

THE EFFECT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ON EMPLOYEES' PRODUCTIVITY IN MEDIUM-SCALE ENTERPRISES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In contemporary organisational practice, sustained performance is largely driven by how effectively enterprises prioritise career development opportunities that enhance employee capability, commitment, and long-term productivity. Thus, this study investigates the effect of career development programmes on the productivity of employees in Nigerian medium-scale enterprises. The study population comprised 398 employees of three selected medium-scale enterprises for this study, comprising JUHEL Nigeria Limited, Awka; DELOG Nigeria Limited, Lagos; and SCL Future Food Systems, Abuja. Using a census sampling technique, the study population of 398 was retained as the sample size of the study since its manageable. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide. Analysis of the quantitative data was conducted using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, alongside SPSS version 23, while regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance, complemented by thematic analysis of qualitative interview responses. The study found that career development initiatives, such as induction, in-house training, and professional development programmes, helped improve employees' skills and job performance, although opportunities for paid study leave were limited. Despite these benefits, the study showed that career development schemes did not have a significant influence on employee motivation for productivity. It was recommended that medium-scale enterprises strengthen employee development by implementing structured training programmes, identifying staff learning needs, collaborating with professional training providers, and improving study leave policies to support career advancement while maintaining organisational efficiency.

Keywords: Career development programmes, employee productivity, medium-scale enterprises

Introduction

Humans are essential to the optimal performance of any business organisation. Their productivity as employees remains one of the principal indicators of organisational effectiveness in modern-day human resource management. This is because it reflects the extent to which employees utilise their knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve organisational objectives. Therefore, the ability of any business organisation to get the best of its employees depends on how motivated they are. Although financial incentives such as salaries and bonuses remain important motivators, non-financial factors, especially opportunities for career advancement, have become equally significant in shaping employee attitudes and performance (Sharma cited in Tran, 2020). Employees who receive adequate support for their professional growth are more likely to demonstrate initiative, innovation, adaptability, and willingness to assume greater responsibilities, all of which contribute positively to organisational productivity and continuity (Doda, 2022; Sharma cited in Tran, 2020; Sarma, 2019). Consequently, modern business organisations increasingly recognise career development programmes as an essential component of employee welfare, as they enable workers to improve their competencies while strengthening their commitment to organisational goals.

Within the Nigerian business environment, the implementation of employee welfare programmes, particularly among medium-scale enterprises (MSEs) has become a subject of academic interest. This is because of the strategic position medium-scale enterprises occupy in the socio-economic development of developing countries, especially in employment generation, industrial growth, and wealth creation. In Nigeria, medium-scale enterprises, as organisations, employ between 50 and 199 workers, possess assets valued between ₦50 million and ₦500 million, and record an annual gross turnover of between ₦25 million and below ₦100 million (Agusto *et al.*, 2025). They also contribute nearly 50 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and account for about 80 per cent of employment opportunities within the wider micro, small and medium-scale enterprise (MSME) sector (Yakoob & Ejiofor, 2021; OECD, 2023).

Despite the considerable contribution of medium-scale enterprises to national development, many of these enterprises continue to experience organisational challenges, including high labour turnover, difficulty in retaining competent employees, and declining productivity (Yakoob & Ejiofor, 2021). When structured career development opportunities are inadequate within medium-scale enterprises, the employees may experience declining morale, stronger intentions to leave their organisations, and reduced organisational commitment (Azubuike,

2023; Ogbuma, 2025; Gupta & Mehta, 2023). These circumstances can undermine the competitiveness and sustainability of medium-scale enterprises as well as the broader Nigerian economy. In this regard, career development programmes have become increasingly relevant because they provide employees with opportunities to strengthen their knowledge, acquire new skills, and improve their capacity to contribute meaningfully to organisational performance. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine how career development programmes influence employees' productivity within Nigerian medium-scale enterprises, particularly in JUHEL Nigeria Limited, Awka; DELOG Nigeria Limited, Lagos; and SCL Future Food Systems, Abuja, between 2020 and 2025. Thus, the basic research question guiding this study is: How have career development programmes affected the productivity of employees in medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria between 2020 and 2025?

Hypothesis

Career development programmes of medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria have positively motivated employees' productivity by increasing their work output.

Literature Review

Career development programmes have continued to receive considerable attention in human resource management literature because of their capacity to enhance employee competence and improve organisational productivity. Scholars generally agree that organisations which deliberately invest in employees' professional growth often experience improvements in workforce performance and organisational competitiveness. Ogbuma (2025) argued that career development creates a mutually beneficial relationship between employees and management by aligning individual career aspirations with organisational objectives. According to the author, this process encompasses continuous education, structured training, increased responsibilities, and participation in professional associations, all of which equip employees with the competencies required to perform effectively. Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) similarly described career development as a sequence of deliberate short-term activities undertaken to achieve long-term professional objectives through networking, mentoring, continuous education, and exposure to new responsibilities.

Further, studies have examined the relationship between career development and employee commitment as a determinant of productivity. Fadhila and Sulistiyani (2022) maintained that employees who clearly understand their career prospects within an organisation often demonstrate stronger loyalty and become more committed to organisational objectives. According to the authors, career development encourages employees to reciprocate organisational investment

through greater dedication and improved work performance. Ichdan (2023) reinforced this position by arguing that structured career development initiatives strengthen organisational commitment when employees are provided with transparent career paths and realistic advancement opportunities. Likewise, Khương et al. (2020) observed that career development initiatives implemented as part of broader human resource management strategies create trust and organisational stability, particularly within small and medium-sized enterprises. Their argument suggests that employees who perceive opportunities for professional growth are less likely to seek employment elsewhere, thereby improving workforce stability and productivity.

The literature further demonstrates that mentoring constitutes one of the most influential dimensions of career development capable of improving employee productivity. Ogbuma (2025) identified mentoring as a strategic mechanism through which experienced employees transfer organisational knowledge, practical skills, and professional values to less experienced colleagues. The author explained that mentoring improves employees' confidence, develops institutional capacity, and strengthens organisational competitiveness by preparing competent workers capable of addressing emerging organisational challenges. Supporting this position, Ofobruku and Nwakoby (2019) argued that mentoring programmes are intentionally designed by management to enhance employee capabilities and sustain organisational performance. Similarly, Nyamori (2015) described mentoring as a mutually beneficial relationship through which experienced employees provide guidance, career advice, and workplace orientation to younger employees, thereby facilitating knowledge transfer and professional growth. Akeem (2020) equally viewed mentoring as a structured developmental conversation that enables employees to identify performance gaps and formulate practical strategies for career progression. Although these scholars consistently acknowledge mentoring as an effective career development strategy, Nyamori's (2015) position appears somewhat idealistic because it assumes that all mentoring relationships produce positive outcomes without recognising potential challenges such as incompatible mentor-mentee relationships, unequal power dynamics, and ineffective communication that may reduce the expected productivity gains.

Another major component of career development identified in the literature is employee training. Ogbu and Osanaiye (2017) argued that employees become more committed to organisational objectives when they understand how their individual responsibilities contribute to the broader mission of the organisation. According to the authors, structured training programmes enable employees to appreciate the significance of their roles, thereby increasing their enthusiasm and improving productivity. Ofobruku and Nwakoby (2023) further described training as a planned educational process intended to modify employee

behaviour, improve work efficiency, and enhance organisational performance. Similarly, Alisara et al. (2022) maintained that specialised training develops technical competence, strengthens employees' professional confidence, and improves their ability to execute complex responsibilities. Mohammed, Mohammed, and Gana (2022) also observed that continuous training enhances organisational culture, employee competence, and workplace productivity, while Otuko et al. (2018) found that regular training reduces employee turnover by strengthening employees' sense of belonging. Despite these contributions, the assumption that training alone automatically improves productivity appears overly simplistic because factors such as organisational support, availability of work resources, and employees' willingness to apply newly acquired knowledge may significantly influence the eventual outcomes of training programmes.

Ofobruku (2022) and Rohan and Madhumita (2022) argued that organisations should regard training as a strategic investment capable of strengthening employee competence, organisational commitment, and long-term productivity. According to the authors, employees who perceive continuous learning opportunities often demonstrate greater commitment to their organisations because they believe management values their professional development. Choi et al. (2019), as cited in Oziegbe et al. (2022), distinguished education from training by explaining that education provides foundational knowledge while training equips employees with practical competencies necessary for effective workplace performance. Cherotich et al. (2024) added that seminars provide interactive learning platforms through which employees exchange ideas, update their knowledge, and improve professional competence. Mohammed (2022) further identified induction training, well-designed training programmes and on-the-job learning as important predictors of employee performance because they expose employees to practical experiences that improve technical proficiency. Pérez-Bustamante Ilander et al. (2016) similarly argued that organisations should institutionalise continuous training to maintain workforce relevance within rapidly changing business environments. Nevertheless, although these scholars acknowledge the importance of continuous learning, they pay relatively little attention to financial limitations confronting many medium-scale enterprises, which may constrain the regular implementation of comprehensive staff development programmes.

Career advancement has also been widely recognised as an important dimension of career development that influences employee productivity. Muhammad et al. (2022) defined career advancement as employees' progression towards higher responsibilities, improved competencies, and better career opportunities through promotion and expanded job roles. Igbomor (2024) similarly maintained that career advancement motivates employees by creating opportunities for professional growth and continuous learning. Ndukwe and Ezika (2016) further

argued that promotions serve not merely as rewards but as strategic mechanisms for recognising competence, maintaining employee morale, and improving organisational efficiency. Likewise, Nwazufu (2023), drawing on Hasibuan's work, observed that promotions encourage discipline, creativity, innovation, and higher productivity because employees become more motivated when they perceive fair opportunities for advancement. However, Abbass (2020), together with Ndukwe and Ezika (2016), cautioned that favouritism, lack of transparency, and inconsistent promotion policies weaken employees' confidence in career development initiatives and reduce their motivational value. Similar concerns were raised by Elensi et al. (2024) as well as Nwankwo et al. (2024), who argued that many organisations fail to establish a clear relationship between employee performance and career recognition, thereby reducing the effectiveness of career advancement programmes. These observations suggest that career development initiatives can only improve employee productivity when advancement opportunities are administered fairly, transparently, and consistently.

The empirical literature largely supports the positive influence of career development programmes on employee productivity, although differences exist regarding methodological approaches and organisational contexts. Ogbuma (2025), using a descriptive survey of selected manufacturing firms in Delta and Edo States, found that mentoring, counselling, career advancement, and training significantly improved employee performance. Similarly, Muthumbi and Kamau (2021) reported that career development initiatives positively influenced employee productivity among employees of Deloitte Limited in Kenya. Nzimakwe and Utete (2024) equally established that continuous staff training enhanced employee performance within South Africa's transportation industry, while Odunayo (2022) found that mentoring, coaching, orientation, and apprenticeship significantly improved productivity among SMEs in Lagos State. Das and Buba (2019) also concluded that well-designed training programmes contributed substantially to organisational effectiveness in Indian organisations. Although these empirical findings consistently demonstrate that career development programmes enhance employee productivity, most studies were undertaken within large organisations, manufacturing firms, or foreign contexts, thereby limiting their direct applicability to Nigerian medium-scale enterprises. Furthermore, relatively few studies have comprehensively examined how the combined effects of mentoring, training, and career advancement influence employee productivity in Nigerian medium-sized enterprises. Based on evidence from previous scholars, it is reasonable to argue that career development programmes remain indispensable for improving employee productivity, provided that organisations implement them systematically and equitably, and in

ways that reflect employees' professional aspirations as well as the operational realities of medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria.

Gap in Knowledge

Existing studies have generally shown that career development programmes, such as employee training, mentoring, coaching, and promotion opportunities, contribute positively to employee commitment, competence, productivity, and overall job performance across diverse organisational settings (Das & Buba, 2019; Muthumbi & Kamau, 2021; Odunayo, 2022; Nzimakwe & Utete, 2024; Ogbuma, 2025). Nevertheless, much of the available empirical evidence has centred on manufacturing firms, small and medium-sized enterprises, or organisations outside the Nigerian medium-scale enterprise category, leaving limited evidence on the influence of career development initiatives on employee productivity within Nigerian medium-scale enterprises. Furthermore, previous studies such as Ogbuma (2025) and Odunayo (2022), have not specifically examined selected organisations such as JUHEL Nigeria Limited, Awka; DELOG Nigeria Limited, Lagos; and SCL Future Food Systems, Abuja, over the 2020–2025 period. It is this contextual and empirical gap that the present study seeks to address by investigating how career development programmes have influenced employee productivity in selected Nigerian medium-scale enterprises between 2020 and 2025.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was developed by the American psychologist Abraham Harold Maslow and first introduced in 1943 through his article, *A Theory of Human Motivation*, published in *Psychological Review*. He later refined the theory in his book: *Motivation and Personality* in 1954 (Maslow, 1943, 1954). The theory argues that human motivation is driven by a progression of needs arranged in five levels: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation. Maslow maintained that lower-level needs require reasonable satisfaction before higher-level needs become dominant sources of motivation. This perspective shifted attention from behaviourist explanations of motivation towards the study of human growth, personal fulfilment, and psychological wellbeing, making the theory influential in psychology, education, management, and organisational studies (Taormina & Gao, 2013).

Although the theory remains widely recognised, its hierarchical structure has attracted sustained scholarly criticism. Empirical studies indicate that individuals often pursue several categories of needs simultaneously, while the proposed sequence is not consistently observed across different cultural and socioeconomic settings (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976; Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Critics

also argue that the model reflects Western individualistic assumptions by placing self-actualisation above collective goals and social obligations, thereby limiting its universal applicability (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Even so, the theory continues to provide a valuable framework for understanding the relationship between basic human needs and higher aspirations, particularly in studies of employee motivation and organisational behaviour (Taormina & Gao, 2013).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs serves as a useful framework for explaining how career development programmes may influence employee productivity in medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria. The theory suggests that once employees perceive reasonable satisfaction of their basic physiological and safety needs, they are more likely to value opportunities for professional growth, recognition, and self-actualisation, which are often achieved through training, mentoring, promotion, and skills development initiatives (Maslow, 1943; Maslow, 1954). Career development programmes therefore extend beyond improving technical competence by addressing employees' esteem needs through recognition of their abilities and creating pathways for personal fulfilment. As employees acquire new knowledge and experience greater confidence in their career prospects, they are more inclined to demonstrate stronger commitment, innovation, and higher productivity, thereby contributing to organisational performance. In the context of Nigerian medium-scale enterprises, where resource limitations may restrict access to structured career advancement, the theory helps explain why organisations that invest in continuous employee development are likely to record better workforce outcomes.

Methodology

Research Design

The study utilised a descriptive survey research design, as it facilitates the organised collection and analysis of data from a carefully selected sample that reflects the characteristics of the wider population.

Population of the Study

A total of 398 employees constituted the population for this study. This figure was obtained from the Human Resource Departments of JUHEL Nigeria Limited, Awka; DELOG Nigeria Limited, Lagos; and SCL Future Food Systems, Abuja, which confirmed that the combined workforce of the three organisations was 398 employees. The breakdown of this population is shown in the table that follows.

Table 1: Population breakdown of selected companies under study

S/N	Company	Population
1.	JUHEL Nigeria LTD Awka	169
2.	DELOG Nigeria LTD Lagos	133
3.	SCL Future Food Systems, Abuja	96
Total		398

Source: JUHEL (2026), DELOG Nigeria (2026), and SCL Future Food Systems (2026)

The distribution of employees selected for this study is presented in Table 1. As shown in the table, JUHEL Nigeria LTD in Awka has the highest employee population, comprising 169 staff members. This is followed by DELOG Nigeria LTD in Lagos with 133 employees, whereas SCL Future Food Systems in Abuja records the lowest population of 96 employees. Information on the employee population was obtained from the Human Resource units of the three business organisations.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study utilised a census sampling technique because the target population of 398 employees was sufficiently manageable to allow for the inclusion of all eligible respondents in the survey. For the qualitative component, nine employees were purposively selected for in-depth interviews, considering their readiness to participate. As a result, three employees were interviewed from each of the three companies included in the study.

Method of Data Collection

Primary data for this research were generated using two instruments: the questionnaire and an in-depth interview (IDI) guide. Before data collection began, the researcher obtained official approval from the management of the selected medium-scale enterprises. Letters introducing the study and explaining its purpose, relevance, and confidentiality were presented to each organisation. Following approval, the researcher, assisted by trained field personnel, briefed employees on the study and assured them that all responses would remain confidential, anonymous, and strictly for academic purposes. This approach helped to secure their cooperation and voluntary participation.

To address the challenges associated with collecting data across Awka, Lagos, and Abuja, the researcher engaged twelve trained field research assistants, with four deployed in each location. The questionnaire was distributed and retrieved during employees' lunch breaks to minimise interference with official responsibilities. The field exercise was completed within four weeks, spanning 22 October to 16 November. Out of the 398 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 316 were returned and analysed, whereas 82 were either not

returned or left incomplete because some employees chose not to participate or failed to return the questionnaires. The resulting response rate of about 79.4% was considered adequate for robust statistical analysis.

Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire alongside an in-depth interview guide served as the instruments for collecting data in this study. The questionnaire was organised into two sections, with Section A collecting demographic information from the respondents and Section B containing one cluster of items aligned with the research question. Responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale comprising Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

Furthermore, the study used an in-depth interview guide to gather additional insights from staff members of JUHEL Nigeria Limited, Awka; DELOG Nigeria Limited, Lagos; and SCL Future Food Systems, Abuja. Three staff members were randomly selected to participate in face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher. The information obtained from the interviews was subsequently transcribed and reported.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The validity of the data collection instruments was established through expert evaluation before their final administration. Three experts in Public Administration from the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, reviewed the structured questionnaire and interview guide to ascertain their clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. The comments received from the experts and the research supervisor were incorporated into the revised instruments. Thereafter, the questionnaire's reliability was assessed using the test-retest approach with 20 staff members of JUHEL Oral Medicine Manufacturing Plant, Emene, Enugu State. Cronbach's Alpha analysis of the responses produced a coefficient of 0.76, which exceeded the 0.70 benchmark recommended by Nunnally (1978), demonstrating that the instrument possessed satisfactory internal consistency for the main study.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data were processed and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques in SPSS version 23. Demographic variables were presented using frequencies, percentages, and tables, whereas arithmetic means and standard deviations were used to address the research questions. Given the use of a five-point Likert scale, a cut-off mean of 3.0 served as the basis for interpretation, with scores of 3.0 and above regarded as positive and those below 3.0 regarded as negative.

Regression analysis was employed to test the hypothesis. A p-value output of 0.05 or less leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating that the predictor variable had a significant effect on the outcome variable. On the other hand, if the p-value is greater than 0.05, it suggests insufficient statistical evidence of such an effect. The interview responses were examined through thematic analysis in line with the study's objective.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Questionnaire Distribution and Return Rate

This section outlines the distribution of the research questionnaires and reports the number of completed questionnaires retrieved from respondents during the fieldwork.

Table 2: Questionnaire Distributed and Retrieved

Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaires Retrieved	Percentage Return Rate (%)
398	316	79.4%

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 2 presents the distribution and retrieval of the questionnaires administered for the study. Out of the 398 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, 316 were duly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 79.4%. This favourable return rate reflects a high level of respondents' participation and suggests that the data obtained are sufficiently representative for the study.

Personal Data of Respondents

The personal data of the respondents is presented in this section, with the data organised based on gender, marital status, age, years of work experience, and educational qualifications.

Table 3: Personal data of respondents (N = 316)

Demographic Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	168	53.2
Female	148	46.8
Total	316	100
Marital Status		
Single	158	50.0
Married	109	34.5
Divorced	31	9.8
Widowed	18	5.7
Total	316	100
Age		
18-27 years	142	44.9

28-37 years	89	28.2
38-47 years	56	17.7
48-57 years	17	5.4
58 years and above	12	3.8
Total	316	100
Work Experience		
Less than 1 year	60	19.0
More than 1 year	114	36.1
More than 5 years	82	25.9
More than 10 years	38	12.0
15 years and above	22	7.0
Total	316	100
Educational Qualification		
FSLC/WASSC	81	25.6
OND/NCE	66	20.9
HND/Bachelors	147	46.5
Masters/PhD	22	7.0
Total	316	100

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The personal data of respondents presented in Table 3 show that the study involved 316 respondents with a near-equal gender representation, consisting of 168 (53.2%) males and 148 (46.8%) females. Single respondents formed the largest marital category with 158 (50.0%), followed by married respondents at 109 (34.5%), while divorced and widowed participants accounted for 31 (9.8%) and 18 (5.7%), respectively. In terms of age, respondents between 18 and 27 years constituted the highest proportion at 142 (44.9%), followed by those aged 28–37 years with 89 (28.2%) and 38–47 years with 56 (17.7%). Only a small proportion fell within the 48–57 years category (17; 5.4%) and 58 years and above (12; 3.8%).

The distribution of work experience indicates that respondents with more than one year of service formed the largest group, numbering 114 (36.1%), while 60 (19.0%) had less than one year of experience. Respondents with over 5 years, more than 10 years, and 15 years or above of experience accounted for 82 (25.9%), 38 (12.0%), and 22 (7.0%), respectively. Educational qualifications were mainly at the undergraduate level, with HND/Bachelor's degree holders accounting for 147 (46.5%), followed by FSLC/WASSC holders with 81 (25.6%) and OND/NCE holders with 66 (20.9%). Respondents with Master's or PhD degrees were the least represented at 22 (7.0%). Overall, the results indicate that the participants were generally young, moderately educated, and possessed varying levels of work experience.

Analysis of Research Question

Research Question: How have career development programmes affected the productivity of employees in medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria between 2020 and 2025?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation scores on how career development programmes have affected the productivity of employees in medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria between 2020 and 2025

S/N	Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	St.D	Remark
1	The company regularly organises in-house seminars for all employees to improve their knowledge and skills	20	100	111	58	27	3.09	1.04	Accepted
2	Newly recruited employees receive training from the management to help them understand their roles and responsibilities	137	98	46	15	20	4.00	1.16	Accepted
3	Some employees are periodically selected to attend professional training programmes outside the company	24	87	112	70	23	3.06	1.04	Accepted
4	Employees who wish to further their education are granted paid study leave by the company	14	19	65	124	94	2.16	1.06	Rejected
5	The regular in-house seminars organised by the company improve my knowledge and skills, which motivates me to perform my job more effectively with increased results	30	120	90	60	16	3.28	1.04	Accepted
6	The training provided by management to newly recruited employees helps them understand their roles clearly, which encourages them to work more productively	101	137	34	15	29	3.84	1.19	Accepted
7	The opportunity for some employees to attend professional training programmes outside the company motivates employees to improve their	15	121	92	68	20	3.14	1.01	Accepted

8	work output The company's provision of paid study leave for employees who wish to further their education motivates employees to enhance their skills and contribute more effectively to organisational goals	13	10	58	136	99	2.06	1.00	Rejected
Cluster Mean							3.08	1.07	Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2025)

As shown in Table 4, respondents generally acknowledged the contribution of career development schemes to employee productivity, with an overall mean score of 3.08 exceeding the accepted benchmark of 3.0. Items 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, and 21 were accepted, reflecting agreement that measures such as in-house seminars, training for newly employed staff, and professional development opportunities motivate employees, while items 18 and 22, which focused on paid study leave, were rejected because their mean scores of 2.16 and 2.06 fell below the benchmark. The standard deviation values ranged from 1.00 to 1.19, with a cluster standard deviation of 1.07, further showing that respondents' opinions were fairly consistent.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis One: Career development programmes of medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria, have positively motivated employees' productivity by increasing their work output.

Table 5: Regression analysis of career development programme and employee motivation

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.571	3	1.190	.350	.789 ^b
	Residual	1060.666	312	3.400		
	Total	1064.237	315			

a. **Dependent Variable:** Employee_Motivation_2

b. **Predictors:** (Constant), Career_Development

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The regression analysis in Table 5 indicates that career development initiatives, including regular staff training, induction training for new employees, and specialised professional training, did not significantly influence employee motivation in medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria. The model produced an F-value of 0.350 with a significance level of 0.789, which exceeds the 0.05

threshold. Consequently, the proposed hypothesis was not supported, and the null hypothesis was accepted, suggesting that these career development schemes had no statistically significant effect on employee motivation.

Discussion of Findings

Effect of Career Development Programmes on the Productivity of Employees in Medium-Scale Enterprises in Nigeria

Evidence from the study suggests that career development opportunities play an important role in enhancing employee competence, motivation, and productivity. Employees across JUHEL Nigeria Limited, Awka; DELOG Nigeria Limited, Lagos; and SCL Future Food Systems, Abuja, acknowledged that programmes including staff seminars, training for newly recruited employees, and attendance at professional courses improved their skills, clarified their work responsibilities, and motivated them to perform effectively. These findings were consistent with the views expressed by IDI participants, including *Respondent A*.

Every time new people are employed, they are trained on how things work in the company, especially those who must operate machines. Also, the company conducts training from time to time, especially during general meetings of the company. Such training sessions help us to understand our roles better and give practical skills that make my work easier (Male, JUHEL Nigeria Limited, 5 years in the company).

A similar view was expressed by *Respondent B*:

Some staff members who have spent some number of years and are due to be promoted to managerial positions based on their performance, are usually sent on short professional course programmes that will prepare them for their new roles and responsibilities. This not only broadens their knowledge but also challenges them to apply what they learnt to their daily work (Male, SCL Future Food Systems, 6 years in the company).

However, the study also highlights limitations in the scope of these motivational effects. Notably, the provision of paid study leaves for employees wishing to further their education was not perceived as a significant motivator. This finding was also affirmed by IDI participants. According to *Respondent C*:

Any staff member who wishes to pursue a university degree does so at his or her own expense, as the company does not take responsibility for such pursuits. When you compare the cost of acquiring such degree with your current earnings and other personal responsibilities, you will have to give up. In fact, employees who intend to further their education either resign from their positions or pursue it without the knowledge of the company, because management expects them to devote their full attention to their assigned duties (Female, DELOG Nigeria Limited, 4 years in the company).

Again, *Respondent D* shared a related perspective:

The reason some workers seek to go for higher academic degrees, is because they believe it will help them get better employment opportunities. However, the management does not grant study leave to employees who wish to pursue higher education degrees. Staff members are often required to choose between continuing with their job responsibilities or resigning to focus on their academic studies. This policy makes it difficult for employees who are interested in furthering their education while still maintaining their positions in the company (Female, JUHEL Nigeria Limited, 3 years in the company).

The present findings corroborate with those of earlier empirical studies showing that career development initiatives can improve employee performance and productivity. Studies by Ogbuma (2025) revealed that mentoring, career advancement, counselling, and training strengthened employees' motivation and competencies in Nigerian manufacturing organisations, while Odunayo (2022) observed that coaching and apprenticeship programmes improved productivity within Lagos SMEs. However, despite employees acknowledging the benefits of career development schemes, the statistical analysis of the hypothesis showed that regular staff training, induction training, and specialised professional development did not significantly influence employee motivation, indicating that their effectiveness may depend on other organisational factors such as leadership practices, workplace conditions, and employees' intrinsic drive.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study reveals that career development opportunities contribute to employees' acquisition of skills, clearer understanding of job responsibilities, and improved readiness to perform their duties. Training for newly recruited staff, regular seminars, and professional courses were particularly valued because they provided practical knowledge and prepared employees for increased responsibilities. However, the findings suggest that participation in these programmes does not automatically translate into sustained employee motivation. Although employees recognised their usefulness, the statistical result showed that regular staff training, induction training, and specialised professional development did not significantly influence motivation. This points to a distinction between improving employees' competence and producing lasting motivational effects, suggesting that training may be beneficial for performance without being sufficient to change employees' level of motivation.

The findings further reveal a weakness in the broader career development environment, particularly in relation to employees' pursuit of higher education. The absence of paid study leave places the financial and occupational burden of further education on employees, forcing some to abandon their studies, pursue them without organisational support, or leave their jobs altogether. This limits the extent to which the organisations can support long-term career growth and may weaken employees' attachment and motivation. Taken together, the evidence suggests that career development in the organisations is more effective when it is directly connected to employees' immediate work responsibilities, such as induction, practical training, and preparation for promotion, but less supportive of longer-term educational advancement. The non-significant statistical relationship also indicates that the motivational value of career development depends on wider organisational conditions, including leadership, working conditions, recognition, promotion opportunities, and employees' personal aspirations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that although employees generally appreciated career development initiatives such as training, induction, and professional development opportunities, these schemes did not significantly influence their motivation for productivity. This suggests that career development, although important, may not be sufficient on its own to sustain employee motivation and improve workplace performance. Employees' attitudes towards their work are also shaped by wider organisational conditions, particularly the quality of leadership, managerial support, communication, recognition, and the general work environment. Where employees perceive that organisational leaders are supportive, fair, responsive, and concerned about their welfare, they are more likely to develop a stronger sense of commitment to the organisation. Similarly, a positive work environment can provide employees with the psychological and professional conditions necessary to apply their skills effectively and remain motivated. Therefore, efforts to improve employee motivation should extend beyond career development programmes to include effective leadership practices and the creation of a supportive and conducive organisational environment. This broader approach recognises that employees' commitment and performance are influenced not by a single organisational factor, but by the interaction of opportunities for career growth with the wider conditions under which they perform their duties.

Therefore, this study recommends that to strengthen employee development, leaders of medium-scale enterprises should introduce organised internal training programmes that correspond with staff roles and career objectives. Human resource units should work closely with professional training providers and

employee committees to assess competency gaps and offer appropriate learning opportunities. Management should also revise study leave policies to support employees seeking higher qualifications while ensuring the smooth running of organisational operations.

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