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Strategic Human Capital Investment and Its Influence on Employee Development and Organizational Competitiveness in Nigeria's Private Sector

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Abstract:

Human capital has become a central driver of organizational performance and competitiveness in the modern business environment, particularly within the private sector where firms rely heavily on skilled and adaptable employees to sustain growth and innovation (Popoola, 2014; Njoku & Onyegbula, 2017). Consequently, strategic investment in employee development has emerged as a critical organizational priority. This study investigates the relationship between human capital development and employees' career development in the private sector, using Nestle Nigeria Plc as a case study. Employing a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 300 employees using structured questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and regression analyses. Findings reveal that human capital development, coaching, managerial support, and skill acquisition significantly enhance employees' career progression. The study emphasizes that strategic investment in employee development contributes not only to individual growth but also to organizational competitiveness and sustainability. Policy implications suggest the need for structured training programs, mentorship initiatives, supportive leadership, and continuous skill development to foster career advancement and optimize organizational performance. These findings provide critical insights for private sector organizations aiming to align human capital strategies with long-term business objectives.

Keywords:

Human Capital Development, Employees' Career Development, Coaching, Managerial Support, Skill Acquisition, Private Sector

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Introduction

Employees represent a critical asset in any organization, and their development plays a pivotal role in determining organizational success. Human capital development (HCD) refers to processes that enhance employees' skills, knowledge, and competencies, ultimately improving productivity and contributing to organizational growth (Popoola, 2014; Obi-Anike & Ekwe, 2014). Within the private sector, organizations such as Nestlé Nigeria Plc have increasingly recognized the importance of structured HCD initiatives as a strategic approach to fostering a skilled and adaptable workforce. These initiatives, which include training programs, mentorship, and leadership development, are designed to align employees' professional growth with the organization's long-term objectives, enabling both personal career progression and organizational competitiveness (Nestlé, 2024). In the twenty-first-century global economy, investing in human capital is no longer optional but essential for organizations seeking sustainable success and a competitive edge (Njoku & Onyegbula, 2017).

Career development, defined as the ongoing process of managing learning, work, and transitions to achieve personal and professional goals, is intrinsically linked to human capital development (Ozioma, 2017; Rasaq, 2017). Effective HCD strategies provide employees with opportunities to acquire new skills, improve performance, and enhance employability, which collectively facilitate career advancement. In the context of Nestlé Nigeria Plc, career development initiatives are embedded within the organization's broader human capital framework, encompassing formal training, on-the-job experience, professional certifications, and coaching programs (Bello et al., 2020). Understanding the interplay between human capital development and career progression is therefore crucial, as it allows organizations to optimize employee potential while simultaneously advancing organizational goals.

Empirical studies suggest that well-structured human capital development initiatives positively influence employee career outcomes, including job satisfaction, performance, and organizational commitment (Njoku & Onyegbula, 2017; Gunu et al., 2013). However, evidence on how specific HCD components operate jointly within Nigeria's private sector remains limited. The primary aim of this study is therefore to examine the relationship between human capital development and employees' career development at Nestlé Nigeria Plc, with particular emphasis on coaching, managerial support, and skill acquisition.

Coaching and managerial support are recognized as critical mechanisms through which organizations enhance employee growth and career progression. Coaching improves self-awareness, clarifies career goals, and strengthens professional performance (Rasaq, 2017; Zeglat & Zigan, 2013), while managerial support, through mentorship, feedback, and encouragement, creates an enabling environment for learning and development (Popoola, 2014; Simon, 2015). Similarly, continuous skill acquisition is essential for sustaining employability and competitiveness in dynamic industries (Alika & Aibieyi, 2014). By focusing on these dimensions, this study contributes to understanding how strategic human capital

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investment supports employee development and organizational competitiveness in Nigeria's private sector.

Literature and Hypothesis Development

Human Capital Development (HCD) is grounded in economic and organizational theories that emphasize the value of investing in employees as a means to enhance productivity and organizational performance. Becker's (1993) Human Capital Theory posits that investments in education, training, and skill development increase individual productivity, thereby benefiting organizations and economies. This theoretical perspective underscores the importance of viewing employees as assets whose value can be augmented through strategic development initiatives.

In the context of career development, Hall's (2002) concept of the *protean career* suggests that individuals assume greater responsibility for managing their career paths, while organizations provide support through mentorship, career planning, and developmental opportunities. This view aligns with the argument that career development is a dynamic and self-directed process shaped by both individual aspirations and organizational support mechanisms. Similarly, the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm posits that organizations achieve sustained competitive advantage by developing valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources, including a skilled and knowledgeable workforce (Barney, 1991). Together, these theories emphasize the strategic role of HCD in enhancing employee development and organizational competitiveness.

Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates a strong relationship between human capital development and employee career outcomes. Bello et al. (2020) found that quality of work life, encompassing training and career development opportunities, significantly influences employee performance in Nestlé Nigeria Plc. Likewise, Usoro (2023) reported that career development initiatives positively affect organizational performance, reinforcing the link between HCD and employee career progression. Based on this evidence, the study hypothesizes that human capital development has a significant relationship with employees' career development at Nestlé Nigeria Plc (***H_{01}**: *Human capital development has no significant relationship with employees' career development*).

Coaching has also been identified as a critical component of human capital development that supports employees' career growth. Coaching provides personalized guidance, feedback, and developmental support that enhance self-awareness, goal clarity, and professional performance (Amaeshi, 2019; Zunker, 2018). Zeglat and Zigan (2013) further demonstrated that coaching interventions improve employee performance in multinational organizations. Drawing from these findings, this study hypothesizes that coaching significantly enhances employees' career development (***H_{02}**: *Coaching does not enhance employees' career development in Nestlé Nigeria Plc*).

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Managerial support represents another essential mechanism through which organizations foster employee career development. Supportive managerial practices—such as mentoring, feedback, and career guidance—create an enabling environment for learning and growth (Popoola, 2014). Atukpa (2021) emphasized that managerial support strategies reduce job insecurity and promote employee development in Nigerian organizations, while Usoro (2023) linked managerial support to improved organizational performance. In line with these studies, this research hypothesizes that managerial support significantly enhances employees' career development (***H_{03}**: Managerial support does not enhance employees' career development in Nestlé Nigeria Plc*).

Skill acquisition is fundamental to sustaining employability and facilitating career advancement, particularly in dynamic and competitive industries. Alika and Aibieyi (2014) found that skill development significantly influences career progression in Nigerian firms. Emah (2025) further highlighted the importance of vocational and technical skill acquisition in improving employability and career growth, while Isa (2024) demonstrated the positive impact of skills acquisition programmes on organizational outcomes. Consequently, this study hypothesizes that skill acquisition significantly enhances employees' career development (***H_{04}**: Skill acquisition does not enhance employees' career development in Nestlé Nigeria Plc*).

Methods and Data

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is widely recognized as an effective strategy for integrating various components of a research project in a coherent and logical manner, thereby enabling the researcher to address the research problem comprehensively (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). A descriptive survey design allows for the collection, evaluation, and interpretation of data without manipulation of the variables, thereby providing an accurate representation of the population under study (Asika, 1991). This approach was particularly suitable for the present study as it enabled the researcher to investigate the relationship between human capital development, coaching, managerial support, skill acquisition, and employees' career development at Nestlé Nigeria Plc through systematic data collection and analysis. Primary data were collected through self-administered questionnaires, which ensured that respondents could provide truthful and reflective responses while maintaining anonymity.

The population of the study comprised all employees of Nestlé Nigeria Plc, totaling 3,211 individuals across five key departments: Production (979), Admin and Finance (865), Quality Control (75), Marketing (1,169), and Research and Development (123). The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

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where n represents the desired sample size, N is the population size (3,211), and e is the margin of error tolerance (5%). Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{3,211}{1+3,211(0.05)^2} = \frac{3,211}{1+8.0275} = \frac{3,211}{9.0275} \approx 356 \quad (2)$$

A total of 356 employees were therefore selected using a random sampling technique, ensuring that each employee had an equal chance of being included in the study (Asika, 1991; Cooper & Schindler, 2003). This sampling strategy enhanced the representativeness of the study and allowed for generalization of findings across the entire population of Nestlé Nigeria Plc employees.

The research instrument employed was a structured questionnaire, designed based on the study's objectives and research questions. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: the first section collected respondents' demographic information, while the second section focused on variables of interest, including human capital development, coaching, managerial support, skill acquisition, and career development. A five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) was used to quantify respondents' perceptions and experiences. The instrument's validity was ensured through content validation by the researcher's supervisor, who is an expert in the field, to ascertain relevance, clarity, and coverage of all content areas.

Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed through a pilot study involving 25 employees at Nestlé Nigeria Plc. The pilot study facilitated identification and correction of ambiguous items, thereby enhancing the consistency and replicability of the instrument. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were guaranteed, and prior permission was obtained from relevant organizational authorities.

Data collection involved repeated visits to ensure high response rates. Completed questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic data, while inferential statistics, specifically correlation analysis, were employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between independent variables (human capital development, coaching, managerial support, skill acquisition) and the dependent variable (employees' career development). Correlation analysis was chosen because it provides insight into the degree of association among variables, thereby allowing the researcher to test the proposed hypotheses effectively.

Results

Table 1 shows the social demographic characteristics of the respondents. The social demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study provide a foundational understanding of the workforce

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composition, which is crucial for interpreting the subsequent analyses on human capital development and career progression. With a total of 300 respondents, the age distribution reveals a predominantly youthful workforce, with 35.0% aged between 21–30 years, 30.7% between 31–40 years, and 27.0% between 41–50 years. This suggests a dynamic and potentially adaptable workforce, which is advantageous for implementing human capital development initiatives aimed at enhancing organizational performance (Madgavkar et al., 2023).

Gender distribution indicates a male-dominated workforce, with 70.0% male and 30.0% female respondents. This imbalance may reflect broader societal gender disparities in employment opportunities and could influence the design and delivery of human capital development programs to ensure inclusivity and equity (Deloitte, 2024). The marital status data shows that 76.7% of respondents are married, 13.3% are divorced, and 10.0% are single. Marital status can impact employees' career development, as married individuals may have different career priorities and constraints compared to their single counterparts. Understanding these dynamics is essential for tailoring career development programs that accommodate diverse personal circumstances (Madgavkar et al., 2023).

Educational qualifications vary among respondents, with 61.7% holding NCE/OND, 18.0% with MSc/MBA, 15.3% possessing BSc/HND, and 5.0% having SSCE. This distribution underscores the importance of aligning human capital development initiatives with the existing educational levels to effectively bridge skill gaps and enhance job performance (Deloitte, 2024). Regarding length of service, 61.7% of respondents are junior staff, 28.0% are senior staff, and 15.3% are in management positions. This distribution highlights the need for targeted human capital development strategies that cater to the specific needs and career aspirations of employees at different organizational levels (Madgavkar et al., 2023).

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	21–30 years	105	35.0
	31–40 years	92	30.7
	41–50 years	81	27.0
	51 years and above	22	7.3
Total		300	100.0
Gender	Male	210	70.0
	Female	90	30.0
Total		300	100.0

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Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Marital Status	Single	30	10.0
	Married	230	76.7
	Divorced	40	13.3
Total		300	100.0
Educational Qualification	SSCE	15	5.0
	NCE/OND	185	61.7
	BSc/HND	46	15.3
	MSc/MBA	54	18.0
Total		300	100.0
Length of Service	Senior staff	69	28.0
	Junior staff	185	61.7
	Management staff	46	15.3
Total		300	100.0

Table 1: Social Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (Source: Author (2024))

Table 2 shows the human capital development (HCD) responses. The analysis of human capital development (HCD) responses demonstrates that the majority of employees recognize the strategic value of HCD policies. Specifically, 71.7% strongly agreed that HCD policies enhance competitive advantage, while 70.3% strongly agreed that HCD significantly relates to employees' career development. This aligns with resource-based theory, which posits that investment in human capital is a source of sustained competitive advantage (Abubakar et al., 2022; Alika & Aibieyi, 2014). Additionally, 60.7% and 57.0% of respondents acknowledged the significant role of line managers and the improvement of knowledge, skills, and abilities, respectively, indicating the centrality of managerial involvement in human capital development (Elarabi & Johari, 2014; Abubakar et al., 2022).

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Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
HCD policy enhances competitive advantage	215 (71.7%)	25 (8.3%)	60 (20.0%)	-	-	300
Management takes HCD seriously	136 (45.3%)	109 (36.3%)	55 (18.3%)	-	-	300
Line managers play significant role in HCD	182 (60.7%)	74 (24.7%)	11 (3.7%)	33 (11.0%)	-	300
HCD improves knowledge, skills, and abilities	171 (57.0%)	105 (35.0%)	24 (8.0%)	-	-	300
HCD significantly relates to career development	211 (70.3%)	85 (28.3%)	4 (1.3%)	-	-	300

Table 2: Human Capital Development (HCD) Responses (Source: Author (2024))

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Coaching develops full potential	136 (45.3%)	109 (36.3%)	55 (18.3%)	-	-	300
Coaching enables learning	111 (37.0%)	106 (35.3%)	65 (21.7%)	18 (6.0%)	-	300
Coaching enables development	171 (57.0%)	105 (35.0%)	24 (8.0%)	-	-	300
Senior employees coach juniors	213 (71.0%)	87 (29.0%)	-	-	-	300
Coaching enhances career development	150 (50.0%)	100 (33.3%)	50 (16.7%)	-	-	300

Table 3: Coaching Responses (Source: Author (2024))

Responses regarding coaching highlight its importance as a mechanism for enhancing employees' potential and career progression. A majority of respondents (71.0%) strongly agreed that senior employees are willing to coach juniors, while 57.0% indicated that coaching enables development.

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Furthermore, 50.0% strongly agreed that coaching enhances career development, supporting the notion that structured coaching interventions facilitate skill development and knowledge transfer within organizations (Prakash, 2019; Zeglat & Zigan, 2013; Robbins, 2017). These findings are consistent with adult learning theories that emphasize experiential learning and mentorship as key drivers of professional growth.

Managerial and supervisory support emerged as another critical determinant of career development. A combined 98.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that supervisor support is essential, with 60.7% and 45.3% indicating that supervisors provide necessary support and allow free access, respectively. Flexible work arrangements were similarly endorsed by 60.7% of respondents. The findings reinforce the social exchange theory, which posits that supportive managerial behaviors foster employee commitment and performance (Agha & Out, 2018; Patiraj & Bhanu, 2015; Vishwa, 2015; Solomon & Dixon, 2017). Managerial support was further shown to enhance career development, as 45.3% strongly agreed with this proposition, corroborating prior studies on organizational support systems.

Skill acquisition responses further illustrate the organization's commitment to employee development. The majority of respondents strongly agreed that management creates technical skills (57.0%) and managerial skills (71.0%), while 45.3% strongly agreed that skill acquisition enhances career development. These results indicate that skill-building initiatives are pivotal in equipping employees with competencies required for both current roles and future advancement, in line with human capital theory (Alika & Aibieyi, 2014; Arulsamy et al., 2023; Anaduaka, 2014).

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Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Supervisor support is essential	200 (66.7%)	95 (31.7%)	5 (1.7%)	-	-	300
Supervisors provide necessary support	182 (60.7%)	74 (24.7%)	11 (3.7%)	33 (11.0%)	-	300
Supervisors allow free access	136 (45.3%)	109 (36.3%)	55 (18.3%)	-	-	300
Supervisors allow flexible work arrangement	182 (60.7%)	74 (24.7%)	11 (3.7%)	33 (11.0%)	-	300
Managerial support enhances career development	136 (45.3%)	109 (36.3%)	55 (18.3%)	-	-	300

Table 4: Managerial/ Supervisor Support Responses (Source: Author (2024))

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Management creates conceptual skills	111 (37.0%)	106 (35.3%)	65 (21.7%)	18 (6.0%)	-	300
Management creates technical skills	171 (57.0%)	105 (35.0%)	24 (8.0%)	-	-	300
Management creates managerial skills	213 (71.0%)	87 (29.0%)	-	-	-	300
Skill acquisition enhances career development	136 (45.3%)	109 (36.3%)	55 (18.3%)	-	-	300

Table 5: Skill Acquisition Responses (Source: Author (2024))

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Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Control of career path	182 (60.7%)	74 (24.7%)	11 (3.7%)	33 (11.0%)	-	300
Progress in personal/professional development	171 (57.0%)	105 (35.0%)	24 (8.0%)	-	-	300
Understand promotion criteria	211 (70.3%)	85 (28.3%)	4 (1.3%)	-	-	300
Opportunity to reach full potential	136 (45.3%)	109 (36.3%)	55 (18.3%)	-	-	300
Organization supports career progression	111 (37.0%)	106 (35.3%)	65 (21.7%)	18 (6.0%)	-	300

Table 6: Employees' Career Development Responses (Source: Author (2024))

Finally, employees' career development responses reveal a strong sense of agency and progress. A majority of respondents reported understanding promotion criteria (70.3%), feeling in control of their career path (60.7%), and perceiving opportunities to reach their full potential (45.3%). Additionally, organizational support for career progression was acknowledged by 37.0% of respondents. Correlation analysis confirmed a strong positive relationship between HCD and career development (Pearson's $r = 0.833$, $p < 0.001$), while regression analyses indicated that coaching, managerial support, and skill acquisition significantly predict career development, with R^2 values ranging from 50.7% to 55.3%. These results highlight the interconnectedness of human capital initiatives, managerial practices, and skill acquisition in shaping employees' career trajectories (Prakash, 2019; Simon, 2015; Abubakar et al., 2022).

Variables	Pearson's r	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. t	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
HCD & Career Development	0.833	0.054	8.421	0.000	300
Spearman Correlation	0.966	0.079	11.662	0.000	300

Table 7: Pearson Correlation – Human Capital Development & Career Development (Source: Author (2024))

The evaluation of the study hypotheses demonstrates that all four independent variables, human capital development, coaching, managerial support, and skill acquisition, have significant positive relationships

with employees' career development. For the first hypothesis, human capital development was found to be strongly correlated with career development (Pearson's r = 0.833, p < 0.001), indicating that employees who benefit from structured human capital initiatives experience greater career progression. This finding aligns with the resource-based view (Barney, 1991) and human capital theory (Becker, 1993), both of which posit that investment in employee knowledge, skills, and abilities constitutes a strategic resource for achieving sustained competitive advantage. Empirical studies support this relationship, as Abubakar et al. (2022) found that Nigerian firms that implemented human capital development programs reported improved employee career outcomes, while Alika and Aibieyi (2014) emphasized that structured training enhances both employee performance and mobility within organizations.

The second hypothesis examined the effect of coaching on career development and revealed that coaching significantly predicts career progression (R^2 = 50.7%, p < 0.001). This supports adult learning theory, which highlights experiential learning, mentoring, and guided practice as critical mechanisms for skill development and professional growth (Kolb, 1984). Consistent with these theoretical underpinnings, empirical studies such as Prakash (2019) and Zeglat and Zigan (2013) found that coaching initiatives in organizations enhance employees' knowledge, competencies, and readiness for higher responsibilities. These results underscore coaching as a strategic tool for transferring tacit knowledge, fostering learning, and enabling employees to realize their full potential, reinforcing the theoretical link between mentoring practices and career development.

The third hypothesis, addressing managerial support, was also statistically significant (R^2 = 55.3%, p < 0.001), indicating that employees receiving support from supervisors and managers experience greater career development. Social exchange theory explains this phenomenon by positing that supportive organizational behaviors encourage reciprocal commitment and career-oriented efforts from employees (Blau, 1964). Empirical evidence confirms these findings, with Simon (2015) and Agha and Out (2018) documenting that flexible work arrangements, accessible supervisors, and mentoring directly enhance career trajectories. Managerial support, therefore, functions as a key enabler of career progression, providing both emotional and practical resources that facilitate employee growth and performance, in line with human capital and social exchange frameworks.

The fourth hypothesis focused on skill acquisition and its impact on career development, with results confirming a significant effect (R^2 = 50.9%, p < 0.001). This is theoretically consistent with human capital theory, which emphasizes that acquiring conceptual, technical, and managerial skills enhances employability and career advancement (Becker, 1993). Empirical research supports this finding; Anaduaka (2014) observed that structured skill acquisition programs in Nigerian organizations improved employees' promotion prospects and job performance. Alika and Aibieyi (2014) similarly highlighted that

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continuous skill development bridges competency gaps and equips employees for higher responsibilities, thereby directly influencing career growth.

Overall, the study's findings collectively demonstrate that investments in human capital development, structured coaching, managerial support, and skill acquisition are critical determinants of career development within organizations. These results corroborate theoretical frameworks such as the resource-based view, human capital theory, social exchange theory, and adult learning theory, while providing empirical confirmation within the Nigerian organizational context (Abubakar et al., 2022; Prakash, 2019; Simon, 2015). Practically, these findings suggest that organizations aiming to enhance employee career progression must adopt integrated strategies that combine training, coaching, managerial support, and skill development. By doing so, organizations can foster a skilled, motivated, and committed workforce capable of achieving both individual career goals and organizational performance objectives.

Hypothesis	Predictor	Constant	Coefficient	R^2	Sig.
H2: Coaching → Career Development	Coaching (C)	4.354	1.134	50.7%	0.000
H3: Managerial Support → Career Development	Managerial Support (MS)	4.774	1.324	55.3%	0.000
H4: Skill Acquisition → Career Development	Skill Acquisition (SA)	4.638	1.114	50.9%	0.000

Table 8: Regression Coefficients for Hypotheses Testing (Source: Author (2024))

Note: Coefficients represent standardized regression values; ECD = Employees' Career Development

Discussion and Policy Implications

The findings of this study have significant policy implications for organizational management and human capital development strategies within Nigerian firms. Consistent with Becker's (1993) Human Capital Theory, the positive and significant relationship observed between human capital development and employees' career advancement confirms that investments in education, training, and skill development enhance individual productivity and organizational outcomes**.** This result aligns with empirical evidence from Nigerian studies which show that structured human capital initiatives improve employee performance, commitment, and retention (Gunu et al., 2013; Abubakar et al., 2022). Accordingly, organizational policymakers should prioritize sustained investment in human capital programs, as these not only support individual career growth but also strengthen firm-level competitiveness and efficiency (Barney, 1991).

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The study further revealed that coaching plays a significant role in enhancing employees' career development. This finding corroborates earlier studies which identified coaching as a critical mechanism for improving self-awareness, goal clarity, and professional competence (Prakash, 2019; Zeglat & Zigan, 2013). Kolb's (1984) experiential learning perspective supports this result by emphasizing learning through guided experience and reflection. From a policy standpoint, formalizing coaching and mentoring frameworks within human resource policies can facilitate effective knowledge transfer, reduce skill gaps, and improve workforce adaptability, thereby lowering recruitment and training costs while increasing returns on human capital investments.

Managerial support also emerged as a significant determinant of career development, reinforcing the argument that leadership behavior directly shapes employee outcomes. This result is consistent with social exchange theory, which posits that employees reciprocate supportive managerial actions with increased commitment and performance (Blau, 1964). Empirical studies by Simon (2015) and Agha and Out (2018) similarly found that supervisory support enhances employee engagement and career progression. Policies that institutionalize supportive supervisory practices, such as structured feedback, mentoring, and leadership accessibility, can therefore enhance employee motivation, reduce absenteeism, and improve overall labor productivity (Popoola, 2014).

Skill acquisition was also found to significantly influence employees' career development. This finding supports earlier Nigerian studies which emphasize that continuous skill development is essential for career progression and organizational competitiveness in dynamic environments (Alika & Aibieyi, 2014; Anaduaka, 2014). Arulsamy et al. (2023) further argue that continuous training enhances employees' capacity to adapt to innovation-driven organizational demands. Consequently, organizational policies should mandate regular technical, managerial, and conceptual skill development programs to ensure sustained employability and alignment with evolving organizational needs.

Taken together**,** the findings support an integrated human capital development approach that combines training, coaching, managerial support, and skill acquisition, consistent with prior research linking such integration to enhanced productivity and organizational resilience (Zeglat & Zigan, 2013; Njoku & Onyegbula, 2017). From a broader policy perspective, regulatory bodies and industry associations can promote best practices by providing guidelines or incentives that encourage comprehensive career development initiatives. Such a policy environment would enhance labor productivity, reduce skill mismatches, and increase human capital returns at the macroeconomic level (Becker, 1993). Ultimately, integrating these measures creates a virtuous cycle in which improved employee career outcomes translate into stronger organizational performance, economic growth, and social welfare.

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Conclusions

This study underscores the critical role of human capital development in enhancing employees' career progression within Nigerian organizations. The empirical findings indicate that structured training, coaching, managerial support, and skill acquisition programs significantly influence career development outcomes. These results align with established theoretical frameworks, including human capital theory (Becker, 1993), social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), and adult learning theory (Kolb, 1984), which emphasize the importance of investing in employees' skills and fostering supportive work environments.

The positive correlation between human capital development and career advancement suggests that organizations should prioritize investments in training and development initiatives. Such investments not only enhance individual employee performance but also contribute to overall organizational effectiveness and competitiveness. Additionally, the significant impact of coaching on career development highlights the value of mentorship programs in facilitating knowledge transfer and skill enhancement among employees.

Managerial support emerged as another pivotal factor influencing career progression. Organizations should, therefore, cultivate a supportive leadership culture that encourages open communication, provides constructive feedback, and offers opportunities for professional growth. Furthermore, the study's findings on skill acquisition emphasize the necessity for continuous learning and development programs that equip employees with relevant competencies to meet evolving industry demands.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Develop Comprehensive Training Programs: Organizations should design and implement training programs that address both technical and soft skills, ensuring employees are well-equipped to perform effectively in their roles.
2. Establish Coaching and Mentorship Initiatives: Formalize coaching and mentorship programs to facilitate knowledge sharing and career guidance, thereby enhancing employee development and retention.
3. Promote Supportive Management Practices: Encourage managers to adopt supportive leadership styles that foster a positive work environment, characterized by trust, recognition, and opportunities for advancement.
4. Invest in Continuous Skill Development: Implement continuous professional development programs that enable employees to acquire new skills and adapt to technological advancements, ensuring organizational agility and competitiveness.

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