thus, with the research revealing that there is a strong definite link between HR and BP, the parallel realization is that the Government of St. Lucia (GOSL) is possibly missing and inadvertently mismanaging a potentially vital tool in the form of HR and HRT, as a means of adding to its sparse options of socioeconomic boosters for acquiring its growth objectives. As such, a relevant takeaway from the study is that HR and HRT provide a feasible option for socioeconomic growth and BP improvement, necessitating equity of weighting and parity of emphasis to technical concerns.

More succinctly, the research is conclusive that inappropriate attention or inattention to HR soft skill issues in unbalanced favor of technical skills, deprives the GOSL of an immediately amenable means of addressing its HR related performance and socioeconomic issues. Thus, a balanced emphasis on both soft and technical skills, allows for addressing more holistically, curatively and dedicatedly, each area of relevantly correlated national socioeconomic and performance concern. For instance, in the case of this study, these areas could include HR

associated business performance issues within the public sector, governmental performance in terms of leading as an agency for HR connected social change and performance in terms of public sector strategic impact on the alleviation of HR related social ills.

Correspondingly, equitable appropriately aligned approaches would be engaged in addressing the technical interests of each of these areas, thus facilitating the balanced weighting of HR to technical considerations, through actioned acknowledgment of HR as a similarly significant contributor to BP improvement. Hence, business improvement options such as training would not be misaligned with its intended targets or outcome expectations but appropriated to match the type of skill to be trained. As noticeably revealed with the result indications of this study, interventions based on HR targets and expectations yield BP improvements in confirmation of an HR to BP improvement link.

HR Drives Improvements to Existing High Standards

More interestingly conclusive, is the result rendered recognition that the intentional strengthening of HR presence within business pushes improvements overall. In fact, another outstanding takeaway from the study is that actual and perceived performance are positively affected by attention to HR and these improvement effects override the innate characteristics of both soft and hard skill organizational activity. As such performance perception improves with the introduction of HR interventions, notwithstanding necessary built-in rigidities in public sector technical operational processes. In this regard, it does not matter whether the business is soft skill or technically oriented, the inclusion of an equitable HR emphasis heightens employee service provision and increases favorable client perception about business performance. Thus, the manifestations presented in the study deepens the credibility of HR's performance improvement

ability to overcome prevailing circumstances by driving performance beyond existing levels. Significantly, the link between HR and BP is potently emphasized in that HR appears to possess an optimizing effect on performance and HR introduced to organizations through HRT supports business performance optimization.

HRT Improves Business Performance

Along with the confirmation of correlational positivity between HR and BP, the study's results make it significantly noteworthy that HRT improves business performance. This critical conclusion convenes the essences of HRM, HRD and HR, with the favorable outcome of improved BP. As such, the cross disciplinary assemblage of the expressed principles of interactionally driven HR, with the HRD concerns of training within the organizationally oriented practice of HRM, for the desired purpose of enhancing BP, provides a platform for melding and proving the valuable interconnectivity of theory to practice. Thus, several additional but integrated conclusions are drawn stemming from the imbedded theoretical and practical implications in the nomenclature of HRT and its revealed improvement impact on BP.

HRT Focuses Group Outcomes on Individual Efforts

Thus, among the emerging conclusions is that HRT is developmentally transformational to the individual, which results in behavior beneficial to organizational interests. This is in stark contrast to contemporary HRM practice which focuses on a group to individual direction of impact or strongly unitarist approach (Van De Voorde, 2019), in which the individual takes bearing for their behavior from the actions of the group or promptings outside of themselves. Instead, this study confirms that group benefits are derived from individual decisional processes as a result of

intrinsically targeted HRT. In this vein HRT as delivered within this study, is grounded in a definition of HR that emphasizes individual efficacy on the group. Thus according to the concerns of this research and the reorienting of practice, Human Relations is defined as the focused efforts of an individual toward self-development and self-regulatory behaviors for the benefit of interacting successfully with others.

Complementary to the personally directed definitional concept of HR, performance improvement takes on corresponding personally weighted characteristics that facilitate the independent considerations of both HR and performance improvement from an intrapersonal perspective. To this end, performance improvement is assessed on the basis of a client's post interaction perception of improvement of service along with employees' demonstrated awareness of HR qualities that support organizational goals. The research processes founded on the dual conceptualizations of HR and BP, serve to unearth several conclusions promoting the idea of within-person influence on group outcomes.

Hence, based on the person centered factors of self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership, which facilitated the relevantly positive results of the research, it could be convincingly concluded that person driven HR approaches result in performance improvements for business. More directly, individually generated behavior is productive of successful interactions with groups as a consequence of HRT. More so, HRT engages self-reflective behavior that evokes concern for others and demonstrates this in the form of sacrificial actions that benefits business. Further, HRT produces personally emanating conscientiousness that supports business through the evoking of soft skill imbued behavior such as seeking harmony in the workplace, conflict resolution and pursuing work goals.

In fact, the results point to a range of transfer and transformation evincing behavior that strongly fuel the conclusion that individually internalized processes influences the group and by extension business, by developing individual self-esteem, leadership, interpersonal skill, reflexivity and the desire to demonstrate these for the benefit of others. This suggests that businesses with a HR soft skill focus stand to be more productivity and performance generative, since individual efforts are focused on group outcomes and are not dissipated into degenerative, organizationally destructive disgruntlements.

As such, HRT encourages the development of positively directed introspective behavior, that enhances self-esteem and the value of individual input, leadership attributes that allow for taking initiative and influencing others as well as attitudes that promote the desire for positive interpersonal skills for harmonious constructive relationships with others. Thus, since the inputs of HRT are inextricable from the individual, a person's resulting transformation and willingness to demonstrate these transformed behaviors, make business a primary beneficiary of HRT, on the strength of individually internal stimulation.

Moreover, the nationally reported scenario of soft skill deficits that contribute deleteriously to business (NCPC, 2016), stands to be reversed, given the introduction of a person centered approach to HRT. In this regard, the convergence of dependence on the soft skill inclined tourist and service industries, along with internationalized interactions for socioeconomic growth, places HR and HRT at the strategic forefront in options for developmental efforts. This is on the strength that the widespread infusion of transformational stimulus such as derived from HRT, transforms individual behavior into nationally productive actions emanating from personal impetus.

As such the research affirms and concludes that HRT through organizational administration, potentializes redressing of reported deficits in person dependent skills as

leadership, people management, performance management, customer relations and effective communication (Training and Development Policy, 2019). More directly, individually focused HRT results in the identification of a nationally strategic approach for bolstering soft skill demands and ensuring socioeconomic improvements on business, social and personally developmental levels.

HRT is Individually Transformative

Thus, companion to the conclusion that individually targeted HRT evokes behaviors beneficial to the group, is that HRT is individually transformative. Hence, HRT is suitable for the employee transformational objectives of business and fitting for achieving public sector developmental, stewardship and business performance mandates. Accordingly, HRT provides an avenue for effectively addressing the HRD shortfalls in policy initiatives that affect business performance in St. Lucia but fall within the ambits of governmental imperatives, as suggested in the National Employment Report of 2003-2005. This power of HRT to transform is registered in the expressions of employee intentional behavior, signaling their willingness to demonstrate the transformative impact of their HRT consequent learning in practice, as highlighted in the performance improvements observed in the study.

Therefore, performance improvement in itself is confirmation of the positive impact of HRT and a strong basis for drawing the conclusion that HRT is transformative. To this end, individual employee behavioral changes in statements of intention to take initiative, lead by positively influencing others, manage situations of negative conflict and employ cohesion building interactional skills, provide evidence of self-adjustment that may have been ignored or nonexistent prior to HRT but evoked through HRT. As such, a direct positive correlational impact is declared

between HRT and individual transformation. By extension, a similar positive correlation exists between HRT transformed individuals and organizational performance improvements. These improvements are demonstrated in employee transformational intentions to develop themselves, apply their learning, share knowledge, make personal adjustments, engage in introspection and pursue organizationally beneficial objectives as a result of being transformed by HRT.

HRT is Significantly Transferrable

Congruently, the study confirms a significant takeaway resulting from the transformational effectiveness of HRT in that, despite its abstract and nontechnical nature, it is suitably transferrable to individuals as well as intra-contextually, inter-contextually and extra-contextually. Accordingly, on a personal level and on the basis of the findings, HRT has proven to be effectively trainable within individuals. Thus despite being intangible, individually targeted HRT renders specific, identifiable and measurable changes in individuals as evidence of its transfer. This dispels misgivings concerning the trainability and transfer of highly innate, person-centered soft skills (Awais, Mohamed, Pandiyan and Othman, 2013). Instead, HRT transferability serves the strategic HRD purposes of St. Lucia by providing an opportunity to confidently engage in development of personal soft skills as a means of reducing national deficits and promoting public sector performance through upskilling in this regard.

Further, HRT supports intra-contextual transfer of soft skills that redounds to improved internal organizational performance. Interestingly, a positive transfer effect was observed in the results, indicating that while all employees of specific departments did not form part of the study sample, the entire department registered perceived enhancements from clients. Importantly, transfer manifested in a form of vicarious dispersion, that is aligned with the abstract to abstract

or “like to like” recommendations for effectively measuring soft skills. As such, employees who did not take part in HRT were impacted by employees who were exposed, to the benefit of the entire organization. This emphasizes the within context transferability of HRT in that, while clients did not interact with exclusively trained employees, the overall impact of HRT was positively pervasive. Further, wherever trained participants were stationed within their departments apart from the frontline, resulted in the evidence of HRT transfer in the form of overall improvement. Accordingly, this transferability lends support to the idea of wide scale HR focus, since it is evidentially conclusive that HRT is contextually pervasive.

Along these lines the conclusion that HRT is transferrable inter-contextually, is drawn from the participants’ willingness to apply, share and demonstrate the consequences of HRT in their various departments, notwithstanding that they were trained together in one context but transferred their training with the outcome of overall interdepartmental performance improvement. Moreover, participant suggestions for collaboration through sharing of processes and providing interdepartmental support, confirm the high potential for inter-contextual HRT transfer for public sector stakeholders. More convincingly conclusive in terms of inter-contextual transfer, is the inextricability of transferred HRT from its embeddedness within the receiving individual. Thus HRT gains portability, in that it is transferred within the individual from context to context and initialized as a result of individual decisional processes.

Consequently, the inseparability from the individual and portability of HRT makes it transportable across contexts and therefore accessible in circumstances external to which it was obtained. As such, HRT as a result of its person-centric orientation is dependent on personal transformation and activation by its “carrier” regardless of context. Thus it is the decisional, intentional and introspective processes of the individual that are of greater import to the transfer

of HRT than the context. This gives rise to the conclusion that the positives derived from HRT can be transferred to extra-contextual situations amenable to HR influences.

HRT Potentializes Business as Agents of Social Change

Of equal conclusional significance, is that the portability of HRT strongly potentiates it as a means of impacting HR related social change. Implicitly, the content and ethos of HRT align it with aspects of St. Lucia's HR associated expectations of the social environment but which are found to be deficient therein. These deficient expectations include harmony building interactions, sacrificial behavior, care and concern for others and personal development that fosters societal growth. Consequently, national HR soft skill deficits that may manifest socially in terms of introspectional, interpersonal, attitudinal and developmental skills, stand to be positively impacted by the essences transported within HRT to the social context. Moreover, HRT moves beyond the possibility of merely socially contextual potency and offers "meta-contextual" efficacy since it is potentially able to transcend indefinite circumstances such as cultural contexts. This potential is derived from the universality of the social expectations enmeshed in HRT, which aid in the societal improvements embodied in efforts considered as social change.

In this regard, the research results support the conclusion of cultural amenability of HRT, in trained participants' indications and inclinations to demonstrate care and concern for others, resolve negative conflict and display empathy toward others. Juxtapositionally, St. Lucia's situation of rising crime, increasing social ills and movement toward culturally individualistic tendencies among its population (SLP, 2021) assists with drawing the conclusion that HRT, with its revealed impact of generating "other-focused" business benefits, is potentially apt for producing

similar effects within the St. Lucian socio-cultural context and act as a catalyst for producing HR related social change.

HRT Facilitates a New Corporate Social Responsibility

Thus, in addition to generalized social change efficacy, two related conclusions are drawn based on the potential of HRT for addressing HR oriented social issues. Firstly, that HRT facilitates business and particularly the St. Lucian public sector, in provisioning social change mandates through a new form of HR focused corporate social responsibility. Secondly, that HRT provides a potentially potent option for the alleviation of crime and HR related social ills. In the first instance, widespread promotion of HRT within public sector departments as St. Lucia's largest employer and being the employer with a democratized responsibility for social welfare, the government of St. Lucia (GOSL) possesses the opportunity to deliberately assume the responsibility as an agent of social change.

This takeaway conceptualizes a conveniently strategic option for the GOSL to consciously provide a conduit for infiltrating the benefits of HRT into society through its employees. This infiltration of social change benefits through HR imbued public sector employees, is latently disseminated in the deliberate social deposits of care and concern for others, empathetic emotionally intelligent behavior and constructively developmental engagements. In turn, these behaviors contribute toward the promotion of social harmony, positive attitudinal and personal adjustments as well as nationally beneficial personal tendencies. As such, a public sector as social change agent approach, is confirmed by the study as an adoption worthy strategy, since it potentially appropriates the benefits to HRT derived within the context of business and may

“unzip” these benefits within the social context for effecting social change, the alleviation of social ills and the reduction of crime.

HR/T Promotes Crime Reduction

Thus, while HR/T is not a panacea for mitigating against all social ills and criminal behavior, it is forcefully conclusive based on study results and the nature of HR, that it presents a potentially powerful strategic tool for promoting HR related crime reduction. More directly, HR soft skill interventions offer “prophylactic” or preemptive approaches to complementarily HR deficits that can spiral into criminal activity. For instance, personally derived HR domain behavior such as anger, which in itself is not a criminal offence, may spiral into criminal action if the related HR skills for managing anger have not been a pervasive strategic presence within national social settings. As such, persons who have not been exposed to nationally deliberate HR influences may not have the ability to avert escalation into behavior that is socially unacceptable, violent or legally punishable.

However, the results of this study confirm the conclusion that HR and HRT lead to behaviors that could be considered corrective, preventative and transformative. These behaviors are manifested in actions that seek to correct or adjust, show care and concern for others, elicit introspection and self-control as well as manage conflict. Thus, HR/T potentially averts criminality by instilling beforehand self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership qualities that would prevent and by extension bring about reductions in HR related crime.

This conclusion is reinforced as a worthy, workable option since, as highlighted in the introduction to this study, St. Lucia’s rising HR related social ills and crime rate have attracted the attention of stakeholders for answers to address the situation, albeit with the inclusion of adhoc,

fragmented and tokenistic HR interventions. In this vein, the study notes the mention of strategies such as conflict resolution and the development of emotional intelligence for school goers as soft skill options for managing crime but without any deliberate, actionable strategy (SLP, 2021). This bolsters the conclusion that HR/T is strongly potentiated as a crime reduction strategy and is highly configurable in the form of exposure to self-awareness, attitude adjustment, interpersonal skills and leadership (SAIL), to address crime and other purposes as revealed in the study.

HRT SAIL Facilitates HR Objectives

Overall the study is conclusive that HRT as configured through SAIL is powerfully efficacious in achieving the HR objectives pursued as matters of interest in the conduct of this investigation. Thus, in addition to establishing distinctive clarity between HR and BP and that BP is improved on account of HRT, in several areas as discussed above, the study further draws the important conclusions that HRT positively impacts client perception and encourages repeatability of business transactions. While these two additional conclusions can be categorized as benefits to the business, they particularly speak to the client centered impact of HRT and credentializes the compatible utility of abstract measurement instruments for abstract phenomena.

As such, the study concludes that public sector training attention directed toward the development of self-awareness and introspective behavior, attitude adjustment emphasis, interpersonal skill management and leadership skill enhancement in employees, positively impacts client performance perceptions of the organization and promotes the desire to reengage in business transactions. Accordingly, client perceptions are improved notwithstanding uncomfortable procedural and processual transactional rigidities. In this regard, HRT produces a dulling of apprehensiveness toward the inevitable stringencies relevant to several public sector transactions

and departments. As such, the effects of HRT overshadows actual or anticipated transactional unpleasantness and positively spotlights the client experience of other-centered behavior exhibited by employees. Thus, the subsumption of rigidities into more overwhelming transactional positives brought on by HRT, recedes apprehensions and fosters organizationally positive perceptions that neutralizes hesitancy or misgivings about repeating transactions with a public sector entity.

Importantly, the conclusion that HRT promotes willingness to repeat public sector interactions is significant since public sector services are critical for legitimizing key nationally oriented public actions. While most of these transactions are essential and must be conducted through public sector agencies, their afore mentioned rigidities are found to cause reluctance to engage with the respective departments and by extension a negative perception is cast by clients toward the respective departments and the sector as a whole. For instance the five departments used in this study, namely the Civil Status Registry, Electoral Department, Immigration Department, Accountant General's Department and Transport Division, all necessitate repeat interactions but are steeped in procedural guidelines that challenge client's eagerness to engage the respective departments for critical services. This augurs problematically for these services since client reluctance to accessing them may lead to issues of stakeholder frustration, poor sector perceptions, departmental inefficiencies and defensive employee approaches as discussed previously.

Thus, without the influence of HRT, public sector services such as vital records, National Identification Card acquisition, travel documentation, driver's license authorization and public funds payments may continue to seem prohibitive and otherwise discouraging. Hence, the results unearthed in the study showing clients' improved perception in the case of all studied departments and willingness to reengage, lend to drawing the firm conclusion that HRT reduces aversion to

engagement and promotes the likelihood of experientially positive repeat public sector interactions. Along with the previously discussed conclusions, confirmation of the impact of HRT on repeatability contributes to finality in filling in the affirmatively drawn conclusions in relation to the research hypotheticals.

Thus synoptically, the study concludes in response to the hypotheses, that HRT improvements are transferrable from business to social contexts (H5), generating ideas regarding portability, new approaches to corporate social responsibility and crime reduction. Further, the study is conclusive in relation to H4, that HRT affects employee willingness to make personal sacrifices. This hypothetical element gave conclusive bearing to the transformative ability of HRT, the individual introspective, decisional impact on business and the other-centered generativity produced by HRT.

In terms of stakeholder focused interactions, the study concludes in congruence with H3, that HRT affects willingness of clients to engage in repeat transactions with a business. To this end, the study notes the changes in clients improved attitudes toward public sector departments and employees after HRT and by extension acknowledges a nonselective feature of HRT in that it pushes improvements to already existing high standards. Correspondingly, H2's initial tentative statement that HRT affects client perception of business performance is made conclusive by the increases in affirmative post data responses. Significantly, perception as a compatible soft skill measure is confirmed to be effective as a performance indicator and basis for evaluating ROI.

Thus, in this vein, the H1 hypothesis that HRT improves business performance is conclusively confirmed and encompasses all the study's areas of interest. Most importantly, the study has established that there is a clear link between HR and business performance and by extension that HRT improves BP. These improvements are in accordance with the person-centered

definitional qualities of HR and BP improvements as adopted in the research and within the operational mandates of the government and public sector of St. Lucia. Secondly, as objectivized in the introduction, the research concludes that HR holds significant potential for the alleviation of social ills and crime reduction.

Notwithstanding contextual circumstances, HRT is found to have the potential to override existing conditionalities, including cultural peculiarities, further facilitating the use of business as agents of social change. Thus, in culmination, the study through its empirical investigation as to whether a national Human Relations training program (NH RTP) would improve business performance in St. Lucia, concludes on the basis of the performance improvements identified within the selected public sector departments, that wide scale intervention through HRT would effect wide scale performance improvement if applied nationally and so justifies the implementation of a NH RTP.

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Appendix A

Public Service Performance Survey

You are invited to complete the following questionnaire which aims at examining the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program on Business Performance in St. Lucia

The questionnaire should only take 10 minutes to complete and it includes 16 questions. Your responses are anonymous and will not be identified with you in any way.

You may skip any question that you find intrusive or offensive, but it will help me if you respond to as many questions as you feel comfortable with. You have the right to withdraw at any stage (before or after the completion) of the research without any consequences and without providing any explanation. In this case, the data collected will be deleted.

Please complete questions 1 to 15 by placing an X over the letter in brackets, next to your answer. Place an X over your appropriate gender and write your age.

Gender (M) / (F) **Age** _____

1. Have you ever done business with this institution before?
 (a) YES
 (b) NO

2. Was your present transaction successful?
 (a) YES
 (b) NO

3. Did you have a pleasant experience doing business with the institution?
 (a) YES
 (b) NO

4. Were you eagerly looking forward to doing business with the institution?
 (a) YES
 (b) NO

5. Before coming, were your impressions of the institution positive?
 (a) YES
 (b) NO
 (c) Neutral

6. Are your impressions of the institution based on how you are treated by attendants?
 (a) YES
 (b) NO

7. Are your impressions of the institution based on the nature of the transactions?
 (a) YES
 (b) NO

8. Are your impressions based on the reputation of the institution?
 (a) YES
 (b) NO

9. After leaving are your impressions of the institution the same as before you came?
 - (a) YES
 - (b) NO
10. Would you be eager to conduct repeat business with the institution in the future?
 - (a) YES
 - (b) NO
11. Does your eagerness to conduct future business depend on the service you received?
 - (a) YES
 - (b) NO
12. Does your eagerness to conduct future business depend on your interaction with attendants?
 - (a) YES
 - (b) NO
13. If you had a choice would you choose the same attendant to serve you?
 - (a) YES
 - (b) NO
14. Were you offered any unsolicited additional assistance, guidance or information?
 - (a) YES
 - (b) NO
15. How did the attendant make you feel?
 - (a) Valued
 - (b) Just another client
 - (c) Like a burden

16. Choose one option for each question presented in the table below. Circle the number that represents your opinion.

QUESTIONS	Very poor	Poor	Neutral	Good	Very good
Overall, how do you rate your interaction with the institution?	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, how do you rate the quality of service received?	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, how would you rate your impressions of the institution after your transaction?	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, how would you rate your feelings after your experiences with the institution?	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, how do you rate your attendant's ability to make your transaction easy for you?	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, how do you rate your perception of the institution?	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Public Sector

Post Training Review – Focus Group Schedule

Thank you for attending this post training review focus group session which facilitates examining the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program on Business Performance in St. Lucia

The session would last about 60 minutes. Your responses are strictly anonymous and will not be identified with you in any way. The discussion will be recorded to allow for research analysis. Confidentiality is necessary to allow for free and open discussion as required by the research.

Please allow one speaker at a time and avoid side conversations. There are no right or wrong answers, speak freely and independently, not being swayed by the expressions of others.

You do not have to respond to every question, but it will help me if everyone participates in the discussion and you respond to as many questions as possible. You have the right to withdraw at any stage (before or after the completion) of the research without any consequences and without providing any explanation. In this case, the data collected will be deleted.

Preliminary information

- Institution represented
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Job title
 - Role within the department
 - Level of contact with clients
 - Number of years working with the institution
-

Interview schedule

1. To what extent did you have organized Human Relations training before now?
2. What are your general thoughts about Human Relations training?
3. How relevant do you think the recently concluded training was to you
4. How relevant do you think the recently concluded training is for the organization
5. In what ways do you think the training would be beneficial to you
6. In what ways do you think the training could be beneficial to your organization
7. How widespread do you think Human Relations training should be within the public service
8. How aware have you become regarding your impact on others as a result of this training
9. How could this training impact your relationship with clients
10. How could this training impact your relationship with internal customers
11. In what ways have your thinking and behavior changed in terms of your relationship with others
12. Do you believe that this training could impact employee perception of the organization
13. What do you think is the public's perception of your organization and why?
14. How prepared / willing are you to apply your training for the enhancement of public perception of your organization.

15. How much of your training are you willing to adopt as part of your everyday lifestyle both in and out of work.
16. Has this training changed you in any way? If so how?

Appendix C**UREC's Decision**

Student's Name: Ernest M. Ottley

Student's ID #: R1710D358273

Supervisor's Name: Raimi Lukman

Program of Study: UUM: DBA - Doctorate of Business Administration

Offer ID /Group ID: O13348G12885

Dissertation Stage: 1

Research Project Title: An empirical investigation of the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program on
Business Performance in St. Lucia

Comments:

Decision: A. Approved without revision or comments

Date: 10-Mar-2020

Appendix D



UREC's Decision

Student's Name: Ernest M. Ottley

Student's ID #: R1710D3582734

Supervisor's Name: Dr Lukman Raimi

Program of Study: UUM: DBA - Doctorate of Business Administration

Offer ID /Group ID: O21424G21418

Dissertation Stage: 3

Research Project Title: An empirical investigation of the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program on Business Performance in St. Lucia

Comments:

REAF:

Estimated End Date is in the past. Please correct.

5b - Disabilities. Provide information on whether participants with disabilities will take part in the research.

9.2 - tick attached.

Informed consent: sign the form. Gatekeeper letter:

sign the form. Questionnaire:

Please add a demographics section at the beginning of the questionnaire.

Interview schedule:

Please add a demographics section prior to the questions. It is vital to know some demographic information in order to define which groups of people prefer one answer over the other.

General: A number of grammar and spelling errors."

Decision: B. Approved with comments for minor revision

Date: 21-Jan-2021



Informed Consent Form

Student's Name: Ernest Ottley

Student's E-mail Address: ernestottley.eo@gmail.com

Student ID #: R1710D3582734

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Raimi Lukman

University Campus: Unicaf University Malawi (UUM)

Program of Study: Doctorate of Business Administration

Research Project Title: An empirical investigation of the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program on Business Performance in St. Lucia

Date:

Provide a short description (purpose, aim and significance) of the research project, and explain why and how you have chosen this person to participate in this research (maximum 150 words).

The study aims to determine whether the implementation of a National Human Relations Training Program would improve business performance nationwide, particularly among government agencies. These agencies are also explored for their potential to alleviate social ills via transferred training of their employees.

The study is significant in that high performing businesses are essential to the survival of St. Lucia's economy with its scant natural resources, in a competitive global environment. The link is therefore strongly made between HR soft skills and business success.

Participants are both randomly and purposively selected. Selection is based on the degree of direct

The above named Student is committed in ensuring participant's voluntarily participation in the research project and guaranteeing there are no potential risks and/or harms to the participants. Participants have the right to withdraw at any stage (prior or post the completion) of the research without any consequences and without providing any explanation. In these cases, data collected will be deleted. All data and information collected will be coded and will not be accessible to anyone outside this research. Data described and included in dissemination activities will only refer to coded information ensuring beyond the bounds of possibility participant identification.

I, Ernest Ottley, ensure that all information stated above is true and that all conditions have been met.

Student's Signature:

Informed Consent Form

This section is mandatory and should to be signed by the participant(s)

Student's Name: Ernest Ottley

Student's E-mail Address: ernestottley.eo@gmail.com

Student ID #: R1710D3582734

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Raimi Lukman

University Campus: Unicaf University Malawi (UUM)

Program of Study: Doctorate of Business Administration

Research Project Title: An empirical investigation of the effects of a National Human Relations Training Program on Business Performance in St. Lucia

I have read the foregoing information about this study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss about it. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions and I have received enough information about this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without negative consequences. I consent to the use of multimedia (e.g. audio recordings, video recordings) for the purposes of my participation to this study. I understand that my data will remain anonymous and confidential, unless stated otherwise. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Participant's Print name:

Participant's Signature:

Date:

If the Participant is illiterate:

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had an opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the aforementioned individual has given consent freely.

Witness's Print name:

Witness's Signature:

Date:

Appendix F



Gatekeeper letter

Address: Dept. of the Public Service, Castries SLU.

Date: 26-Nov-2020

Subject: Request for Participation

Dear Ms. Soudatt

I am a doctoral student at Unicaf University Malawi. As part of my degree I am carrying out a study on the effects of a national Human Relations training program on improving business performance in St. Lucia. I am writing to enquire whether you would be willing to facilitate the study by allowing access to the departments under your purview for research purposes.

This study will be using questionnaires, an HR training program and focus groups.

The research will investigate the perception of clients about the performance of relevant businesses before and after administering a training program, to determine the feasibility of implementing such a program nationally to all entrants of the workforce. My research supervisor is Dr. Raimi Lukman.

I would be grateful for your permission to access relevant managers, premises and employees as well as your kind conveyance of the conduct of the research to your various departments. I would also appreciate a letter from you permitting my access and go ahead to work out the necessary logistics with departmental managers to facilitate conducting the research.

Thank you in advance for your time and for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require any further information or need any further clarifications.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "E. Ottley", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Student's Name: Ernest Ottley

Student's E-mail: ernestottley.eo@gmail.com

Student's Address and Telephone:

Supervisor's Title and Name: Dr. Raimi Lukman

Supervisor's Position: Student Supervisor

Supervisor's E-mail: r.lukman@unicaf.org

Appendix G



GOVERNMENT OF SAINT LUCIA
MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ECONOMIC GROWTH, JOB CREATION, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

*Communication on this subject
 should be addressed to:
 The Permanent Secretary*

*Graham Louisy Administrative Building,
 2nd Floor, Waterfront, Castries,
 Saint Lucia, W.I.*

October 23, 2020

Mr. Ernest Ottley
 Student
 St Lucia

Dear Mr. Ottley,

The Department of the Public Service acknowledges receipt of your correspondence dated October 20, 2020, wherein you requested permission to conduct research at this Department, for your doctoral studies on the effects of a national Human Relations training program on improving business performance in St. Lucia.

Kindly note that this Department has no objection to your request and therefore you are advised to liaise with Mrs. Shelia Imbert, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Department of the Public Service who will coordinate the research participation. Mrs. Imbert can be contacted via email at shelia.imbert@govt.lc or telephone at 468 – 2204/2209.

The Department of the Public Service wishes you the best in your studies. Yours
 sincerely,

.....
Peggy-Ann Soudatt
Permanent Secretary

Copied Dr. Raimi Lukman, Supervisor, Unicaf University Malawi

Telephone Number: (758)468-2203/2234• Facsimile Number: (758) 453-1305

