Career Management and Employees' Engagement in Selected Local Government Councils in Osun- State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of career management on employees' engagement in selected local government councils in Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, it investigated the effects of coaching and mentoring, as well as career development opportunities, on employee engagement. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, with a population of 1,078 employees and a sample size of 539 respondents selected from six local government councils using a multistage sampling technique. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that coaching and mentoring had a positive and statistically significant effect on employee engagement ($R = 0.837$, $R^2 = 0.701$, $\beta = 0.837$, $F = 1235.462$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, career development opportunities had a positive and significant influence on employee engagement ($R = 0.875$, $R^2 = 0.766$, $\beta = 0.875$, $F = 1724.528$, $p < 0.001$). The study concluded that effective career management practices are essential for strengthening employees' engagement in local government councils. It therefore recommended that council management should institutionalise structured coaching and mentoring programmes, provide accessible career development opportunities, and establish transparent career advancement procedures to enhance employees' motivation, commitment and involvement in organisational activities.

Keywords: Career management, coaching, mentoring, career development, employee engagement, local government councils.

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement has become a vital concept in modern management research because of its significant influence on organisational behavioural outcomes. Noor et al. (2023) observed that engagement signifies employees' emotional, cognitive, and behavioural commitment to their positions. Engagement is a strategic objective that provide waste management, public health, and community development since engaged personnel are more likely to innovate, work hard, and support organisational goals (Stamopoulos et al. 2024). Ahmed et al. (2020) stated that engagement signifies the emotional connection that employee possesses towards their organisation and its objectives. Ahmeti (2023) posits that employee engagement has emerged as a pivotal notion in organisational behaviour, with several experts highlighting its significance in enhancing productivity and success. Engaged personnel exhibit profound dedication to their organisation, always endeavouring to enhance its performance. Michel et al. (2023) shown that engaged personnel yield 23% more productivity and 65% reduced attrition.

Transitioning to engagement antecedents, career management techniques empower workers' purpose and advancement. Aligning individual goals with organisational objectives is the goal of career management,

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which includes systematic interventions like as mentorship, career path planning, and succession strategies (Yildiz et al. 2024). Effective career management, according to Baruch and Rosenstein (2020), may boost engagement by making goals more transparent and opening doors to better possibilities. According to Ugoani (2019), employees' need for competence and autonomy is heightened by professional development programs. To survive in today's fast-paced, knowledge-driven global economy, organisations need career management through corporate education. Businesses must constantly train their employees to be competitive as market needs and technology progress (Norizan et al. 2022). The future prosperity of every organisation depends on its dedication to cultivating intellectual capital. Ongoing education not only guarantees institutional resilience but also improves staff adaptation and personal development (Oginni et al. 2022). Contemporary firms are progressively incorporating education into their fundamental strategy, recognising that neglecting this aspect jeopardises their competitive advantage.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing recognition of career management as an important human resource management practice for promoting employee engagement, local government councils in Osun State, Nigeria, continue to face challenges relating to inadequate career development opportunities, limited promotion prospects, insufficient training, poor career guidance and perceived lack of transparency in career advancement processes. Effective career management practices, including career planning, mentoring, training and professional development, are essential for enhancing employees' competencies, career satisfaction and organisational attachment (Zhao et al., 2022; Ng et al., 2023). Furthermore, Kwon et al. (2024) established that employee development and employee engagement are mutually reinforcing, suggesting that organisations that invest in employees' development are better positioned to promote their engagement. However, inadequate attention to structured career management may weaken employees' motivation, dedication, enthusiasm and commitment to organisational responsibilities. Given the bureaucratic structure and administrative challenges associated with local government administration, it remains necessary to establish the extent to which career management practices influence employees' engagement within local government councils in Osun State. Consequently, this study seeks to examine the relationship between career management and employees' engagement in local government councils in Osun State, Nigeria, with a view to providing empirical evidence on how effective career management can strengthen employee engagement and improve organisational performance.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives were to:

- determine the impact of coaching and mentoring on employees engagement in selected Local government councils in Osun State Nigeria.
- determine the impact of career development oppurtunities on employee engagement in selected Local government councils in Osun State Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study

- Coaching and mentoring will have no significant impact on employees' engagement in selected Local government councils in Osun State Nigeria.
- There will be no significant influence of career development oppurtunities on employee engagement in selected Local government councils in Osun State Nigeria

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career Management

Zhao et al. (2022) and Lomonosova (2024) state that career management is a strategic process that ensures a dynamic alignment between an employee's growth and the organization's requirements by connecting present

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performance with future development. Optimal alignment of individual abilities with organisational objectives should be the goal of both employees and managers, who should focus on enhancing job performance while predicting future potential (Mineva et al., 2020). Personal and professional growth are both aided by well-designed career management systems, which help businesses achieve their objectives. According to Zeltner and Van-Mol (2025) and Ugoani (2019), these systems work best when they are created with input from employees, are in line with the goals of the company, and have the support of upper management.

Mentorship is an important part of career management since it helps employees advance more quickly (Firman, 2021). Mentors are more seasoned workers who advise less experienced workers, help them comprehend the company's culture, and provide them with personalised advice on how to develop in their careers. In addition to formal training programs, this mentorship boosts practical experience, which is crucial for building job-specific competencies (Nasidi et al., 2020). The holistic approach to professional progress offered by mentoring allows employees to exploit the views and knowledge of senior managers (Robianto & Masdupi, 2020). Career development, in addition to mentorship, is essential in career management since it prepares individuals for more responsibility. Both current and future managers may benefit from this approach, as it teaches them the skills they need to excel in their roles (Pradhan & Shrestha, 2021). To ensure the development of suitable managers to drive the organisation forward, management development must be closely tied to the organization's strategic objectives (Lesmana et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2020).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is crucial for companies seeking to decrease attrition, increase productivity, and stay ahead in a changing business climate (Noor et al., 2023) as more and more organisations include it into their plans. When workers genuinely believe in and work towards the organisation's stated objectives, they are said to be emotionally engaged. Worker engagement is defined as "the degree to which an individual feels an emotional, physiological, and mental investment in the achievement of organisational goals" (Graham et al., 2023).

Pederneiras et al. (2021) asserts that employees' full investment in their job, which boosts their self-efficacy and general well-being, is the essence of work engagement. Worker happiness, output, and creativity are just a few of the organisational outcomes that have been positively impacted by this. Motivated to strive for difficult goals and give their all, engaged workers have a sense of fulfilment and belonging with the organisation's aims. Consequently, Agyabeng-Mensah et al. (2020) found that organisations that prioritise employee engagement had a higher chance of achieving superior performance results and sustainable growth. Therefore, employee engagement is multi-faceted and ever-changing, depending on and impacting many different aspects of an organisation. To get the most out of it, organisational strategy that takes into account its emotional, cognitive, and behavioural components. Organisational strategy that prioritises employee engagement has a substantial influence on employee motivation, productivity, and the organisation's long-term performance (Chaudhary, 2020; Aboramadan, 2022).

Theoretical Review

Social Exchange Theory (SET) serves as a fundamental theory in organisational behaviour. The theory offers a framework to comprehend the interdependent interactions that support employee engagement within the scope of the current investigation. Social Exchange Theory (SET) was chiefly formulated by sociologist Homans. In 1958, he wrote "Social Behaviour as Exchange," then in 1961, "Social Behaviour: Its Elementary Forms" expanded on the idea. To describe social interactions, SET originated from economic transaction concepts. Homans (1958) asserted that individuals participate in relationships through a cost-benefit analysis, aiming to optimise gains (e.g., recognition, support) while minimising costs (e.g., effort, time). Blau (1964) differentiated between commercial transactions, characterised by contracts, and social exchanges, which are voluntary and founded on trust and mutual duty. Over the decades, Social Exchange Theory (SET) has been honed in organisational studies, particularly by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), who amalgamated it with psychological contracts to elucidate workplace dynamics.

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SET fundamentally asserts that relationships are maintained by a norm of reciprocity, whereby the behaviours of one person elicit a comparable reaction from the other. In the workplace, when organisations offer resources like supporting policies or developmental chances, employees feel compelled to repay with dedication, effort, or loyalty. This interaction transcends basic commerce and cultivates emotional connections when seen as authentic. The theory posits rational agents that evaluate advantages relative to costs, with trust and fairness influencing the quality of the transaction. Employees that get significant rewards are more inclined to participate profoundly, since the perceived value of organisational support surpasses their efforts (Adeel et al. 2022).

This theory elucidates how green HRM practices cultivate reciprocal interactions in respect to the current study. Green HRP, via activities such as sustainability training or environmentally conscious performance incentives, demonstrates the organization's commitment to workers' values and professional development. Likewise, career management methods, including as mentorship, offer both concrete and intangible advantages that augment employees' sense of security and purpose. SET posits that workers respond to these initiatives with increased engagement, characterised by vigour, devotion, and absorption, as they view the organisation as a collaborator in a mutually advantageous exchange (Fawehinmi et al. 2020). An employee educated in sustainable techniques may see their worth and exhibit proactive environmental behaviours, so enhancing their emotional engagement. Saks (2019) affirms that HR strategies attuned to employee needs foster engagement through reciprocity. Nonetheless, SET faces criticism. Critics contend that it disproportionately prioritises rational decision, overlooking emotional or altruistic impulses that may influence involvement, especially in value-oriented situations such as sustainability. Cropanzano et al. (2017) argue that the emphasis of Social Exchange Theory (SET) on reciprocity may too simplify intricate workplace dynamics, wherein power disparities or external influences, such as job uncertainty, can skew transactions. The theory's dependence on perceived fairness presupposes persistent organisational authenticity; nevertheless, greenwashing in HRP may erode confidence, hence interrupting the exchange (Dziuba et al. 2020).

Empirical Review

Yildiz et al. (2024) investigate the influence of organisational career management (OCM) on employees' career outcomes, emphasising the mediating function of career capital. The study employed a cross-sectional approach to poll 426 Turkish employees from diverse organisations, utilising structural equation modelling to analyse the correlations. The results indicate that OCM has a beneficial impact on subjective career success, employability, and innovative work behaviour. Career capital is recognised as a critical intermediary in this interaction. The study highlights the strategic significance of OCM in advancing career paths and recommends that organisations allocate resources to career management techniques to enhance worker potential. Nonetheless, the study's dependence on self-reported data and its concentration on the Turkish environment may restrict wider generalisability.

Ojo et al. (2024) investigated the influence of human resource management practices on employees' job performance in deposit money banks during the post-COVID-19 pandemic in Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined recruitment and selection and employee compensation as dimensions of human resource management practices affecting employees' performance. The researchers adopted a descriptive survey research design, focusing on employees of selected deposit money banks in Osogbo. From a population of 381 employees, a sample of 216 respondents was selected through simple random sampling, while 218 valid questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The findings revealed that recruitment and selection significantly influenced employees' job performance ($R = 0.873$, $R^2 = 0.763$, $F = 688.782$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.873$, $t = 26.245$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, employee compensation had a stronger significant effect on job performance ($R = 0.926$, $R^2 = 0.858$, $F = 1292.874$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.926$, $t = 35.957$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that effective recruitment and selection processes, alongside competitive employee compensation, are critical determinants of employee performance in the post-pandemic banking sector and recommended that bank management strengthen merit-based recruitment systems and periodically review compensation packages to sustain high employee performance.

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Muchibi, Mutua, and Juma (2022) used Super's career development theory to study public health staff engagement in Kenya. With the use of stratified and random sampling approaches, the study surveyed 342 participants, including 35 physicians and 307 nurses, using a positivist paradigm and a descriptive research methodology. Quantitative and qualitative approaches, such as regression and correlation analysis, were used to examine the data gathered from the surveys. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.670$, $p < 0.000$; $R^2 = 0.449$) was found between career development and employee engagement. The study found that when there aren't enough possibilities for professional growth, employee engagement drops, which in turn hurts service quality. In order to maintain staff motivation and performance, it suggested rules for comprehensive career management and for equal access to development programs.

Using theories of social exchange and attribution, Jia-Jun and Hua-Ming (2022) looked at the relationship between knowledge workers' involvement and their career advancement. Based on the study's empirical findings, career advancement boosts organisational engagement, especially when it comes to reaching career goals and developing professional competence. One important mediator in this association was affective commitment, which suggests that employees are more engaged when they feel a strong emotional connection to their organisation and see opportunities for meaningful career advancement. There was also a positive moderating effect of perceived organisational support on the association between emotional commitment and career advancement. Organisations should invest in structured career progression opportunities and supportive cultures to encourage knowledge-based employees to be more engaged, according to the report.

In a similar study by Lartey (2021) which investigated how career planning, employee autonomy, and managerial recognition affected employee engagement in SMEs in the United States. The study determined that all three characteristics strongly contributed to employee engagement using data from 120 workers and multiple regression analysis. The biggest predictor, however, was career planning. The influence of managerial recognition was also substantial, but it was not as strong as that of employee autonomy. Employees' motivation and perceived opportunities for progress are boosted by managers' regular acknowledgement and career-related interactions, according to the research.

Also, Nasidi et al. (2020) examine how training and career development affect non-academic staff engagement at a Nigerian institution. The study employs a structured questionnaire and analyses data from 150 respondents (63.34% response rate) via Structural Equation Modelling and Partial Least Squares, revealing that training and career advancement significantly impact employee engagement. The findings indicate that career advancement possibilities, skill enhancement, and personal achievement promote increased employee engagement. This study enhances the literature by applying the Social Exchange Theory (SET) to employee engagement inside universities. The results underscore the significance of training and career advancement as essential factors influencing employee engagement.

Firman (2021) examined the impact of the career development programs at Aswin Hotel and Spa Makassar on employee productivity. The study encompassed all 53 hotel workers and employed a saturation sampling approach with a Likert-scale questionnaire. The study demonstrated through simple regression that career growth positively and significantly influences worker productivity. Career growth accounted for 54.4% of the variance in employee performance, whereas the remaining 45.6% was due to other variables. This result underscores the importance of career development programs in improving employee performance within the hospitality sector.

In their study of Nepalese service sector organisations, Pradhan and Shrestha (2021) look at how career planning and training and development affect employee participation. There was an 82.97% response rate among 502 respondents from a variety of service industries, including financial services, healthcare, insurance, and education. The study indicates that organisational training, development, and career planning boost employee engagement and performance using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression. In order to keep employees and encourage their long-term involvement, the results indicate that Nepalese service sector organisations should invest in training programs and give chances for professional advancement.

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Robianto and Masdupi (2020) examine how career advancement, salary, work environment, and job satisfaction affect Bukittinggi City Government workers' work engagement. Work engagement is favourably and substantially impacted by career growth, pay, work environment, and job satisfaction, according to a study that used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with AMOS to analyse data from 200 respondents. Organisations should prioritise professional development opportunities, pay, working conditions, and job satisfaction to cultivate a more engaged workforce, since these variables are crucial in increasing employee engagement.

Ugoani (2019) used a corporate education framework to do an exploratory research that looked at the connection between career management and employee performance. The study indicated a robust positive association between successful career management techniques and better employee performance, using primary and secondary data from 80 respondents. Less hierarchical structures and more employee engagement to facilitate dynamic learning and strategy alignment were recommended by the research, which emphasised the significance of organisational agility. The importance of corporate education in promoting control, coordination, and ongoing learning was emphasized. Further research exploring the impact of career management on management failures, particularly within SMEs, should be conducted, since the study did admit significant shortcomings. The results highlight the importance of career development as a strategic component of long-term organisational viability.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and focused on six local government councils in Osun State, Nigeria, namely Osogbo, Ifedayo, Ife Central, Ilesa West, Iwo and Irewole, across the three senatorial districts. The study population comprised 1,078 employees, from which a sample of 539 respondents was selected using a multistage sampling technique involving purposive selection of the councils, proportional allocation across the councils and departments, and stratified random sampling based on gender. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire divided into sections covering respondents' socio-demographic characteristics career management and employee engagement, measured on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was adapted from established measurement scales, while its validity was assessed through expert reviews and its reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha. The questionnaire was administered personally to respondents, with confidentiality and voluntary participation ensured. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, linear regression analysis to examine the relationships among the study variables and determine their influence on employee engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Test of Hypothesis

$H0_1$: Coaching and mentoring will have no significant impact on employees' engagement in selected Local government councils in Osun State Nigeria.

Table 1: Model Summary for the Effect of Coaching and Mentoring on Employee Engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.837[a]	.701	.700	.440

Predictors: (Constant), Coaching and Mentoring

The model summary in Table 1 reveals a strong, positive linear relationship (R = 0.837) between coaching and mentoring and employee engagement among staff of the selected Local Government Councils in Osun State, Nigeria. This correlation is very strong interpretive band, positioning coaching and mentoring as a consistently powerful predictor of engagement, broadly comparable in strength to green succession planning

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(R = 0.813) but somewhat below green workforce forecasting (R = 0.909) and green recruitment planning (R = 0.880).

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.701$) indicates that coaching and mentoring alone accounts for 70.1% of the variance in employee engagement scores. This is a substantial explanatory yield for a single-predictor model, well above the 0.30–0.40 threshold conventionally regarded as noteworthy in organizational behaviour research, leaving only about 29.9% of the variance attributable to factors outside the model (e.g., reward systems, leadership style, or the other career management and green HR practices examined in this study). The adjusted R^2 (0.700), being nearly identical to the unadjusted R^2, confirms that this explanatory power is stable across the sample and is not an artefact of overfitting, and would likely generalize to a similar population of local government employees.

Table 2: ANOVA Summary for the Effect of Coaching and Mentoring on Employee Engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	238.741	1	238.741	1235.462	.000[b]
	Residual	102.031	528	.193		
	Total	340.772	529			

Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Predictors: (Constant), Coaching and Mentoring

The F-statistic ($F(1, 528) = 1235.462$, $p < 0.001$) is very large and far exceeds the critical threshold for significance at the 0.05 level, confirming that the regression model provides a significantly better prediction of employee engagement than a mean-only baseline model. The variance explained by the regression (238.741) considerably outweighs the unexplained residual variance (102.031), reinforcing the R^2-based conclusion that coaching and mentoring is a strong and dependable predictor of engagement. Practically, this implies that local government councils that institutionalize structured coaching and mentoring pairing employees with experienced mentors, providing regular developmental feedback, and creating clear pathways for skills transfer and career guidance can expect a strong and statistically dependable improvement in employee engagement.

Table 3: Coefficients of Regression Analysis for the Effect of Coaching and Mentoring on Employee Engagement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.888	.101		8.779	.000
	Coaching and Mentoring	.805	.023	.837	35.149	.000

Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

The coefficient table offers the most granular evidence of the relationship. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.805$, $SE = 0.023$, $t = 35.149$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in coaching and

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mentoring, employee engagement is predicted to rise by approximately 0.805 units, holding other variables constant. The very large t-value (35.149) far beyond the conventional critical threshold of ±1.96 confirms that this effect is highly unlikely to be due to sampling error. The 95% confidence interval for B (0.760 to 0.850) is narrow and does not cross zero, underscoring the precision of the estimate: even at its most conservative bound, the effect of coaching and mentoring on engagement remains substantial and unambiguously positive. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.837) identical to the model's R, as expected in a simple single-predictor regression indicates that a one standard deviation increases in coaching and mentoring is associated with a 0.837 standard deviation increase in employee engagement, an effect size classified as very large by conventional standards. Coaching and mentoring exert a strong, positive, and highly statistically significant impact on employee engagement in the selected Local Government Councils in Osun State, Nigeria. Since $p < 0.05$ ($p = .000$) across all relevant tests, the null hypothesis ($H0_1$) is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis Two

$H0_2$: There will be no significant influence of career development opportunities on employee engagement in selected Local government councils in Osun State Nigeria.

Table 4: Model Summary for the Effect of Career Development Opportunities on Employee Engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.875[a]	.766	.765	.389

Predictors: (Constant), Career Development

The model summary in Table 4 reveals a very strong, positive linear relationship (R = 0.875) between career development opportunities and employee engagement among staff of the selected Local Government Councils in Osun State, Nigeria. This correlation places career development among the strongest predictors examined so far in this study, trailing only green workforce forecasting (R = 0.909) and comparable to green recruitment planning (R = 0.880). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.766$) indicates that career development opportunities alone account for 76.6% of the variance in employee engagement scores — a remarkably high explanatory yield for a single-predictor model, leaving only about 23.4% of the variance attributable to factors outside the model (e.g., leadership style, reward systems, or other green HR and career management practices already examined). The adjusted R^2 (0.765), being virtually identical to the unadjusted R^2, confirms that this explanatory power is stable across the sample and not an artefact of overfitting, and would be expected to generalize well to a similar population of local government employees. The standard error of the estimate (0.389) is small relative to the measurement scale, indicating a close fit between predicted and observed engagement scores. Collectively, these indices show that career development opportunities are not merely statistically associated with employee engagement but constitute one of the most substantively powerful and reliable predictors identified in this study.

Table 4.23: ANOVA Summary for the Effect of Career Development Opportunities on Employee Engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	260.894	1	260.894	1724.528	.000[b]
	Residual	79.878	528	.151		
	Total	340.772	529			

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Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Predictors: (Constant), Career Development

The F-statistic ($F(1, 528) = 1724.528$, $p < 0.001$) is very large and far exceeds the critical threshold for significance at the 0.05 level, confirming that the regression model provides a significantly better prediction of employee engagement than a mean-only baseline model. The variance explained by the regression (260.894) considerably outweighs the unexplained residual variance (79.878), reinforcing the R^2-based conclusion that career development opportunities constitute a powerful and dependable predictor of engagement. Practically, this implies that local government councils that provide clear, accessible, and well-structured career development pathways including training opportunities, promotion criteria, skills advancement programmes, and visible growth trajectories can expect a strong and statistically dependable improvement in employee engagement.

Table 4.24: Coefficients of Regression Analysis for the Effect of Career Development Opportunities on Employee Engagement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.353	.098		3.587	.000
	Career Development	.918	.022	.875	41.527	.000

Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

The coefficient table offers the most granular evidence of the relationship. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.918$, $SE = 0.022$, $t = 41.527$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in career development opportunities, employee engagement is predicted to rise by approximately 0.918 units, holding other variables constant. The exceptionally large t-value (41.527) far beyond the conventional critical threshold of ±1.96 confirms that this effect is highly unlikely to be due to sampling error. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.875) identical to the model's R, as expected in a simple single-predictor regression indicates that a one standard deviation increase in career development opportunities is associated with a 0.875 standard deviation increase in employee engagement, an effect size classified as very large by conventional standards. The constant term ($B = 0.353$, $t = 3.587$, $p < 0.001$) is statistically significant but modest in magnitude, suggesting that a relatively low baseline level of employee engagement exists even in the theoretical absence of career development opportunities plausibly attributable to other latent organizational or dispositional factors outside the scope of this model. Its significance does not undermine the primary finding; rather, it confirms that the model's intercept is meaningfully anchored rather than arbitrary.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated career management and employees' engagement in selected local councils in Osun State. The first hypothesis revealed that coaching and mentoring emerged as a strong and highly significant predictor of employee engagement. This finding provides direct empirical resolution to a gap flagged in the literature review concerning Nasidi et al. (2020) and Muchibi et al. (2022), both of whom demonstrated that training and career development significantly enhanced engagement among Nigerian university staff and Kenyan public health workers respectively, but neither of whom isolated coaching or mentoring as distinct constructs. By explicitly testing coaching and mentoring, the present study confirms that these individualised, relationship-based developmental practices are not merely subsumed within broader training or career

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development effects but constitute powerful engagement drivers in their own right within a Nigerian public sector setting.

The result also aligns with Jia-Jun and Hua-Ming (2022), who found that affective commitment mediated the relationship between career advancement and engagement among knowledge workers, and with Lartey (2021), who identified managerial recognition and career-related interaction as substantial, though secondary, predictors of engagement among United States SME employees, behind career planning itself. That coaching and mentoring produced a comparatively stronger effect in the present study than in prior SME-based research suggests that, within the more hierarchical and formally structured environment of local government administration, mentoring relationships may substitute for the more informal recognition and autonomy mechanisms available in smaller private organisations, underscoring Ugoani's (2019) call for less hierarchical structures and more dynamic, engagement-facilitating learning within public institutions.

The finding that career development opportunities significantly and strongly predicted employee engagement. It closely mirrors Pradhan and Shrestha (2021), who found that training, development, and career planning boosted engagement and performance among Nepalese service sector employees, and Robianto and Masdupi (2020), who demonstrated that career growth significantly and positively influenced work engagement among Bukittinggi City Government employees using structural equation modelling, a public sector finding directly comparable to the present study's own local government context.

The magnitude of the effect recorded here also lends strong support to Lartey (2021), who identified career planning as the single strongest predictor of engagement among the variables tested in United States SMEs, and to Firman (2021), who found that career development accounted for over half of the variance in employee productivity at Aswin Hotel and Spa Makassar. That career development opportunities in the present study accounted for a broadly comparable share of variance in engagement (76.6 percent) as green recruitment planning (77.5 percent) suggests that, for employees of Osun State local government councils, structured pathways for advancement carry an engagement value on par with sustainability-oriented recruitment strategies, reinforcing Ugoani's (2019) conclusion that career management constitutes a strategic, rather than peripheral, component of long-term organisational viability, one that this study confirms extends robustly into resource-constrained public sector administration.

CONCLUSION

Effective career management is a vital human resource management strategy for fostering employees' engagement and improving organisational effectiveness in local government councils. Providing employees with adequate career development opportunities, transparent promotion procedures, mentoring, training and career planning can enhance their motivation, professional growth, sense of belonging and commitment to organisational goals. Given the importance of an engaged workforce in delivering quality public services, local government councils in Osun State need to prioritise structured career management practices that align employees' career aspirations with organisational objectives. Therefore, examining the relationship between career management and employees' engagement will provide valuable insights into how improved career management practices can promote employee dedication, involvement and productivity within the local government system in Osun State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made to Local Government Service Commissions, council management, human resource practitioners, and policymakers in Osun State and comparable public sectors:

- Local government councils in Osun State should establish well-structured career development programmes that provide employees with clear career paths, opportunities for professional growth and guidance on achieving their career objectives.

- Management should ensure that promotion and career advancement processes are transparent, merit-based and free from favouritism. This will strengthen employees' confidence in the organisation and encourage greater dedication and commitment to their duties.
- Local government councils should organise regular training, workshops, seminars and mentoring programmes to improve employees' skills, knowledge and competencies. These initiatives will enhance employees' professional development and encourage greater involvement in organisational activities.
- Local government authorities should periodically assess the effectiveness of their career management policies and programmes to identify gaps, address employees' career-related concerns and introduce improvements that promote sustained employee engagement.

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