Global Journal of Business Strategy and Finance, Volume 1, Issue 2, pp. 1-29, February 2026.

Global Journal of Business Strategy and Finance
ISSN 0000-0000
DAC Insight Publishers
https://journals.dacinsightpublishers.com/GJBSF

HR ANALYTICS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: A DATA-DRIVEN REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

HR analytics has evolved from simply counting headcounts to modeling the impact of investments in the workforce on organizational value creation. This narrative review synthesizes survey findings related to the adoption of HR analytics, the meta-analysis of the training return on investment, and a series of systematic and conceptual reviews of workforce planning, performance, safety, digital transformation, ethics, and predictive attrition. According to survey findings, around 30% of organizations reported using AI in HR processes, while approximately 50% of organizations used spreadsheets and HR core system reports for people analytics. Findings related to training are positive on average but heterogeneous, and this review does not provide pooled effect sizes estimates. Increased productivity does not necessarily result in positive financial outcomes. From the set of the sources related to retention, predictive attrition modeling is the most popular one, and there are many comparisons of machine learning models for attrition but the reported accuracy rarely translates between organizations. Profile of the 128 references included in this review reveals that the literature is fairly new and distributed over eight topic areas. This review argues that analytics of workforce development should focus on causally evaluating training, measuring skills in terms of business outcomes, and governing predictions. Limitations of this review are reliance on published summaries and different outcome measures.

Keywords: *people analytics, HR analytics, workforce development, training evaluation, attrition prediction, workforce planning, return on investment*

Received 4 February 2026; Accepted 25 February 2026, Available online 28 February 2026.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, organizations have collected more data on employees than ever before. Hiring, compensation, performance ratings, training completions, and separations are recorded in human resource information systems, and many organizations also use survey platforms, collaboration logs, and performance dashboards. For human resource professionals, the question of analysis has transformed from whether to analyze available data to whether such an analysis will affect the decision-making process. Marler and Boudreau (2017) defined HR analytics through its role in evidence-based decision making, which remains the most relevant definition of the area. From the decision-oriented point of view, a useful measure of people analytics should change the decision-making process related to hiring, development, pay, or retention and should produce better outcomes than an alternative choice.

Workforce development is the perfect candidate for such evaluation. Workforce development initiatives represent some of the biggest people investments and are often justified by productivity, retention, and internal mobility. Training claims are frequently just claimed but not measured. Tursunbayeva *et al.* (2018) analyzed conceptual borders of people analytics and its value propositions. Minbaeva (2018) discussed how human capital analytics could contribute to organizational competitive advantage. Analytics can help with that task, but only if training records are connected to the business outcomes and causal estimates are obtained through designs.

In particular, this review focuses on the following four questions: What is the extent of adoption and maturity of HR analytics? What does the evidence suggest in terms of returns to workforce development and training? What do the reviews of predictive analytics in workforce retention and turnover reveal and what constraints limit their applications? What are the conditions that have to be met in order for predictive and AI-powered analytics to be useful in workforce decision-making? The sources include survey reports, meta-analyses, systematic and scoping reviews, and conceptual papers published between 2001 and 2026.

The rest of the paper is organized according to the IMRaD structure. In Section 1.1 to 1.3, we introduce the concepts. Section 2 describes the synthesis method. Section 3 presents the results, including adoption and maturity (3.1), workforce planning and forecasting (3.2), returns to workforce development and skills (3.3), performance, productivity, and safety analytics (3.4), predictive analytics for attrition and retention (3.5), and artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and ethics (3.6). Section 4 discusses the measurement framework (4.1), the limitations of the evidence (4.2), and its interpretation and implications (4.3). Finally, Section 5 provides the conclusions.

1.1 Definitions and Scope

The terms HR analytics, people analytics, and workforce analytics are used interchangeably in practice, but there are several distinctions between them in the literature. Typically, HR analytics is referred to as the application of quantitative methods to human resource data to support decisions about the workforce. People analytics is the broader term used in the recent literature and implies organizational value of employee data. Workforce analytics is a term used mostly in the context of workforce planning and operations when the emphasis is made on labor force supply, deployment, and productivity. Tursunbayeva *et al.* (2018) considered these conceptual boundaries and value propositions of people analytics, which forms the basis for definitions in this paper.

The structure introduced by Soares *et al.* (2022), who analyzed 42 papers reporting analytical experiments related to recruitment, talent management, and turnover, is a good starting point for structuring this field. Recruitment analytics includes sourcing and selection of candidates. Talent management analytics covers development, performance, and succession. Turnover analytics includes retention and attrition of employees. We adopt the same structure expanded to workforce planning, performance and safety, and governance, since these issues currently dominate the applied literature.

1.2 Systematizing the Research Topics

There are several attempts to review research topics in HR analytics. Margherita (2022) systematized the research topics in this field in Human Resource Management Review and suggested possible future research directions. Coolen *et al.* (2023), in the same journal, focused on institutionalization of workforce analytics rather than the techniques. Wang *et al.* (2024) reviewed the factors that determine successful implementation of HR analytics and proposed a dynamic framework for further research.

People Analytics as a vehicle for changing organizational culture: Unpacking data-driven value beneath the hype (2021) is an investigation into whether the value promised in people analytics is delivered. Alam *et al.* (2026) studied methods of overcoming the problems in human resource analytics adoption by engaging stakeholders. This study fits the argument put forward in this review, that analytics succeeds or fails because of decisions taken by people using it. Lee and Lee (2024) reviewed the implications of people analytics from the viewpoint of human resource development.

1.3 The Development Perspective

Development programs aim at changing what employees are capable of doing and require analytics to prove that the change occurred. Yoon *et al.* (2024) conducted a bibliometric analysis combined with scoping review of people analytics research landscape in human resource development and outlined future research needs in this area. Roul *et al.* (2025) defined a research agenda for HR analytics based on systematic literature review. These studies outline the problem studied in the remaining part of this review – development outcome measurement that would enable investment decisions.

2. METHODS

2.1 Source Set

The source set contains 128 sources. It includes peer-reviewed reviews and research articles, survey reports, and a set of conceptual frameworks published in regional and institutional journals. Survey reports and meta-analyses were included if they contained numerical results, provided sampling or review protocol, and were published by well-known research organizations. Conceptual frameworks were included if they discussed a topic relevant to the review and are cited for the scope and arguments they present. Industry blogs and statistics pages were excluded from primary evidence because they often cite one another and the samples used are frequently not disclosed. If a source provides its own review protocol, it is cited as such. For example, Kiran *et al.* (2024) provide PRISMA-based review of 196 articles and this is the standard against which other systematic reviews in this set can be measured.

The source set was compiled by the author using a reference list. It was not produced through database searches, no search string or screening protocol was applied, and no source was excluded on the grounds of quality appraisal. This review, therefore, is a narrative review. It claims no systematic coverage of the literature, and the counts of domain and years apply to the source set only.

Each source was classified into one of eight domains based on its principal theme. Classification was done by the author based on the titles and scopes provided by the sources. Table 1 shows the number of sources in each domain. The most numerous are those covering training, skills, and workforce development (33 sources), followed by performance, productivity, and safety (24 sources), digital transformation and AI (22 sources), and retention and attrition (14 sources). The counts represent the description of the source set and do not reflect the strength of evidence in any domain.

Table 1: Distribution of the 128 references by domain

Domain	References	Share of set (%)
HR analytics foundations	12	9.4
Adoption surveys	2	1.6
Workforce planning and forecasting	10	7.8
Training, skills and workforce development	33	25.8
Performance, productivity and safety	24	18.7
Retention and attrition	14	10.9
Digital transformation and AI	22	17.2
Ethics and governance	11	8.6
Total	128	100.0

2.2 Analytical Procedure

Synthesis followed the narrative approach with quantification. For each domain, this review describes research questions posed in sources, methods, and quantitative findings provided in the sources. No effect sizes were recalculated, and no pooled estimates were produced because the sources are different in terms of outcomes, populations, and time periods. In case, the source includes just the title and bibliographic record of the source, it was cited on the topic stated. The restriction was made intentionally, to avoid making conclusions about the work that the author does not have the content of. A few sources were included among peripherals to be considered from the perspective of the methodology they employ but not workforce findings. The predictive maintenance and order quotation (3.4) demonstrate the prediction under capacity constraint problem, loan-default early warning (3.5) demonstrate the same early detection design as attrition models, and the governance research in agriculture and healthcare (3.6) demonstrate the issues of

fairness and access beyond employment. The findings are not used to estimate the workforce effects.

Table 2 provides distribution of sources by years of publication. Year distribution is important for interpretation, since the field rapidly expands, and the earliest sources describe different technological environment from the newest sources. Any data from survey reports must be verified on the basis of the original publications before using them for formal decision-making.

Table 2: Distribution of the 128 references by publication year

Publication year	References
2001	1
2011	1
2013	1
2017	1
2018	5
2019	7
2020	6
2021	9
2022	14
2023	19
2024	30
2025	32
2026	2
Total	128

3. RESULTS

3.1 Adoption and Maturity of HR Analytics

Adoption figures depend on sample composition, but the trend is consistent across sources. The surveys vary in terms of sample, population, and definition of AI use, so their numbers cannot be used for estimating the same value. They are used to point out the direction of the change. According to HR Tech Systems Survey, there was an increase from 24% to 31% of organizations using AI in the HR process in the preceding year (Sapient Insights Group, 2025).

The adoption of AI technology and the adoption of analytics practice are not synonymous. The HR.com State of People Analytics 2025-26 report, which was based on a survey of 201 HR professionals from August to October 2025, revealed that most companies still employ basic tools

(HR.com, 2025). The spreadsheet software and core HRIS analytics were employed by roughly half of the respondents. Non-core HR system analytics were used by 40%, survey and assessment platforms by 37%, and business intelligence and visualization tools by 33%. According to the same report, few organizations were able to use people analytics effectively, and those leading in people analytics performed better than laggards on key metrics used in the study.

Table 3 below provides some details about the adoption indicators described above. The difference between the adoption of AI tools and the basic tools, on which most organizations still depend on to conduct people analytics, is crucial for workforce development. While most companies are capable of generating a report, much fewer organizations have been able to connect learning investments with measurable outcomes. The emphasis on stakeholders made by Alam *et al.* (2026) and the institutional approach taken by Coolen *et al.* (2023) reveal organizational rather than technical factors behind these adoption issues.

Table 3: Reported adoption indicators for AI and analytics in HR, 2025

Indicator	Value	Sample or scope	Source
Organizations using AI within HR processes, prior year	31% (up from 24%)	HR Tech Systems Survey, 28th edition	Sapient Insights Group (2025)
Organizations using spreadsheet software for people analytics	About 50%	201 HR professionals, Aug to Oct 2025	HR.com (2025)
Organizations using business intelligence tools for people analytics	33%	Same sample	HR.com (2025)

Thus, while there may be a high level of adoption of AI tools, the maturity of the analytics process appears to be different. Companies can deploy a recruiting model within one quarter; however, the process of verification of the link between completion of a training program and performance requires years-long measurement efforts. The discrepancy between the two processes is also evident in the literature on skills management. Okafor *et al.* (2025) explored human resource development initiatives and employee career progression; however, the measurement of these initiatives requires specific records, which according to adoption statistics, many companies do not have yet. Ussher-Eke *et al.* (2025) focused on the importance of biometric and IoT-based attendance systems in the improvement of HR administration and workforce accountability; thus, they also highlight the significance of operational data as the source of analytics.

Adoption is determined by systems and tools available to organizations. Chibwaye and Oteri (2023) studied the issue of data-integrated ERP migration in the context of large-scale government workforce transformation, and they highlighted the importance of data integration as a critical factor for that transformation. The example of Ahmed *et al.* (2026) who developed an automated performance appraisal system demonstrated that workflow automation generates data for further analysis. In this regard, adoption depends not only on the choice of analytics software but also on the order of integration of different systems.

3.2 Workforce Planning and Forecasting

Planning is the oldest HRM task that uses quantitative approaches, and it is also the most directly linked to operational decision-making. Safarishahrbijari (2018) conducted an overview of workforce forecasting models. Forecasting techniques differ in terms of their data needs, their assumptions concerning the future demand, and their ability to capture changes in the workforce structure. Forecasting is a useful tool only when the resulting plan leads to decisions, and thus planning is focused on scenario analysis and the translation of forecast results into hiring, training, and redeployment plans. Table 4 contains planning and talent-supply studies from the source set, classified by setting.

A number of studies apply planning logic to particular sectors. Ilodigwe and Adesemoye (2024) developed a framework for the health care sector which links organizational strategy and excellence in its operations to workforce capability. Similarly, Omaghomi *et al.* (2023) offered a framework for governance-based workforce planning and optimization of nurse-to-patient ratio in public hospitals. In each case the planning problem entails both staffing and capability development needs, and both frameworks see the workforce as a constraint in providing the service. The health care sector thus offers an obvious example of why there is a need for the connection between planning and development analytics.

Talent-supply studies involve an extension of planning logic to the matching of skills and demand. Akhigbe *et al.* (2023b) introduced a data-driven model for matching software talent with enterprise skill requirements. Akhigbe *et al.* (2020) developed a framework for strategic recruitment and integration of employees in emerging-market enterprises. Falemi *et al.* (2020) suggested a conceptual framework for talent development in the supply chain context, while Falemi *et al.* (2023b) offered a supply chain workforce optimization framework that addresses staffing volatility amid fast expansion of the operations. Each of these studies involves the concern with timing of supply, which is at the core of forecasting, and illustrates that planning models can be linked to development programs that train the necessary skills.

Table 4: Workforce planning and talent-supply studies in the source set

Study	Setting	Stated focus
Safarishahrbijari (2018)	General workforce	Systematic review of workforce forecasting models
Akhigbe *et al.* (2020)	Emerging-market enterprises	Strategic recruitment and employee integration
Akhigbe *et al.* (2023b)	Enterprise software talent	Data-driven matching of talent to skill requirements
Falemi *et al.* (2020)	Distributed operations	Supply chain talent development model
Falemi *et al.* (2023b)	Supply chains	Staffing volatility during rapid expansion

Study	Setting	Stated focus
Ilodigwe & Adesemoye (2024)	Health systems	Organizational strategy and workforce capability
Omaghomi *et al.* (2023)	Public hospitals	Nurse-patient ratio optimization and governance

Planning models also reveal the limitations of forecasting techniques due to a quick change in labor market conditions. Studies in Table 4 deal with planning problems that require solutions based on labor market data. However, in reality many organizations do not have access to that type of information in the usable form. The lesson for practitioners is that the planning models should be validated using real-world outcome indicators, like actual hiring and vacancy durations, and not be accepted solely due to their theoretical logic. This point ties the planning models to the development program evaluation in Section 3.3, since a plan that cannot be validated with outcome indicators cannot prove that the training closed the skill gap.

Another condition is data quality. Consistent historical data on hires, departures, transfers, and competencies collected over several years is a prerequisite for forecasts, and such data is usually stored in disconnected systems with inconsistent definitions. Tursunbayeva *et al.* (2018) analyzed the value proposition of people analytics, and Minbaeva (2018) – the credibility of human capital analytics. Both cases rely on consistent organizational measures. Thus, the planning literature supports the argument that data governance is a necessary precondition for forecasting and assessment, and investment into definitions produces greater value than investment into complex models.

Process design and staffing capacities are among variables influencing planning. Oyeleye *et al.* (2022) developed a Lean Six Sigma process redesign framework to decrease onboarding cycle time in small professional services firms – tying process performance metrics to firm capacity. Yusuf *et al.* (2025) offered a conceptual framework to decrease diagnostic turnaround time through workflow optimization and staffing capacity building. In both papers, staffing capacity is treated as a variable to manage with the help of process metrics. Therefore, a planning model incorporating process metrics can estimate freed-up capacity resulting from workflow redesign, and such estimation can be compared with observed cycle time after the change.

3.3 Returns to Workforce Development and Skills

3.3.1 Evidence from Government Programs and Firms

The strongest evidence on workforce development comes from evaluations of subsidized training programs and from meta-analyses of firm-level training impacts. Greenberg *et al.* (2001) summarized 31 evaluations of 15 government training programs for disadvantaged workers operating in the US between 1964 and 1998. The programs used various types of training, such as structured job search, remedial education, classroom vocational training, on-the-job training, and subsidized employment. As a result, the authors discovered varying effects of training depending on program type, target group, and economic circumstances. Individual evaluations seldom offered explanations of program success. Such heterogeneity is the main reason why program-level average estimates are misleading for planning.

Evidence on firm-level training impact moves in the same direction. Cedefop (2011) based their synthesis on 62 studies and 264 estimated effects of vocational education and training on economic performance of firms. They discovered a significant positive effect valid for most economic performance measures and robust to the methodology of the underlying studies. At the same time, the authors admitted that there was little information on the effects of different types of training due to lack of classification of training type in the majority of studies. This is as much as a data issue as a research one. Analytics teams can neither estimate the effect of different types of training when the data on training type is not coded consistently. Thus, the Cedefop finding imposes direct requirements on the records to be kept by development functions.

3.3.2 Productivity and Financial Return

Productivity gains do not imply financial returns. Percival *et al.* (2013) studied the relationship between training investment and productivity in 14 Canadian industries during 1999–2005. Training had a significant effect on productivity in 12 out of 14 industries. Once the study was put into the financial context, however, only in four out of 14 industries return on investment turned positive. The authors interpret the difference as the evidence that training is needed to maintain productivity in the changing technological environment rather than a tool to create additional value. Table 5 presents the three syntheses together.

Table 5: Evidence on effects of workforce development in meta-analysis and syntheses

Study	Scope	Key quantitative finding	Implication for analytics
Greenberg *et al.* (2001)	31 evaluations, 15 US government programs, 1964 to 1998	Effects varied by training type, participant group and economic conditions	Measure effects by subgroup, not only as a program average
Cedefop (2011)	62 studies, 264 estimated effects, company level	Positive and significant effect on firm economic performance	Training type and intensity need consistent coding
Percival *et al.* (2013)	14 Canadian industries, 1999 to 2005	Positive productivity effect in 12 of 14; positive ROI in 4 of 14	Productivity and financial return must be measured separately

Table 5 provides several more reasons to doubt the reliability of the average returns figure. The evidence on the government programs shows that positive average effects exist alongside high heterogeneity, and no recalculation of the effect sizes from those studies was performed here. The evidence on the firm-level effects shows a positive average effect on performance; however, the

Canadian evidence suggests that even the same training can increase productivity without covering the cost in most industries. Thus, the development function that focuses only on productivity, or only on completion rate, cannot make a convincing case for the investments. It needs to measure all three dimensions of the effect: productivity, return on investment, and retention as separate outcomes, with the specific type of training responsible for each.

3.3.3 Training Design, Skills, and Vocational Pathways

The skills literature in the source set touches upon the design of training as well as its quantity. Joseph *et al.* (2025a) studied future-proofing skills in the Global South via transformation of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET). A companion article by Joseph *et al.* (2025b) compared the TVET in the United States with the TVET in developing economies, with the focus on workforce readiness and economic inclusion. Both articles address the same problem but from different angles: what vocational system design can create the labor market-relevant skills. Komi and Adamolekun (2024) combined econometrics with skills mapping in the study of worker displacement during the transition from coal to renewable energy, which demonstrates the linkage between skills data and labor market changes.

There are several sources dedicated to particular training content. Onche *et al.* (2024) conducted a literature review on cybersecurity awareness training for insider-threat behavior in university administrations. Anichukwueze *et al.* (2020) focused on the design of the training frameworks to foster the compliance culture and behavioral change through training. Dada *et al.* (2024) presented the longitudinal analysis of entrepreneurial training in the emerging economies. Amarahobu *et al.* (2025) studied mentorship models to support the development of on-the-job technicians, and Okafor *et al.* (2025) evaluated human resource development initiatives and employee career development. All those sources deal with a training design problem, and all suggest measuring the outcomes before the training start.

Workforce readiness and competency frameworks make another group. Unamma *et al.* (2018) conducted a systematic review of digital inclusion and workforce readiness interventions in the emerging economies. Wikiri (2019) suggested a competency framework for preparing software professionals for international employment, and Wikiri (2021) suggested a framework for workforce competencies and service quality of enterprise technology support. Such competencies are directly linked to service outcomes, and the link is exactly the kind of information the development analytics function needs. Most of the frameworks are theoretical and require validation against comparable data. This limitation will reappear in Section 4.2.

Delivery contexts in technical and health education offer other examples. Ogunnowo *et al.* (2025a) suggested a learning framework for mechanical engineering education based on experiment learning and laboratory methods. Nwangwu *et al.* (2019) reviewed the industry-academia partnership approach for the modernization of technical learning centers, while Anyanwu (2022) focused on the mechanisms of skill transfer between IT operations of enterprises and digital entrepreneurship. Joseph and Nwankwo (2024) analyzed professional development for STEM educators as one of the strategies of increasing effectiveness through continuous learning. Michael and Ogunsola (2019) explored entrepreneurial competencies and youth employment in Sub-Saharan Africa, while Michael and Ogunsola (2025) analyzed the integration of curriculum in the context of STEM education and careers. Ogbona *et al.* (2020a) made the comparison of coaching

in education and career transition among students in Nigeria and the United States. Common to all these articles is the dependency of development outcomes on the connection between the design of learning and the career path in which it aims to facilitate development, and such a connection can only be estimated if learning and career records are combined.

Clinical and special education learning analytics offers another perspective. Orise and Niniola (2024a) considered the application of learning analytics in clinical education as a tool for monitoring, measurement, and optimization of professional development of healthcare professionals. Orise and Niniola (2024b) addressed the problem of digital equity in clinical education for underrepresented groups. Orise and Niniola (2020) outlined data-informed digital learning platforms as a framework for evidence-based educational technology. In special education, Yeboah *et al.* (2022) used the analysis of student progress as the basis for personalization of learning, and Yeboah and Oloto (2024) conducted the review of inclusive instructional frameworks for learners with various learning disabilities. Bobga *et al.* (2025) analyzed reforms to teacher education curricula for special learning needs, and Ijiga *et al.* (2024) addressed policies and practices for inclusive learning through the use of educational technology. The majority of the above-mentioned titles focus on frameworks or reviews of various phenomena rather than their measurable effects, thus limiting the opportunity for assessment of return on training.

Leadership and professional development constitute the final piece of the puzzle. Yeboah *et al.* (2019) analyzed professional development and teacher competency in handling exceptional learners in Ghanaian context. Ogbona *et al.* (2024) considered leadership practices fostering the mental well-being of student-athletes in collegiate sport. Kinyanjui *et al.* (2024) explored the career path of an audit associate becoming a leader focusing on the aspect of reporting accuracy. Amayo *et al.* (2023c) explored the role of diversity and inclusion in the performance of project teams in multinational environment. All of the above-mentioned studies relate a development practice to some leadership or career outcome, posing the same measurement question: does a practice change the intended outcome and for who?

Support staff and extension workers represent the other workforce category. Ajayi (2025) considered inclusive self-efficacy and paraprofessional collaboration as an integrated framework, while Ajayi and Opurum (2024b) offered a theory of instructional assistant practice in the context of inclusive classrooms. Both of the above-mentioned studies consider the performance of support staff as a target of intentional influence through development programs. Michael and Ogunsola (2023e) explored the integration of entrepreneurship education into agribusiness curricula, while Michael and Ogunsola (2021e) explored agricultural extension services as an avenue for innovation adoption by rural farmers. In both cases, the training or extension role is a workforce intervention whose effect can be estimated only when people affected by it are consistently tracked.

3.4 Performance, Productivity, and Safety Analytics

The third largest source set domain after training and skills (35 sources) and digital transformation and AI (25) is performance and safety, which encompasses 24 references. The common theme of the studies in this domain is the relationship between the measurement system and behavior. Obogo *et al.* (2019) discussed leadership-driven transformation of safety culture in large

construction workforces, while Obogo *et al.* (2023) proposed a leadership framework for developing safety culture in construction and engineering projects. Obriki *et al.* (2023) reviewed behavioral safety programs as the tool for risk reduction in large workforces, and Obriki *et al.* (2022) analyzed workforce safety training frameworks for operational risk reduction. Table 6 provides the list of performance and safety studies included in the source set.

Table 6: Performance, productivity and safety studies in the source set

Study	Setting	Stated focus
Obogo *et al.* (2019)	Large construction workforces	Leadership-driven safety culture transformation
Obriki *et al.* (2023)	Large workforces	Behavioral safety programs for risk reduction
Arumosoye & Obriki (2021)	Organizational learning	Maturity model for continuous safety performance
Arumosoye & Obriki (2024)	Temporary project organizations	Safety leadership influence
Obriki & Arumosoye (2024)	Subcontractor management	Governance framework for subcontractor safety performance
Obogo *et al.* (2023)	Construction and engineering projects	Leadership model for safety culture development
Ezeako *et al.* (2024)	Operations management	Performance dashboards and data-driven decisions
Falemi *et al.* (2025)	Organizational growth	Leadership effectiveness and measurable business outcomes
Wikiri *et al.* (2024)	Global technology staffing	Performance scorecards for talent quality and placement
Ahmed *et al.* (2026)	Employee performance appraisal	Automated appraisal system for productivity

Performance research provides development analytics with a concrete target. Ezeako *et al.* (2024) defined performance dashboards as tools for decision-making based on data in operations management, and Wikiri *et al.* (2024) created performance scorecards for technology staffing partnerships that track quality, speed and success of talent placement. Falemi *et al.* (2025) offered an operational growth framework connecting leadership effectiveness to business results. In all of these cases, the data used needs to be related to a performance metric. Ahmed *et al.* (2026) considered the same connection from the appraisal point of view, with a system designed to facilitate productivity.

There is also an important message coming from safety analytics. Arumosoye and Obriki (2021) introduced a maturity model for continuous safety performance improvement based on organizational learning, and Arumosoye and Obriki (2024) analyzed safety leadership in large temporary project organizations. Obriki and Arumosoye (2024) proposed a governance framework for subcontractor safety performance, where measurement has to be done in a multi-organizational context. In the case of safety, as well as training, the most effective measurements are those that link the process and the outcome verifiable by the organization. This is also the case with the performance measures discussed below, and this is the underlying idea of the evaluation argument presented in Section 4.1.

Performance dashboards are the closest analytics tools in this context. Orise and Niniola (2022) have offered a conceptual framework for real-time analytics and performance dashboards in health professional training. The goal of such a dashboard is to integrate training and performance data in order for the manager to see if a development program is associated with the change in the target measure. The dashboard does not provide such an association on its own. The evaluation designs considered in Section 3.3 are needed for that purpose, and the dashboard reporting only completions or satisfaction scores cannot be taken as evidence of the performance change.

There are other performance frameworks with the same logic. Sakyi *et al.* (2022b) have introduced KPI frameworks for enhancing accountability and performance in large commercial organizations, and Tonoyan *et al.* (2024b) have reviewed real-time KPI tracking systems and data-driven decision making. Efobi *et al.* (2021) have introduced a framework for data-driven operations management and performance improvement in educational institutions, and Ogbole *et al.* (2021) have proposed an integrated data visualization model for continuous business performance monitoring. Adelanwa *et al.* (2024) have discussed performance intelligence models for outcome measurement in large-scale public services, and Awulu *et al.* (2022a) have reviewed the metrics for measuring operational performance in the pharmaceutical industry. Amayo *et al.* (2025a) have considered diversity and inclusion in global project teams and their impact on delivery success. In each case, the usefulness of the measure relies on a stable definition and a proven link to the result that it measures.

Safety measurement faces the same issue even more directly. Obriki and Arumosoye (2018) designed a conceptual framework for the control of occupational safety risk in data-driven ways in large energy infrastructure projects, while Obriki and Arumosoye (2019) explored the relationship between the frequency and extent of safety walkthroughs by managers and safety culture outcomes in mega projects. Obriki *et al.* (2025) offered a framework that relates leading safety indicators to sustained performance without incidents, and Arumosoye and Obriki (2020) suggested a governance framework for the safety performance of contractors in multi-contract industrial projects. The leading indicators mentioned in these studies can be registered prior to the occurrence of an incident. In the non-safety and non-HR literature, the same prediction and planning paradigm is encountered. Oluleye and Ekun (2022) suggested a predictive maintenance framework for the cassava pulveriser, and Ekun and Muriel (2024, 2025) examined lead time quotation and order quotation in the presence of a constrained resource with a delayed feedback. None of these papers deal with workforce analytics. They are listed here because they examine prediction and commitment in the context of uncertainty in a similar way that Section 3.5 does for

attrition models. The usefulness of these studies in development is conditional upon the possibility of associating the preceding training and supervision with the indicator in the records.

3.5 Predictive Analytics for Attrition and Retention

The most widespread use of the retention sources is represented by predictive attrition modeling. Kiran *et al.* (2024) analyzed 196 papers published between 2011 and 2023 using the PRISMA methodology. These authors concluded that attrition can be managed through the strategic use of HR analytics, and the paper identified data mining decision systems and forecasting for firm performance as the key factors for triggering analysis in its literature review. Attrition prediction in this review is considered an instrument for intervention rather than the prediction itself that is reported, the same approach taken by this review.

There is plenty of machine learning literature related to turnover. Kosgahakumbura *et al.* (2024) tried to conduct an analysis and comparison of studies dealing with employee attrition prediction by using machine learning and deep learning techniques and identifying gaps in this area. Alqahtani *et al.* (2024) in their literature review of studies from 2019 to February 2024 noted that most studies concur on the idea of comparing several predictive models in order to find the most efficient one. Al Akasheh *et al.* (2024) reviewed a decade of research on machine learning techniques for predicting employee turnover, Talebi *et al.* (2025) conducted the literature review of machine learning approaches to turnover prediction, and Iyiade *et al.* (2025) provided a review of machine learning applications for predicting employee turnover. Table 7 compares the scope of these reviews with that of other attrition-related reviews in the source set.

Table 7: Scope of reviews on HR analytics and attrition prediction

Review	Period covered	Corpus or method	Stated focus
Kiran *et al.* (2024)	2011 to 2023	196 articles, PRISMA protocol	Strategic management of attrition through HR analytics
Kosgahakumbura *et al.* (2024)	Not stated in retrieved record	Systematic review, machine learning and deep learning	Comparison of methods and identification of research gaps
Alqahtani *et al.* (2024)	2019 to February 2024	Literature review and classification	Comparison of predictive models for attrition
Soares *et al.* (2022)	Not stated in retrieved record	42 papers in recruitment, talent management, and turnover	Analytical approaches across three HR segments
Al Akasheh *et al.* (2024)	A decade of research	Systematic literature review	Machine learning for predicting turnover

Review	Period covered	Corpus or method	Stated focus
Talebi *et al.* (2025)	Not stated in retrieved record	Systematic review	Machine learning approaches to turnover prediction
Iyiade *et al.* (2025)	Not stated in retrieved record	Systematic review	Machine learning applications for turnover prediction

Several limitations recur in this group. The first one is that the reviews emphasize the importance of model comparison, but comparison per se does not prove the change of a decision caused by prediction. The second limitation is related to portability. A model calibrated on one workforce may perform differently on another, and accuracy figures provided are seldom accompanied by the rate of leavers in the sample. For the retention model, precision and recall among leavers are more indicative than overall accuracy since the model predicting no departures is still accurate in a low-attrition population. These methodological issues affect any attrition model and should be reported along with accuracy figure. Additional requirements follow. External validation tests the performance of the model calibrated on one workforce on another; internal validation does not prove this. Class imbalance is the issue where leavers represent a small share of the sample, and the choice of decision threshold becomes more important than overall accuracy. Calibration checks if a predicted probability of 0.3 corresponds to a leaving rate of around 30% and thus matters for the manager acting on the number. Data leakage happens when a feature collected after the leaving decision is used for the prediction of that decision (e.g., final performance rating or exit survey). Finally, prediction only tells us about the risk. Improvement of retention due to a model-guided intervention needs comparison with a control group or a phased rollout; the reviews from this set only compare models, judging by their titles.

The area of retention is also related to development. Falemi *et al.* (2023a) put forward a framework for integrating the employee retention system with the productivity metrics of operations, linking retention to the measurement of productivity. Ukadike (2019) reviewed gamification in the area of talent and performance management and its impact on attrition, engagement, and cost, while Wikiri *et al.* (2022) suggested a multi-channel communication framework for engaging developers on global talent platforms. The implication of those studies is that retention interventions may be examined as development projects; the idea is developed by the authors of Section 4.1 through a measurement framework.

There are several more studies that contribute to the retention literature through an examination of other populations. Aliliele *et al.* (2023c) analyzed predictive analytics models for student retention and institutional risk management. Githinji and Atobatele (2025a) presented a structured advising and mentorship framework for advancing the students from academic probation to persistence, while Githinji and Atobatele (2025b) introduced a conceptual model that links mentorship, advising, and institutional identity to persistence of underrepresented STEM students. Yeboah *et al.* (2025) considered teacher resilience and retention in special education with respect to the psychological factors of burnout. Finally, Okoli *et al.* (2022) proposed a machine learning

approach to early warning detection in commercial lending. In that context, the idea of the importance of early detection and intervention is similar to the attrition management. A common theme of those studies is the recognition of retention as a process that may be influenced by institutions.

3.6 AI, Digital Transformation, and Ethics

The infrastructure of people analytics includes the digital transformation, and thus creates a challenge for governance. Unamma *et al.* (2018) provided a review of the digital inclusion and workforce-readiness interventions in emerging economies, while Okwesa *et al.* (2023) studied the digital transformation of workforce and scheduling systems and their advances and future directions. Akhigbe *et al.* (2023a) proposed a conceptual model of improving customer experience by means of workforce behavior and real-time operational data, and Akhigbe *et al.* (2024) proposed a technology adoption framework that promotes employee readiness. In each of those studies, workforce data is viewed as an input into the operations decisions, and relies upon readiness, which is a development outcome.

The issue of AI readiness in human resources is addressed directly in Ukadike (2025), in which a conceptual framework of organizational readiness for AI transformation in the human resources function was proposed. The idea of readiness implies the linkage between the technology and the people. Chibwaye and Oteri (2023) and Ussher-Eke *et al.* (2025), discussed in Section 3.1, consider the integration of the data systems and the workforce administration. The result is the emergence of the issues of governance much earlier in the analytics cycle.

The governance is the common theme of the remaining studies in this group. Unamma *et al.* (2025) proposed a three-pillar model of responsible AI governance that involves the issues of ethics, data, and workforce readiness. Sobowale *et al.* (2025) considered the issues of accountability, compliance, and ethical risk in the contingent workforce economy, and proposed a cross-market governance framework for staffing intermediaries. Wang *et al.* (2024) reviewed the determinants of the effective HR analytics implementation, and Margherita (2022) made a research topics map for the field. Taken together, those studies indicate that the conclusion of the attrition literature in a narrow form is valid: a predictive tool is a component of the decision process, and its governance must specify who evaluates the output and what evidence is needed to take an action.

The fairness considerations carry considerable weight when it comes to workforce development. The possibility of an attrition score that determines the development offerings can be a handy tool, but at the same time, it can be disadvantageous to employees if it makes development offers less accessible to employees flagged as potential attrition cases, or if the flags are made on the basis of proxies that are correlated with protected characteristics. The governance considerations discussed in the above section thus lead to a concrete recommendation: any prediction tool utilized in workforce development should be subject to human review, its inputs should be documented, and its effect on access to development should be monitored.

There are ethical and governance-related considerations discussed in the literature on AI and learning. Essandoh *et al.* (2025) explored the implications of artificial intelligence for the future of work and for employment and jobs. Adams (2023) looked into the preservation of critical thinking in the age of generative AI. Adams (2024) looked at assessment integrity and redesigning of the assessment of learning in order to evaluate genuine human competencies. Ladapo *et al.*

(2022) conducted a review of human-in-the-loop machine learning. Orise and Niniola (2020) proposed evidence-based digital learning platforms and Orise and Niniola (2025) performed a review of implementation frameworks for data governance in digital health learning systems. Annan (2024) analyzed algorithmic accountability and trade secret protection in artificial intelligence, and Ominyi and Anichukwueze (2023) conducted a review of algorithmic accountability and model risk management in financial services. Komi (2023) explored cases when accurate forecasts are not fair forecasts with particular attention paid to district-level equity. All the above papers demonstrate that governance is a key consideration to any tool of AI used in making decisions about people.

There are other instances of readiness and governance being raised in additional research. Afrihyia *et al.* (2025) compare organizational readiness for integration of generative AI into healthcare operations in the USA and low- and middle-income countries. Adebayo *et al.* (2025) discuss implementation pathways, governance, and organizational readiness for AI-enabled compliance in critical infrastructure. Badmus *et al.* (2025) propose a governance framework for deployment, risk management, and organizational readiness of customer relationship workflow assisted by AI. Ominyi *et al.* (2024b) conduct a review of organizational readiness for EU Artificial Intelligence Act in multinational enterprises. Unamma *et al.* (2021) explore the creation of national analytics capacity, and Oteri and Chibwaye (2025) conduct a review of change management analytics for organizational transitions. Seun *et al.* (2023) analyze student engagement through AI-powered personalization in basic education, where the concerns about personal data and fairness take the same shape. The term organizational readiness appears frequently in the titles of these papers and implies that the level of analysis is the organization rather than individual employees.

The use of analytics in non-employment contexts provides similar lessons. Michael and Ogunsola (2021b) assess the role of digital agriculture tools in creating sustainable and inclusive food systems, and Michael and Ogunsola (2021c) examine the effect of data-driven agricultural policy models on production efficiency and resource use. Michael and Ogunsola (2023c) develop predictive data models for crop resilience and climate adaptation, and Michael and Ogunsola (2022b) explore gender inclusion and equity across agricultural value chains. In the field of health, Akinyelure (2023) discusses the integration of predictive analytics with culturally competent mental health care for marginalized populations, and Akinyelure (2025) explores the use of behavioural health data to close the loop of policy innovation through community insights. There are the same considerations related to the workforce analytics: there is a model that yields a score but the value of the score depends on decisions and on safeguards of equity.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 A Measurement Framework for Workforce Development Analytics

The considerations described above suggest a minimum set of measures for workforce development analytics. The proposed framework contains four layers. The input layer includes information about participants in the program and their offerings. The process layer includes information about the delivery and design of the program. The outcome layer includes information about expected productivity, financial, retention, mobility, and safety outcomes from the program. The governance layer includes information about access to data, uses of predictive tools, and

fairness monitoring. Every layer includes certain findings from the source set, and every layer is necessary for interpretation of the other three.

For the input layer, there must be consistent definitions within the organization. First, Minbaeva (2018) considered the issue of credibility of people analytics and its dependence on measures that have consistent meaning throughout the organization. Second, Tursunbayeva *et al.* (2018) assessed value propositions made by people analytics, and each proposition involves a defined measure. Finally, Cedefop (2011) in their synthesis noted that the majority of the reviewed papers do not contain information about the type of training, which is an example in the source set of an input needed for evaluation and rarely captured. Consistent coding of the training type and intensity will allow the development function to analyze various designs and compare the effectiveness of one design to another among participants, as evidenced by the examples of government program effectiveness provided in Greenberg *et al.* (2001).

The outcome layer involves separating different effects treated as such in the existing evidence. Percival *et al.* (2013) demonstrated that productivity effect and financial return can differ, which means that the framework records them as different measures. Moreover, retention and mobility are recorded as different measures once again, because the retention literature cited in Section 3.5 distinguishes between them as separate outcomes which can respond differently to interventions. The governance layer includes the requirements stated in Section 3.6. Wang *et al.* (2024) proposed the dynamic framework for the future research on the implementation of HR analytics. The stakeholder perspective of Alam *et al.* (2026) implies involvement of those who utilize analytics in governance issues. Table 8 presents the measures, the layer each one belongs to and the rationale derived from the source set.

Table 8: Minimum measurement set for workforce development analytics

Layer	Measure	Data source	Rationale in the source set
Input	Participant identifiers, role, and prior skills	HRIS and skills records	Subgroup effects (Greenberg *et al.*, 2001)
Input	Training type, intensity, and delivery mode	Learning management system	Training type needs consistent coding (Cedefop, 2011)
Process	Design team members and curriculum sources	Program documentation	Design choices shape effects (Greenberg *et al.*, 2001)
Outcome	Productivity change against a comparison group	Performance records and comparison cohorts	Productivity and finance diverge (Percival *et al.*, 2013)

Layer	Measure	Data source	Rationale in the source set
Outcome	Program financial benefit against cost	Finance documentation and program budget	Return should be calculated independently (Percival *et* al., 2013)
Outcome	Retention and internal mobility after training	HRIS movement records	Attrition as a managed outcome (Kiran *et al.*, 2024)
Outcome	Safety incidents and leadership indicators	Safety records and audit data	Safety culture development (Obogo *et al.*, 2023)
Governance	Model accuracy with leaver base rate, precision, and recall	Model validation records	Turnover models compared on accuracy (Al Akasheh *et al.*, 2024; Talebi *et al.*, 2025)
Governance	Access to development opportunities by group	Program enrollment records	Governance of access (Sobowale *et al.*, 2025)
Governance	Documented reviewer and decision reason	Decision log	Governance of AI decisions (Unamma *et al.*, 2025)

Table 8 presents several measures that are left undefined, so it is proposed to adopt the following definitions for the purpose of testing them. Productivity change equals the difference between change in output per full-time equivalent of participants in the program and change in output per full-time equivalent in a matched comparison group, observed during twelve months following the end of the program. Financial return is monetized benefit of the program subtracted from the cost and divided by the cost of the program; it is presented at twelve and twenty-four months after completion. Retention and internal mobility are the proportions of participants who stayed with the company or moved to a higher grade at the same periods relative to a matched comparison group. The result for each model is presented along with the accuracy of the model as leaver base rate, precision and recall of the model; additionally, subgroup results are presented together with overall figures. These definitions are proposals and require validation in a live environment before application to decision-making.

The example demonstrates the way the framework works in action. Let us consider the example of the firm, which enrolled 200 employees in a twelve-week course of data analysis, and matched them to 200 employees who did not enroll, using criteria of role, tenure, and prior performance.

Twelve months after the end of the program, the output per full-time equivalent rose by 4.0% for the training group and by 1.5% for the comparison group, so the productivity change is 2.5 percentage points. The direct cost of the program, including cost of instructors and materials, is 1,500 per participant. Given the productivity increase equals monetized benefit of 2,400 per participant over twelve months, the financial return equals (2,400 minus 1,500) divided by 1,500, or 60%. Retention at twelve months is 92% for the training group and 88% for the comparison group; the difference is a separate outcome rather than part of the financial one. Fairness monitoring is conducted by comparing the enrollment rate among gender, age band, and job families with the corresponding share of eligible employees; those groups with enrollment rate that differs from the share by more than five percentage points are flagged for review. These are illustrative figures and they are not taken from any source in the review.

Table 8 is a starting point rather than a full specification, and its measures are derived from the logic of the source set but are not prescribed in this format. A number of measures, especially those in the governance layer, rely on data records which many organizations have not yet developed. The initial step for most organizations would be to develop the input and output layers of a few programs to see how the measures can be obtained and then expand the framework if feasible. Outcome measures also need to be interpreted with labor market data on demand for the developed skill sets.

Implementation is subject to the organization's ability to make sense of the results. Ukadike (2025) takes readiness to transform through artificial intelligence as an attribute of the organization within the human resources domain, and the framework assumes such readiness for evaluation purposes. Akhigbe *et al.* (2024) take employee readiness as a prerequisite for adopting a technology, including measurement. In the absence of readiness, the first action is to develop the skills of those who need to collect, interpret, and take decisions based on measures rather than to obtain new tools. It is important because Figure 3 shows that the latter are more readily available than the former.

4.2 Limitations and Threats to Validity

The limitations of this review can be divided into three categories: limitations of the source set, limitations of the synthesis itself, and limitations of the evidence base for workforce development. The source set includes peer-reviewed journal articles, survey reports, and conceptual frameworks published in regional and institutional journals. Conceptual frameworks are cited for their stated scope and logic, and the statements made in them have not been subjected to tests using comparable data. Bibliographic citations of several entries were checked against publication or institutional repositories, and those entries which lack an author list are cited by title. The review has not analyzed the methodological quality of each individual source in detail, and classification of sources by domains is done based on the author's assessment of their titles and stated scopes.

Several sources have overlapping authors. Entries with Akhigbe *et* al., Wikiri *et* al., Obriki and Arumosoye, and Unamma and Okwesa authors have been repeated. This review has not evaluated whether findings presented in different entries of the same author groups are independent, and has not taken the number of entries from a group as an indication of the strength of its findings. If a reader intends to rely on any particular source, she or he should consult the original publication and analyze its methodology.

The synthesis itself also has some limitations. Effect sizes have not been recomputed and no pooled estimate was calculated. Survey data are cross-sectional, and the adoption figures used come from different samples which vary in terms of size, membership, and definition of AI use. The evidence of government programs in Greenberg *et al.* (2001) is about programs implemented before the emergence of modern analytics, and its findings regarding types of training are not necessarily applicable to contemporary firm-level training. The firm-level evidence from Cedefop (2011) and Percival *et al.* (2013) is about different periods and economies compared to those of today.

For evidence regarding workforce development, there is a smaller body of literature than for predictive analytics. Most attrition-related articles compare models to each other, while there is very little on the evaluation of development interventions using comparison groups or staggered rollouts. The imbalance is an important result in itself and limits the recommendations on specific development interventions that could be drawn from the review. Therefore, future research should focus on evaluation of development interventions in addition to model comparison and should include the conditions under which an evaluation was performed so that it could be replicated elsewhere.

4.3 Interpretation and Implications

Three conclusions are supported by the evidence. First, the adoption of HR analytics tools is widespread, while adoption of measurement is more limited. According to Sapient Insights Group, almost one in three organizations uses AI within HR processes (Sapient Insights Group, 2025). According to HR.com, about half of respondents used spreadsheet tools and core HRIS analytics (HR.com, 2025). The difference between these statistics is suggestive of the potential mismatch between the pace of AI adoption and infrastructure that could support its evaluation. This conclusion can be made as a hypothesis, since surveys ask about different things and the link between the two is not established. This gap is in line with the institutional perspective of Coolen *et al.* (2023) and the stakeholder perspective of Alam *et al.* (2026).

Second, workforce development has positive effects in most cases but their size is highly heterogeneous, and sources do not report comparable effect sizes. Government program evidence and firm-level synthesis both indicate that there is heterogeneity in effect (Cedefop, 2011; Greenberg *et* al., 2001). In addition, the evidence provided by the Canadian industry study suggests that even though productivity increases due to training, it may not be sufficient to produce a positive return on investment for all sectors (Percival *et* al., 2013). Therefore, workforce analytics should track productivity, financial return, and retention separately. Training type should be tracked with sufficient consistency to allow comparisons between different training programs.

Third, predictive retention models are technically mature but fragile in practice. The machine learning review papers in section 3.5 demonstrate the maturity of model comparison literature (Al Akasheh *et* al., 2024; Alqahtani *et* al., 2024; Talebi *et* al., 2025; Iyiade *et* al., 2025). However, the practical value of the retention model is in the intervention and its evaluation. Kiran *et al.* (2024) make the same point from a strategic perspective, and Kosgahakumbura *et al.* (2024) list gaps that cannot be filled by a single comparison of models.

Implications for practice follow from these conclusions. Organizations should plan training outcomes in advance, collect the consistent data on training type and participant characteristics and use comparison groups or staggered rollouts to assess the effects in case of non-randomized

design. Skills data should be integrated with the information about task performance and labor market situation, which is necessary for evidence-based workforce development models. Predictive tools should be assessed according to their decisions and access fairness, and not only accuracy. Governance should specify who reviews the tool output and what evidence is needed to make development or retention decisions.

There are limitations to these conclusions. The adoption numbers come from different survey instruments using different samples and definitions of AI usage. The training literature represents different time periods, different demographics, and different measures of effectiveness, making pooling the effects impossible. Some items in the set of sources are conceptual frameworks which have not been empirically tested against comparable data, and some of the systematic reviews fail to provide their timeframe in the reference for this review. Therefore, what this review does is to identify patterns and gaps in the literature instead of providing one definitive number for the return on investment. A further study using the same measure of outcome in all organizations would be necessary to provide such a number.

This review also points the way forward in terms of the research agenda. The first task is a controlled evaluation of training within the organizational context, including the use of designs that isolate training effects from other effects. The second is the creation of skill measurements that allow comparisons across training programs and correlations with performance and retention. The third is the evaluation of the predictive tool in the actual decision-making context, with reporting of the baseline number of leavers, precision and recall, and measures of access and fairness. These are the points of the research agenda that follows from the gaps in the source set; they represent how the next generation of workforce development analytics will be assessed.

5. CONCLUSION

HR analytics has become widely available, and predictive tools for workforce retention are a standard item in the researcher's toolkit. However, the evidence of whether workforce development is an effective investment is less clear. Training works well on average and brings gains, but they are heterogeneous and depend on the design of training. The organizations that wish to manage workforce development as an investment should focus on measuring types of training, skill gaps, productivity, and retention, use designs that separate the effect of training from others, and manage predictive tools as decision aids. The field is past the point of demonstrating that analytics are possible, but how analytics can change decisions is still open for research and discussion.

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