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EMPLOYEE CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND WORKPLACE BULLYING AMONG THE STAFF OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ONDO METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of employee career development on workplace bullying among the staff of selected tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the effects of training and development, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring and coaching on workplace bullying. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study population comprised 5,560 academic and non-academic staff from Wesley University, University of Medical Sciences (UNIMED), and Adeyemi Federal University of Education (AFUED). A sample size of 373 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, while data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis with the aid of SPSS Version 27 at a 5% level of significance. The findings revealed that training and development had a positive but insignificant effect on workplace bullying ($\beta = 0.066$, $p = 0.646$), career advancement opportunities had a negative but insignificant effect ($\beta = -0.267$, $p = 0.224$), while mentoring and coaching had a positive but insignificant effect ($\beta = 0.428$, $p = 0.074$). However, the overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 7.375$, $p = 0.000$), with employee career development variables jointly explaining 5.7% ($R^2 = 0.057$) of the variation in workplace bullying. The study concluded that employee career development alone is insufficient to significantly reduce workplace bullying without complementary organizational support mechanisms. It recommended strengthening anti bullying policies, ensuring transparent career advancement processes, and institutionalizing effective mentoring and coaching programmes to foster healthier workplace relationships.

Keywords*:* Employee career development, workplace bullying, training and development, career advancement opportunities, mentoring and coaching, tertiary institutions.

Introduction

Employee career development is a strategic human resource management practice that focuses on enhancing employees' knowledge, skills, competencies, and career progression through structured organizational initiatives. Among the major components of career development are training and development, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring and coaching, all of which contribute to employees' professional growth and organizational effectiveness. In tertiary institutions, these practices are particularly important because the quality of teaching, research, and administrative service depends largely on the competence and continuous development of academic and non-academic staff. Organizations that provide effective career development opportunities are more likely to achieve improved employee performance, higher job satisfaction, and stronger organizational commitment (Noe, 2020; Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

Training and development equip employees with the knowledge and skills required to perform their duties effectively and adapt to changing organizational demands. Regular participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, and professional development programmes enhances employees' competence and confidence while reducing workplace conflicts arising from inadequate skills or poor job performance. Similarly, career advancement opportunities, such as transparent promotion systems, succession planning, and equitable access to professional growth, motivate employees to remain committed to organizational goals. Furthermore, mentoring and coaching provide employees with professional guidance, emotional support, and career counselling that facilitate knowledge transfer, improve workplace relationships, and strengthen employees' ability to overcome career challenges (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

Despite the importance of these career development practices, workplace bullying has become a significant concern in many tertiary institutions. Workplace bullying involves repeated acts of intimidation, harassment, humiliation, victimization, verbal abuse, exclusion, and misuse of authority that create a hostile work environment (Arah, 2017). Employees who experience bullying often suffer reduced job satisfaction, poor psychological wellbeing, diminished organizational commitment, and lower productivity. Inadequate training opportunities, limited career advancement prospects, and the absence of effective mentoring relationships may further intensify unhealthy workplace interactions, making employees more vulnerable to bullying behaviours (Einarsen et al., 2020; Salin & Notelaers, 2020).

Ondo Metropolis is home to several public and private tertiary institutions Adeyemi Federal University of Education (AFUED), University of Medical Science (UNIMED) and Wesley University Ondo (WUO) where both academic and non-academic staff pursue career development while performing diverse

institutional responsibilities. Although these institutions implement various staff development initiatives, concerns relating to workplace bullying, favoritism, delayed promotions, poor supervisory relationships, and unequal access to career opportunities continue to exist. Existing studies have largely examined employee career development and workplace bullying independently, with limited attention to how training and development, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring and coaching influence workplace bullying among staff of tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

Career development practices such as training and development, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring and coaching are expected to improve employees' competence, enhance professional growth, and promote positive workplace relationships. However, workplace bullying remains a persistent challenge in many tertiary institutions, where employees continue to experience intimidation, harassment, victimization, exclusion, and unfair treatment that adversely affect their wellbeing, job performance, and career progression. Inadequate access to training, limited promotion opportunities, and ineffective mentoring may further create unhealthy work environments that encourage bullying behaviours. Although previous studies have investigated career development and workplace bullying separately, limited empirical evidence exists on how training and development, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring and coaching influence workplace bullying among the staff of tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis. This gap limits the availability of evidence needed by institutional administrators to formulate policies that enhance staff development while minimizing workplace bullying. It is therefore necessary to examine the relationship between employee career development and workplace bullying among the staff of tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested with 0.05 level of significance:

H01: Training and development has no significant effect on workplace bullying among the staff of tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis.

H02: Career advancement opportunities have no significant effect on workplace bullying among the staff of tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis.

H03: Mentoring and coaching have no significant effect on workplace bullying among the staff of tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis.

Literature Review

Employee Career Development

Employee career development refers to the systematic process through which organizations assist employees in acquiring the knowledge, skills, competencies, and

experiences necessary for career growth and improved organizational performance. It involves planned activities such as training, mentoring, coaching, promotion, job rotation, and career planning that prepare employees for current and future responsibilities. According to Noe (2020), career development enables employees to continuously improve their competencies while aligning their career aspirations with organizational objectives. Similarly, Armstrong and Taylor (2023) asserted that organizations that invest in employee career development experience improved employee commitment, productivity, and organizational effectiveness. In Nigeria, employee career development has become an important strategy for improving service delivery in tertiary institutions. Adejare and Adebisi (2020) found that career development programmes significantly improve employee productivity and organizational commitment among university staff. Likewise, Okolie et al. (2020) reported that structured career development initiatives enhance employees' professional competence and long-term career success in higher education institutions (Adejare & Adebisi, 2020; Okolie et al., 2020).

Training and Development

Training and development represent organized learning activities designed to improve employees' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies. Training focuses on current job performance, while development prepares employees for future responsibilities and leadership positions. According to Noe (2020), continuous training enables employees to acquire new knowledge and adapt to technological and organizational changes. Armstrong and Taylor (2023) further argued that organizations that invest in staff training enjoy higher productivity, improved employee morale, and stronger organizational commitment. In tertiary institutions, training and development include workshops, conferences, seminars, postgraduate sponsorship, academic exchange programmes, and in service training. These programmes enhance employees' teaching, research, administrative, and leadership competencies. Nigerian studies have shown that continuous staff training improves employee effectiveness and institutional performance while promoting positive workplace relationships (Adejare & Adebisi, 2020).

Career Advancement Opportunities

Career advancement opportunities refer to organizational provisions that enable employees to progress to higher positions through promotion, succession planning, leadership development, and professional recognition. Employees who perceive promotion systems as transparent and merit based are more likely to remain committed to organizational objectives and demonstrate higher job satisfaction (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Within Nigerian tertiary institutions, career advancement depends on educational qualifications, research productivity, years of service, professional experience, and

institutional policies. Fair promotion practices encourage employee motivation and organizational loyalty, whereas delayed promotions and favoritism often result in dissatisfaction, workplace conflict, and reduced morale. Okolie et al. (2020) observed that transparent career progression significantly enhances employee motivation and organizational commitment in Nigerian higher education institutions.

Mentoring and Coaching

Mentoring and coaching are essential components of employee career development that facilitate knowledge transfer, professional guidance, and continuous learning. Mentoring involves experienced employees supporting less experienced colleagues over an extended period, while coaching focuses on improving specific competencies and performance. Garvey et al. (2022) maintained that mentoring and coaching enhance employee confidence, leadership development, and organizational learning. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, mentoring and coaching enable junior academics and administrative staff to acquire institutional knowledge, research skills, and leadership competencies. Abodunde (2018) found that mentoring significantly contributes to career progression and professional development among academic staff in selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Effective mentoring relationships also foster teamwork, trust, and positive interpersonal relationships that reduce workplace conflicts.

Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying refers to repeated and persistent negative behaviours directed toward employees, resulting in psychological, emotional, and professional harm. Such behaviours include intimidation, verbal abuse, humiliation, victimization, social exclusion, excessive criticism, and abuse of authority. According to Einarsen et al. (2020) and Arah, (2025), workplace bullying creates an unhealthy organizational climate that undermines employee wellbeing, job satisfaction, and organizational performance. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, workplace bullying has become an emerging organizational concern affecting both academic and non-academic staff. Employees may experience bullying through unfair supervisory practices, discrimination, intimidation, victimization, and exclusion from career development opportunities. Such behaviours reduce employee morale, increase stress, and negatively affect organizational commitment and productivity. Nigerian studies have shown that organizations with supportive career development practices experience lower incidences of workplace bullying and healthier workplace relationships (Adewumi & Danesi, 2020).

Theoretical Review

Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) was developed by George C. Homans in 1958 and was later expanded by Peter M. Blau in 1964. The theory explains that social relationships are built on reciprocal exchanges in which

individuals evaluate the costs and benefits of their interactions. Employees are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes and behaviours when they perceive that their organizations treat them fairly, provide opportunities for growth, and recognize their contributions. Conversely, when employees perceive unfair treatment, lack of support, or hostile interpersonal relationships, they may reciprocate with reduced commitment, lower performance, withdrawal behaviours, or workplace conflict (Blau, 1964). The central tenets of Social Exchange Theory include reciprocity, mutual obligation, trust, fairness, and organizational support. The theory assumes that employees develop stronger commitment and positive workplace relationships when organizations invest in their welfare through career development initiatives such as training and development, mentoring and coaching, and career advancement opportunities. Where these developmental opportunities are absent or unfairly distributed, employees may experience dissatisfaction, frustration, and strained interpersonal relationships that can contribute to workplace bullying. This theory is relevant to the present study because career development represents an important organizational investment in employees. Staff members who receive adequate training, equitable promotion opportunities, and effective mentoring are likely to develop trust in management, maintain healthy relationships with colleagues, and experience lower incidences of workplace bullying. Thus, Social Exchange Theory provides a useful framework for explaining how employee career development influences workplace bullying among staff of tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis.

Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory was developed by Theodore W. Schultz in 1961 and was further advanced by Gary S. Becker in 1964. The theory posits that investments in employees through education, training, experience, and skill development enhance their productivity and overall organizational performance. Human capital is regarded as a valuable organizational asset capable of generating long term competitive advantage when properly developed. The major assumptions of Human Capital Theory are that employees' knowledge, competencies, skills, and experience constitute valuable organizational resources. Organizations that invest in continuous learning, mentoring, coaching, and career advancement improve employees' effectiveness, motivation, innovation, and job satisfaction. Such investments also strengthen interpersonal relationships by creating an environment that values professional growth and employee wellbeing. The theory is applicable to this study because training and development, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring and coaching are all investments in employees' human capital. When tertiary institutions continuously develop their staff, employees become more competent, motivated, and professionally fulfilled. Such an environment promotes mutual respect, cooperation, and supportive relationships

while reducing organizational conditions that may encourage workplace bullying.

Empirical Review

Gadi and Kee (2021) investigated the relationship between workplace bullying, human resource management practices, work engagement, and turnover intention among academic staff in Nigerian public universities. The study aimed to determine whether work engagement mediates the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. A cross sectional survey research design was adopted. Data were collected from 400 academic staff who had worked for at least six months in their respective universities using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS SEM). The findings revealed that workplace bullying significantly increased turnover intention, while effective human resource management practices enhanced work engagement and mitigated the negative effects of workplace bullying. The study concluded that supportive human resource practices are essential for reducing bullying and improving employee retention. It recommended that university management should strengthen employee development programmes and improve workplace relationships. The study is similar to the present study because both focus on workplace bullying among staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions. However, the previous study examined turnover intention as the dependent variable, whereas the present study investigates workplace bullying as influenced by career development. The study contributes to the present research by demonstrating that supportive human resource practices reduce workplace bullying and improve employee engagement.

Adejare, Olaore, Udofia, and Emola (2020) examined the role of training and development in improving the efficiency of non-academic staff in selected Nigerian public universities. The study aimed to determine the influence of induction training, demonstration training, on the job training, and formal training on employee productivity and service delivery. A quantitative survey research design was adopted. The study used a structured questionnaire administered to 293 non-academic staff selected through convenience and stratified sampling techniques. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The findings showed that training and development significantly improved employee productivity and service delivery, although ineffective implementation of on-the-job training reduced organizational efficiency. The study concluded that continuous employee training is essential for improving institutional performance. It recommended integrating effective staff training into employee career management programmes. The study is similar to the present study because both examine employee career development within tertiary institutions. However, while the previous study focused on productivity and service delivery, the present study focuses on

workplace bullying. The study contributes by establishing training and development as an important predictor of positive workplace outcomes.

Okolie, Nwajiuba, Binuomote, Ehiobuche, Igu, and Ajoke (2020) examined career training with mentoring programmes in Nigerian higher education institutions. The purpose of the study was to explore how career training and mentoring facilitate career development and employability. The researchers adopted a qualitative research design using interviews. The study involved 33 experts comprising 21 senior academics and 12 industry executives selected purposively from the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that career training and mentoring improve career aspirations, professional competence, employability, and career planning. The study concluded that Nigerian higher institutions should establish career training and mentoring centres. It recommended strengthening mentoring and coaching programmes to improve career development. The study is similar to the present study because mentoring and career development constitute major variables. However, the previous study focused on graduate employability, whereas the present study investigates workplace bullying among employees. The study contributes by emphasizing mentoring and coaching as effective career development strategies.

Adewumi and Danesi (2020) investigated workplace bullying among employees across different organizations in Nigeria. The study aimed to examine the nature, prevalence, and consequences of workplace bullying in Nigerian workplaces. The researchers adopted a survey research design and collected data using the Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised (NAQ R) from employees across different sectors. The data were analyzed using factor analysis. The findings identified four major dimensions of workplace bullying, namely individual bullying, job related bullying, ostracism, and victimization. The study further revealed that workplace bullying negatively affected employees' psychological wellbeing and organizational performance. The study concluded that workplace bullying has become widespread in Nigerian organizations. It recommended creating organizational awareness and implementing anti bullying policies. The study is similar to the present study because both investigate workplace bullying in Nigeria. However, the previous study did not examine employee career development variables. The study contributes by providing empirical evidence on the dimensions and prevalence of workplace bullying within Nigerian organizations.

Salin and Notelaers (2020) examined organizational antecedents of workplace bullying across different organizations in Europe. The study sought to determine how organizational practices and leadership behaviours influence workplace bullying. A

quantitative survey design was adopted using employees from different organizations, while the data were analyzed using multivariate statistical techniques. The findings indicated that organizations with transparent career management systems, supportive leadership, and effective human resource practices experienced significantly lower levels of workplace bullying. The study concluded that positive organizational practices contribute to healthier workplace environments. It recommended strengthening career development and leadership practices to minimize bullying behaviours. The study is similar to the present study because it recognizes career related organizational practices as mechanisms for reducing workplace bullying. However, it was conducted outside Nigeria. The study contributes by providing international evidence that employee development practices reduce workplace bullying.

Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2020) reviewed empirical studies on workplace bullying across several countries. The objective was to synthesize evidence on the causes, consequences, and prevention of workplace bullying. The study adopted a systematic review approach by examining numerous empirical studies conducted across different organizations. The review found that workplace bullying negatively affects employees' psychological health, organizational commitment, productivity, and job satisfaction while increasing absenteeism and turnover intention. The study concluded that organizations should strengthen employee support systems, leadership practices, and professional development programmes to reduce workplace bullying. It recommended adopting comprehensive organizational policies against bullying. The study is similar to the present study because both investigate workplace bullying. However, the present study empirically examines career development variables within Nigerian tertiary institutions. The study contributes by providing a global understanding of workplace bullying and its organizational implications.

Nielsen and Einarsen (2019) conducted a systematic review of longitudinal studies on workplace bullying and employee wellbeing. The study aimed to determine the long-term consequences of workplace bullying on employees and organizations. The review synthesized findings from numerous longitudinal studies conducted across Europe, North America, and Australia. The findings consistently showed that workplace bullying significantly reduces employees' psychological health, career satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance while increasing stress related illnesses and turnover intention. The study concluded that organizations should invest in preventive human resource policies, supportive leadership, and employee development programmes to minimize bullying. It recommended continuous organizational interventions aimed at promoting healthy work environments. The study is similar to the present study because

both examine workplace bullying as an organizational issue affecting employees. However, the present study specifically investigates how training and development, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring and coaching influence workplace bullying among staff of tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis. The study contributes by providing international evidence supporting the use of positive human resource practices to prevent workplace bullying.

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The study is conducted among the staff of Wesley University, Ondo, University of Medical Sciences (UNIMED), Ondo, and Adeyemi Federal University of Education (AFUED), Ondo, all located in Ondo Metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprises 5,560 academic and non-academic staff, consisting of 1646 staff from Wesley University, 1,235 staff from UNIMED, and 2,679 staff from AFUED. A sample size of 373 respondents is determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula, while a stratified random sampling technique is employed to select respondents proportionately from the three institutions. The study utilizes primary data collected through a structured questionnaire. The instrument is validated by experts, while its reliability is established using the Cronbach Alpha technique. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Workplace Bullying	373	2.80	5.00	4.2295	.57388	-.305	-.656
Training and Development	373	2.20	5.00	3.9625	.56042	-.231	.011
Career Advancement Opportunities	373	2.60	5.00	4.0118	.52062	-.144	.016
Mentoring and Coaching	373	2.60	5.00	3.9834	.51519	-.159	.076

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables. The results indicate that workplace bullying recorded a mean score of 4.2295 with a standard deviation of 0.57388, suggesting that respondents generally perceived the existence of workplace bullying within the selected tertiary institutions. Training and development had a mean score of 3.9625 and a standard deviation of 0.56042, indicating that respondents agreed that training and development practices were available in their institutions. Career advancement opportunities recorded a mean score of

4.0118 with a standard deviation of 0.52062, reflecting respondents' positive perception of career advancement opportunities. Similarly, mentoring and coaching had a mean score of 3.9834 and a standard deviation of 0.51519, indicating that mentoring and coaching practices were fairly practiced across the institutions. The skewness values ranged from −0.305 to −0.144, while kurtosis values ranged from −0.656 to 0.076, indicating that the data were approximately normally distributed and suitable for regression analysis.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.238[a]	.057	.049	.55968

a. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace Bullying

The model summary presented in Table 2 shows that the regression coefficient (R) is 0.238, indicating a weak positive relationship between employee career development variables and workplace bullying. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.057) implies that training and development, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring and coaching jointly explained 5.7% of the variation in workplace bullying among staff of the selected tertiary institutions, while the remaining 94.3% was explained by other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.049 indicates that after adjusting for the number of predictors, the explanatory power of the model remained relatively low.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.931	3	2.310	7.375	.000[b]
	Residual	115.585	369	.313		
	Total	122.516	372			

a. Dependent Variable: Workplace Bullying

b. Predictors: (Constant), Mentoring and Coaching, Training and Development, Career Advancement Opportunities

The ANOVA results presented in Table 3 indicate that the regression model is statistically significant with an F-value of 7.375 and a probability value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the independent variables jointly have a significant effect on workplace bullying among staff of the selected tertiary institutions. Therefore, the overall regression model is appropriate for explaining variations in workplace bullying.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.246	.228		14.239	.000
Training and Development	.067	.146	.066	.460	.646
Career Advancement Opportunities	-.295	.242	-.267	-1.217	.224
Mentoring and Coaching	.477	.266	.428	1.790	.074

a. Dependent Variable: Workplace Bullying

Table 4 presents the regression coefficients examining the individual effects of training and development, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring and coaching on workplace bullying. The results reveal that training and development has a positive but statistically insignificant effect on workplace bullying ($\beta = 0.066$, $t = 0.460$, $p = 0.646$). This indicates that training and development does not significantly influence workplace bullying among the staff of the selected tertiary institutions. The findings further show that career advancement opportunities have a negative but statistically insignificant effect on workplace bullying ($\beta = -0.267$, $t = -1.217$, $p = 0.224$). Although increased career advancement opportunities appear to reduce workplace bullying, the effect is not statistically significant. Similarly, mentoring and coaching exhibit a positive but statistically insignificant effect on workplace bullying ($\beta = 0.428$, $t = 1.790$, $p = 0.074$). Since the probability value exceeds the 0.05 level of significance, mentoring and coaching do not significantly predict workplace bullying among staff of the selected tertiary institutions.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that training and development has a positive but statistically insignificant effect on workplace bullying among staff of tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis. This implies that although staff members have access to training and development programmes, such initiatives alone may not be sufficient to reduce workplace bullying. The finding agrees with Adejare et al. (2020), who reported that training and development primarily enhance employee productivity and service delivery rather than directly addressing interpersonal conflicts and bullying behaviours within organizations. It also supports the position of Noe (2020) that while training improves employees' competencies, additional organizational interventions are required to create healthy workplace relationships.

The study also found that career advancement opportunities have a negative but insignificant effect on workplace bullying. This suggests that the availability of promotion and career progression opportunities may reduce workplace bullying to some extent, although the reduction is not statistically significant. The finding is

consistent with Armstrong and Taylor (2023), who argued that transparent promotion systems enhance employee commitment and reduce workplace dissatisfaction. It also aligns with Okolie et al. (2020), who emphasized that equitable career management practices improve employee motivation and organizational commitment. However, the insignificant relationship suggests that other organizational factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, and communication may play a greater role in influencing workplace bullying.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that mentoring and coaching have a positive but statistically insignificant effect on workplace bullying. This indicates that existing mentoring and coaching programmes within the selected tertiary institutions have not significantly influenced the occurrence of workplace bullying. The finding partially agrees with Okolie et al. (2020), who found that mentoring enhances career development and professional competence among employees. However, it contradicts the assertions of Garvey et al. (2022), who argued that effective mentoring and coaching strengthen workplace relationships, promote trust, and reduce interpersonal conflicts. The insignificant result may be attributed to inadequate implementation of formal mentoring programmes or limited employee participation in mentoring activities.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of employee career development on workplace bullying among the staff of selected tertiary institutions in Ondo Metropolis using training and development, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring and coaching as indicators of employee career development. The findings revealed that although the three career development dimensions jointly had a statistically significant effect on workplace bullying, their individual effects were not statistically significant. Specifically, training and development and mentoring and coaching exhibited positive but insignificant effects on workplace bullying, while career advancement opportunities demonstrated a negative but insignificant effect. This suggests that employee career development alone may not be sufficient to address workplace bullying without complementary organizational practices such as effective leadership, transparent policies, organizational justice, and a supportive work environment. Therefore, reducing workplace bullying in tertiary institutions requires a holistic human resource management approach that integrates career development with strong institutional mechanisms for promoting positive workplace relationships.

Recommendations

1. Management of tertiary institutions should strengthen training and development programmes by incorporating workplace ethics, conflict resolution, emotional

intelligence, and anti-bullying awareness into staff development activities to promote healthy interpersonal relationships.

2. Tertiary institutions should establish transparent and merit-based career advancement policies to ensure fairness in promotion, reduce perceptions of favoritism, and minimize workplace conflicts that may encourage bullying behaviours.
3. Management should institutionalize formal mentoring and coaching programmes that encourage experienced staff to provide professional guidance and psychosocial support to junior employees, thereby fostering collaboration, mutual respect, and a workplace culture that discourages bullying.

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