
Nexus between Sense of Community and Career Development among Employees of selected Private Universities in South-West Nigeria

*ABIOYE, Mishael Bukunmi¹, KASUMU Modupe Silifat², ADEFILA, Benson Adeshina³, ENIAYEWU, Jamiu Abiola⁴, IHEANACHO Victoria Francess⁵

^{1, 3, 4}*Department of Employment Relations & Human Resource Management,
Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.*

²*Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.*

⁵*Department of Business Administration
Oduduwa University, Ipedu-Modu, Osun State, Nigeria.*

*Corresponding Email Address: abioyemishael@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examined the nexus between sense of community and employee career development using private universities in the South-West, Nigeria as the unit of analysis. The study identified belongingness, conflict resolution, and supportive environment as the three dimensions of sense of community vis-à-vis their relationship career development, thus, providing a framework to explain the relationship between sense of community and employee career development. Questionnaire was employed as the research instrument which was administered to the sample size of 337 respondents. The results emanating from the use of correlation coefficient and linear regression shows that there exists a strong and positive relationship between the three dimensions of sense of community which also exerted strong and positive influence on employee career development. The findings also reveal that conflict resolution contribute more to career development. It was concluded that sense of community is significant and plays a fostering role in the employee career success and satisfaction and recommended that management should institute conflict resolution mechanism that will herald harmonious relationship free from bias, prejudice, and subjectivity.

Keywords: Belongingness, Career development, Conflict resolution, Sense of community, Supportive environment

1. Introduction

Sense of community and career development have emerged as critical areas of focus in organizational behaviour and employee management, particularly within academic institutions where employee satisfaction, retention, and performance significantly impact institutional success (Kola-Olusayan et al, 2025; Milliman et al., 2003). In the context of private universities in South-West Nigeria, fostering a strong sense of community has become essential for

addressing challenges related to employee engagement and professional growth in a competitive and resource-constrained educational landscape (Ikechukwu & Amadi, 2021). A *sense of community*, defined as an individual's perception of belonging, shared emotional connections, and mutual support within a group, is a vital component of workplace culture (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). It fosters an environment where employees feel valued, supported, and motivated to contribute to collective goals. This sense of belonging and connectedness has been

linked to improved job satisfaction, reduced turnover intentions, and enhanced professional development (Armstrong, 2020).

In private universities, where collaboration and knowledge sharing are crucial, cultivating a sense of community can positively influence employees' willingness to engage in continuous learning and skill development. A strong sense of community provides employees with a supportive network that encourages knowledge sharing, mentorship, and collaborative problem-solving, all of which are essential for career advancement (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Additionally, environments that promote belongingness and mutual respect are more likely to inspire employees to engage in proactive career management behaviours, such as seeking feedback, pursuing growth opportunities, and taking on challenging tasks (Subashini, 2019). Career development revolves around the lifelong process of learning, managing, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move towards a personally determined and evolving preferred future (Wong, 2009). It entails preparing individuals to assume different or higher responsibilities within the organization (Firman, 2021). It is a critical driver of job performance, satisfaction, and organizational commitment. For employees in private universities, career development often entails participation in training programs, mentoring relationships, and professional opportunities that align individual aspirations with institutional objectives (Greg & Judy, 2012).

However, challenges such as limited access to development resources, inadequate institutional support, and high turnover rates can hinder employees' career progression in these settings (Belyh, 2019). In South-West Nigeria, private universities operate within a rapidly evolving educational landscape characterized by competition for talent,

resource limitations, and shifting academic priorities (Nwanzu & Babalola, 2021). These institutions must adopt innovative strategies to attract, develop, and retain skilled employees. Promoting a sense of community within the workplace can serve as a strategic lever to enhance employee engagement and professional development. Employees who feel connected to their peers and supported by their institutions are more likely to pursue career development opportunities that align with both personal and organizational goals. Existing literature underscores the positive relationship between sense of community and employee career development. For instance, McMillan and Chavis (1986) highlighted the role of shared emotional connections and supportive relationships in fostering motivation and engagement. Similarly, Armstrong (2020) and Greenhaus et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of creating inclusive and collaborative work environments to enhance career satisfaction and growth.

Despite these insights, limited research has explored the Nexus between sense of community and career development within the context of private universities in Nigeria, presenting an important gap in the literature. This study seeks to examine the nexus between sense of community and employee career development among employees of selected private universities in South-West Nigeria. By investigating this relationship, the research aims to provide actionable recommendations for university administrators, policymakers, and human resource professionals to design policies and practices that foster supportive work environments and promote employee growth. Insights from this study will contribute to the broader understanding of how relational dynamics shape career development outcomes in academic institutions.

2. Literature Review

Concept of Sense of Community

Sense of community is one of the dimensions of workplace spirituality that occurs at the group level of human behaviour, and is expressed via interactions between co-workers (Adubasim et al, 2022). Sense of community involves a deep connection to or relationship with others (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). The essence of community is a deeper sense of connection among people, including support, freedom of expression, and genuine caring and well as supportive environment (Kola-Olusanya, et al 2025). Individuals in workplaces experience sense of community in the presence of shared vision, common values, boundaries, empowerment, shared responsibility and development, tension reduction, education, feedback, and friendship (Naylor et al, 1996). People value workplaces where they feel part of a community especially a derivable sense of belonging (Miller, 1998; Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999), and employees find strong connectedness in workplaces where they experience shared values, a shared sense of purpose, and a less frictional environment (Adubasim et al 2022).

In the views of Garrett, et al., (2014), an authentic sense of community is guaranteed in autonomous atmosphere, effective conflict resolution mechanism, collaborative and cooperative environment rather than an imposition driven by extrinsic motivation. Usually, employees feel encouraged to be authentic and allow for personal connections to form rather than assume impersonal connections via their roles. In practice, as evident in the work of Garrett et al., (2014), Southwest Airlines exemplifies an organizational culture with deliberate effort to evoke a sense of community. Employees feel that they are part of a family that takes care of each other as well as their customers, although a strong

emphasis is placed on customers, employees come first and community fun is a strong work ethics without relegating hard work and flexibility to control staffing requirements, (Levering & Moskowitz, 1993; Adubasim et al 2022). Ashmos and Duchon (2000) identified interconnectedness, belongingness, shared vision, boundaries, freedom of expression, support, tension reduction, caring, and friendship not based on role relations in the workplace and placed premium on belongingness and conflict resolution. This also explains why Neal and Bennett (2000) posited that the level of spirituality involves the mental, emotional, and spiritual connections among employees in teams or groups in organizations and placed premium on supportive environment to reduce mental and emotional stress on account of alienation. This was corroborated by the works of Kola-Olusanya et al (2025) that sense of community is meaningful when employee enjoys genuine caring and support from members of the workplace community.

Concept of Career Development

Career development encompasses the lifelong process of managing, learning, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move towards a personally determined and evolving preferred future (Wong, 2009). It involves preparing individuals to assume different or higher responsibilities within the organization (Firman, 2021). Career development is reflection on the career plans usually based on the individual and organization perspectives (Belyh, 2019). Career development is noteworthy and rewarding when the focus is on the individual wellbeing be it personal and or economic, social flexibility, economic productivity, and social justice. For this to take place, the individuals are required to amass valuable skills suitable to the organisational needs and be able to withstand or adapt to the change in careers which are attainable

through training and seminar workshops (Subashini, 2019).

According to the Career Development Institute (2017) Career Development refers to the unique lifelong growth of a person's career through proper management of their work and the smooth progression ensuring efficient participation in the workspace. It is also an ongoing, formalized effort by organizations to develop and enrich their human resources based on the needs of both the employees and the organization (Byars & Rue, 2004). Career development can be seen from individual and organizational perspective Greg and Judy (2012) because individual takes into consideration factors such as psychological, sociological, educational, economic, and physical factors, as well as other factors influencing career of the individual. For organization, it is a process of alignment of individual career planning and organization career management processes to achieve an optimal match between individual and organizational needs. Career development has globally been recognized as a crucial element influencing the career growth and opportunities and has become a key determinant in employee productivity irrespective of the type or the nature of the organization (Delbari et al., 2021; Subashini, 2019).

Dimensions of Career Development

Career development encompasses the various processes and experiences individuals undertake to manage and advance their careers. It involves a complex interplay between personal attributes, environmental factors, and intentional actions. Career development as a practice is a series of activities put together to identify competencies required by employees to navigate their career objective vis-à-vis organization objective i.e., opportunities aimed at providing learning and development environment to in turn enhance employee engagement,

motivation and job satisfaction in the workplace without prejudice whether in the short or long run. Thus, heralding the discussion on the multidimensional nature of career development as well as highlighting key dimensions that contribute to individuals' professional growth and success.

1. Career Success:

Career success is a multidimensional concept that encompasses various indicators of achievement and progress in one's professional life. It involves the attainment of goals, growth, recognition, and overall satisfaction with one's career trajectory. This research work explores the factors that influence career success, drawing on research and empirical evidence.

i. Goal Clarity and Planning:

Goal clarity and effective planning are crucial factors in achieving career success. Individuals who have clear, specific, and realistic career goals are more likely to take focused actions and make deliberate choices aligned with their objectives (Locke & Latham, 1990). Setting challenging yet attainable goals and developing actionable plans contribute to increased motivation, persistence, and ultimately, career success.

ii. Continuous Learning and Skill Development:

Continuous learning and skill development are key drivers of career success. Successful individuals recognize the importance of staying relevant and adapting to evolving job requirements (Arthur et al., 2020). Actively seeking opportunities for professional development, acquiring new knowledge, and honing existing skills contribute to enhanced performance, promotability, and overall career success (Taris & Kompier, 2005).

iii. Networking and Relationship Building:

Networking and relationship building play a significant role in career success.

Building a strong professional network provides access to valuable resources, mentorship, and career opportunities (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Actively engaging in networking activities, maintaining professional relationships, and seeking out mentors can lead to increased visibility, support, and advancement in one's career.

iv. Proactive Career Management:

Successful individuals take charge of their careers and engage in proactive career management. They actively seek opportunities, take calculated risks, and make strategic decisions to shape their career trajectories (Seibert, et al., 2001). Proactive career behaviours, such as seeking feedback, pursuing challenging assignments, and seeking growth opportunities, are positively associated with career success.

Career Satisfaction

Career satisfaction refers to the subjective sense of fulfilment, contentment, and happiness individuals experience in their work lives. It is a critical aspect of overall well-being and can impact various aspects of an individual's life, including job performance, motivation, and overall life satisfaction. This research work explores the factors that influence career satisfaction, drawing on research and empirical evidence.

i. Job Fit and Alignment:

Job fit refers to the match between an individual's skills, interests, values, and the requirements of their job (Edwards, et al., 2006). When there is a high degree of alignment between these factors, individuals are more likely to experience satisfaction in their careers. A good fit provides individuals with a sense of purpose, autonomy, and opportunities to utilize their strengths, leading to greater job satisfaction (Judge & Cable, 1997).

ii. Work-Life Balance:

The attainment of a healthy work-life balance (WLB) is somewhat crucial for employee career satisfaction. When

individuals are able to manage effectively and efficiently their work responsibilities at the same time maintaining personal and family commitments, such individuals experience reduced stress levels and increased satisfaction with their careers (Allen, et al., 2000). Oginni, et al., (2023) described WLB, in its broadest sense, to be a fit between multiple roles in one's person life i.e., a state of equilibrium with harmonious relationship among components of one's personal life. Grzywacz and Carlson (2019) as cited in Oginni et. al (2023) described WLB as the achievement of role-related expectations exchanged and shared between people and their role-related partners in the arena of work and family. However, Greenhaus and Allen (2020) posited that WLB as the degree of satisfaction experienced by a person in terms of his work and family roles are attuned to his role priorities of life at certain point in time. WLB in the work place has become an important issue in the workplace on account of positive results exhibited such as low turnover, work engagement, organisational citizenship behaviour, improved employee performance, increased firm productivity, commitment, and job satisfaction (Konrad & Mangel, 2016; Wang & Walumbwa, 2017). Organisations that promote work-life balance through flexible work arrangements or supportive policies contribute to higher levels of career satisfaction.

Sense of Community as a Catalyst for Career Development

A strong sense of community supports career development by creating an environment where employees feel valued and connected. This sense of connection enhances employee engagement, encourages knowledge sharing, and promotes participation in career development programs. According to Armstrong (2020), environments that nurture community belongingness that is free of constant conflict among employees

provide the foundation for skill acquisition, continuous learning, and overall professional growth.

The sense of community within an organization has emerged as a critical factor influencing career development, particularly in dynamic and competitive work environments. A sense of community fosters a shared sense of belonging, mutual trust, and collaboration, which serve as enablers for career growth (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In the context of organizational settings, this concept aligns with the psychological and social needs of employees, contributing to their professional advancement and satisfaction.

Dimensions of Sense of Community Impacting Career Development

i. Belonging and Social Integration

Employees who feel a sense of belonging within their organization are more likely to engage in collaborative learning and development activities. This integration fosters emotional and professional support, which are critical for career resilience and adaptability (Wong, 2009).

ii. Collaborative Learning and Peer Support

A community-driven culture encourages employees to participate in cross-functional projects and mentorship programs, enabling them to acquire new skills and competencies. Such opportunities align with career aspirations and organizational goals, creating a synergy that drives career progression (Mark & Nzulwa, 2019).

iii. Recognition and Empowerment

Organizations that cultivate a sense of community through recognition and empowerment foster a culture where employees feel encouraged to take proactive steps in their career journeys. Empowered employees are more likely to seek feedback, engage in challenging assignments, and invest in personal development (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2019).

Outcomes of Career Development in Community Oriented Organizations

i. Enhanced Skill Development

Workplaces emphasizing a sense of community provide employees with access to training and mentorship, ensuring continuous skill development. This approach enhances employee readiness for changing career demands (Taris & Kompier, 2005).

ii. Increased Motivation and Engagement

Employees who feel connected to their peers and the organization exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement, which are critical for career development. This motivation translates into greater participation in learning initiatives and long-term professional growth (Subashini, 2019).

iii. Proactive Career Management

Organizations fostering a sense of community encourage employees to take ownership of their career paths. This involves setting clear career goals, utilizing organizational resources effectively, and pursuing growth opportunities actively (Seibert, et al., 2001).

iv. Implications for Organizations

Organizations that prioritize building a sense of community can enhance their career development initiatives. By fostering inclusivity, collaboration, and recognition, they can create an environment that supports individual growth while achieving institutional objectives. For private universities in South-West Nigeria, where talent retention and career stagnation remain challenges, cultivating a sense of community is particularly relevant. It can serve as a strategic tool to enhance employee satisfaction, motivation, and professional advancement (Ikechukwu & Amadi, 2021).

Theoretical Review

The study is anchored on the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which

offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the nexus between sense of community and employee career development, particularly among employees in private universities in South-West Nigeria. Social Exchange Theory posits that workplace interactions are governed by reciprocal relationships, where individuals and organizations exchange resources, support, and benefits. This reciprocal dynamic fosters trust, commitment, and mutual engagement, making the theory highly relevant for examining how a sense of community drives employee career development. Social Exchange Theory emphasizes three key constructs critical to understanding the relationship between sense of community and career development: reciprocity, trust and mutual obligation, and cost-benefit analysis. These constructs provide valuable insights into how a supportive workplace environment can enhance career growth.

First, reciprocity highlights the mutual exchange of resources between employees and their organization. Employees who perceive a strong sense of community are more likely to reciprocate by participating in training programs, mentoring relationships, and other career development activities. In private universities, this reciprocity may manifest as employees engaging more proactively in institutional initiatives that enhance both individual and organizational outcomes. Second, trust and mutual obligation are central to fostering a supportive community. A culture of trust ensures that employees feel valued, secure, and motivated to invest in their professional development. In private universities, this trust encourages employees to seek roles, pursue skill enhancement, and align their career aspirations with institutional goals. Mutual obligation between employees and the organization strengthens this dynamic by reinforcing the idea that career

development is a shared responsibility. Third, the cost-benefit analysis construct reflects how employees evaluate the perceived rewards of engaging in a supportive community against the time, effort, and other costs involved. A strong sense of community reduces the psychological and practical barriers to career development, making it easier for employees to access resources, seek mentorship, and expand their professional networks.

Social Exchange Theory also underscores the importance of creating an environment where employees feel psychologically safe and supported. This sense of safety allows employees to take career-related risks, such as exploring new roles or acquiring advanced skills, without fear of failure or judgment. For private universities in South-West Nigeria, fostering such an environment is critical, as it directly impacts employee retention, satisfaction, and productivity. Additionally, the theory highlights the role of organizational support in facilitating employee development. When institutions invest in cultivating a sense of community through collaborative work cultures, transparent communication, and shared values they enhance employees' willingness to engage in developmental activities. This organizational investment not only benefits individual career trajectories but also contributes to the institution's reputation and long-term sustainability.

By applying the principles of Social Exchange Theory, this study seeks to explore how the interplay between a sense of community and career development influences employee outcomes in private universities. The theory provides a robust foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which supportive workplace environments drive career growth. Insights from this framework can inform the design of interventions and policies aimed at fostering strong

workplace communities, enhancing employee career development, and improving organizational performance in

the South-West Nigerian educational sector.

Conceptual Framework of the study

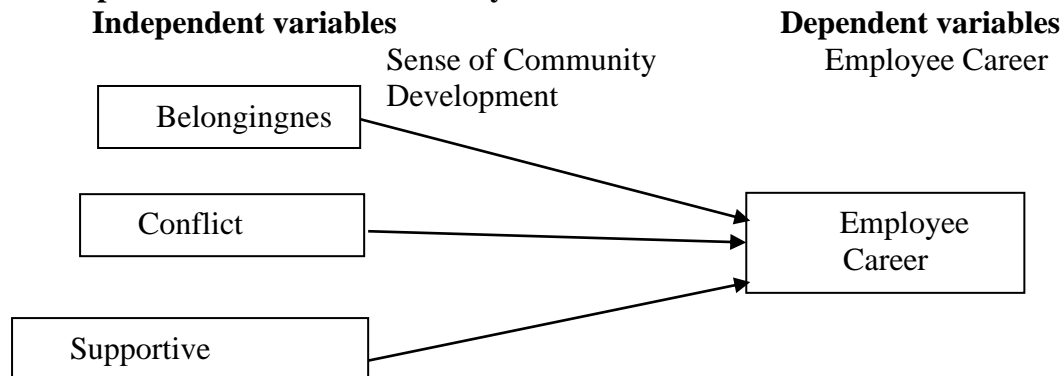


Fig 1: Conceptual framework

The framework identified the three elements of the sense of community at the same time indicating the direction of the study leading to the formulation of three hypotheses for the purpose of examining the nexus between sense of community and employee career development i.e.,
H₁: Belongingness has no relationship with employee career development
H₂: Conflict resolution has no relationship with employee career development.

H₃: Supportive environment has no relationship with employee career development.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, and data were collected using primary data collection methods. The sample size for the study was 337 employees from private universities in South-West Nigeria which was obtained from the study population of 2135 through the use of Yamane's sample size formula. The first-generation private university in each of the six states of the region was selected using purposive sampling techniques to ensure representation across the study area. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire tagged "Sense of Community and Career Development Questionnaire (SOCCDQ),"

designed along a 5-point Likert rating scale (Very High = 5, High = 4, Low = 3, Very Low = 2, and Undecided = 1). The measurement items for the independent variable (Sense of Community) were adapted from the Workplace Spirituality Scale developed by Shrestha (2016) and the Questionnaire of Personal and Organizational Values Congruence by Veinhardt and Gulbovaite (2018). For the dependent variable (Career Development), the items were adapted from the Career Development Scales created by Spurk, Abele and Volmer (2015); Mamolar, Iborra, and Nogueiras (2018), and Adekola (2011).

The reliability coefficients of the adapted instruments are well-established. The three dimensions of the sense of has reliability coefficients where belongingness $r = 0.60$, conflict resolution $r = 0.84$, and supportive environment $r = 0.70$ while the Career Development Scales $r = 0.90$). The reliability coefficients results validated the scales to appropriate for the study. The pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted between November 2024 and January 2025 to ensure its clarity, reliability, and relevance. Subsequently, the full-scale administration of the questionnaire was carried out over three months, from February to April 2025. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were

distributed, and 337 were returned, yielding a response rate of 94.3%. For this study, the independent variable (Sense of Community) was measured using three dimensions i.e., belongingness, conflict resolution, and supportive environment vis-à-vis the dependent variable (Career

Development). Data collected through the structured questionnaire were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. i.e., correlation and regression analysis.

4. Results and Discussions

Respondents' Demographic Information

Table 1: Institutions of Participating Employees'

	State	Institution	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Oyo	Lead City University	46	13.6	13.6
	Osun	Bowen University	68	20.2	33.8
	Lagos	Pan-Atlantic University	24	7.1	40.9
	Ekiti	Afe Babalola University	84	24.9	65.9
	Ondo	Achievers University	23	6.8	72.7
	Ogun	Babcock University	92	27.3	100.0
	Total		337	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 1 has information on all the private universities selected in the South-West, Nigeria with respect to population distribution in accordance to the proportional sampling technique. The sample size of 337 respondents was distributed among the States in the South-

West, Nigeria and Babcock university has the highest frequency followed by Afe Babalola university, and Bowen University as well as Lead City university, followed by Pan-Atlantic university, and Achievers University.

Table 2: Gender Distribution

	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	182	54.0	54.0
	Female	155	46.0	100.0
	Total	337	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 2 contained information the gender. It was evident that male gender respondents were more than the female gender respondents because the male respondents were 182 representing 54% while the female respondents were 155 representing 46%. Therefore, the

universities selected in the South-West, Nigeria were dominated by male gender although not in absolute term because the difference is 8% hence, the dominance is relative.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Study Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	17	5.0	5.0	5.0
	25-34	85	25.2	25.2	30.3
	35-44	107	31.8	31.8	62.0
	45-54	96	28.5	28.5	90.5
	55 and above	32	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	337	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 3 has information on the age distribution of the respondents where age range of 35-44years and 45-54years were dominant. There was no clear cut majority of the respondents falling within a particular age range although 35-44 years

has 31.8% this less than 40%, it cannot be said to represent majority. The workforce is a mixture of old and young people which is good for the study considering the focus on career development.

Table 4: Educational Qualifications

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	BSc	53	15.8	15.8	15.8
	PGD	18	5.3	5.3	21.1
	MSc	109	32.3	32.3	53.4
	PhD	157	46.6	46.6	100.0
	Total	337	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 4 provided information on the educational qualifications of the respondents. It shows that the respondents in relative majority has the basic requirement to be academic staff in the university with 157 respondents representing 46.6% (47%) possess PhD

which is the highest qualification required to be academic staff in any university in Nigeria for meaningful career progression and development to take place while 109 respondents representing 32.3% (32%) have M.Sc. but on different PhD programmes.

Table 5: current job position of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Graduate Assistant	71	21.1	21.1	21.1
	Lecturer I	86	25.5	25.5	46.6
	Lecturer II	90	26.7	26.7	73.5
	Senior Lecturer	57	16.9	16.9	90.2
	Reader	12	3.6	3.6	93.8
	Professor	21	6.2	6.2	100.0
	Total	337	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2025

From Table 5, the majority of the respondents falls within the rank of Senior Lecturer and below which has 304 respondents in this category representing 90.2% while the Professorial cadre has 36

respondents representing 9.8%. This shows that there is ample of opportunity for meaningful career progression and development.

Table 6: Employees' Assessment of Sense of Community and Career Development in the Workplace

Items	%Response N=337					\bar{X}	S.D.
	VH	H	L	VL	U		
Measure of how vulnerable employees are with their colleagues	16.3	46.9	25.5	9.2	2.1	3.66	.928
Measure of whether employees see themselves as part of the workplace community	26.7	59.6	9.8	3.6	.3	4.09	.726
Measure of constructive conflict resolution among employees	32.3	50.1	14.5	2.7	.3	4.12	.769
Measure of encouragement to take risks	19.9	54.3	17.8	6.5	1.5	3.85	.866
A measure of whether employees feel responsible for their behaviour	39.5	48.1	9.8	1.8	.9	4.23	.769
Weighted Average						3.99	

Note. N= Number of respondents; VH= Very High, H= High, L= Low, VL= Very Low, U= Undecided; %= Percentage, \bar{X} = Response Mean Score; S.D.= Standard Deviation Score of Responses. *Standard Reference Mean; 3.50*). Decision rule: High perception of workplace experience (weighted mean score between 3.50-5.00), Low or undecided perception of workplace experience (weighted mean score between 1.00-3.49).

The mean and standard deviation scores presented in Table 6 represents the responses of private university employees in the South West Nigeria, about their assessment of the sense of community in their workplace. The results suggest that most of the respondents find their workplace socially conducive based on a weighted average score of 3.99. For the weighted mean score to rule the responses of employees as high, the score must range between 3.50 and 5.00 for sense of community in private universities in South West Nigeria.

A further breakdown of results in Table 6 indicates that majority of the employees confide in their colleagues for counsel when they run into challenge (Mean = 3.66, SD = .928); see themselves as part of the workplace community (Mean = 4.09, SD = .726); resolve crisis constructively (Mean = 4.12, SD = .769); look forward to going to work (Mean = 3.85, SD = .766); and see a connection between work and the social good of their community (Mean = 4.23, SD = .769). On the broad scale, this finding showed that employees in private universities of South Western Nigeria enjoy a healthy sense of community in the workplace.

Table 7: Correlational Matrix for Sense of Community and Employee Career Development

Variables	B	CR	SE	CD	Mean	Std.	Rank
Belongingness (B)	1				3.771	0.186	2
Conflict Resolution (CR)	0.562**	1			4.217	0.137	1
Supportive Environment (SE)	0.631*	0.546**	1		3.578	0.172	3
Career Development (CD)	0.735*	0.834*	0.776**	1	-	-	

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed) **Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (1-tailed)

It was evident from Table 7 that there exists a relationship between all the dimensions of sense of community with career development. Belongingness has strong and positive relationship with career development where $r = 0.735$, $p < 0.01$ which implies that the higher the

belongingness level in the workplace the possibility of career progression and development. Conflict resolution $r = 0.834$, $p < 0.01$ to imply strong and positive relationship i.e., the higher the level of conflict resolution, the higher the level of possibility of career progression

and development while supportive environment has strong and positive relationship with career development where $r = 0.776$, $p < 0.05$ indicating increase in the level of supportive environment will bring about corresponding increase in the employee career progression and development. From the mean results which was ranked in descending order has conflict resolution

ahead of other elements of sense of community followed by belongingness after which it was supportive environment. The mean result was in agreement the correlation result which indicated that conflict resolution creates an atmosphere for employee career development than the rest of the elements (belongingness and supportive environment).

Table 8: Influence of Sense of Community on Employee Career Development

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P
Regression	21.297	1	21.297	138.130	.000 ^b
Residual	51.650	335	.154		
Total	72.946	336			

$R = 0.540^a$; Multiple $R^2 = 0.292$; R^2 (Adjusted) = 0.290;

Stand error estimate = 0.39266

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Career Development

b. Predictors: (Constant), Sense of Community

The result in Table 8 shows that there exists a positive linear relationship between sense of community and employee career development in the private universities of South-West, Nigeria where $R = 0.540$ and sense of community exerted positive influence on employee career development where $R^2 = 0.292$; Adj. $R^2 = 0.290$ and $F = 138.130$; $P < .05$. This outcome reveals further that sense of community accounted for 29.2% of the variance in employee career development in private universities in South-West Nigeria which was also confirmed by the value of the adjusted R^2 . Therefore, sense of community has an established relationship with and positive influence on employee career development.

Table 9: Influence of Sense of Community variables on Employee Career Development

Explanatory variables	β	Standard error	T – value	P – value	Remarks
Belongingness	0.518	0.172	7.253	0.001	S
Conflict resolution	0.498	0.264	3.016	0.000	S
Supportive environment	0.560	0.359	5.775	0.003	S

S = Significant; p < 0.05 level of Sig.

The result of regression analysis for belongingness ($\beta = 0.518$, $t = 7.253$, $P < 0.05$), conflict resolution ($\beta = 0.498$, $t = 3.016$, $P < 0.05$), and supportive environment ($\beta = 0.560$, $t = 5.775$, $P < 0.05$) in Table 9 revealed that the three variables independently and significantly influenced employee career development with decisive influence on employee career development. Therefore, the three variables of the independent variable are good predictors of employee career development in the selected private universities.

Discussion of Findings

This study has examined the nexus between sense of community and career development among employees in the private universities of South-West, Nigeria. The results obtained from the analysed data, provided a comprehensive insight on how various dimensions of sense of community relates with employee career development as well as influence exerted by sense of community on employee career progression and development. It was evident from the result that belongingness has relationship with career development which was in tandem the summation of Kola-Olusanya (2025) and Wong, (2009)., it also shows positive relationship between conflict resolution and career development which supported the earlier work of Garrett, et al., (2014) and Adubasim, et al., (2022) while Neal and Bennett (2000) position supported the outcome of this study that supportive environment has relationship with career development when it was concluded that supportive environment reduces mental and emotional stress on account of alienation. The earlier work of Armstrong (2020) also supported three dimensions of sense of community where it was posited that environments that nurture community belongingness that is free of incessant conflict and constantly supporting employees have provided the foundation for skill acquisition,

continuous learning, and overall professional growth. The work of Kola-Olusanya (2025) was the bedrock of the summation of the nexus between sense of community and employee career development that sense of community is meaningful when employee enjoys genuine caring and support from members of the workplace community. The result has bearing on the core belief of scholars in the social exchange theory that workplace interactions are governed by reciprocal relationships, where individuals and organizations exchange resources, support, and benefits, thus, confirming the interplay between a sense of community and career development which provides a robust foundation to understand the mechanisms through which supportive workplace environments drive career growth.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study examined the nexus between sense of community and employee career development using private universities in the South-West, Nigeria as the unit of analysis. The study identified three dimensions of sense of community i.e., belongingness, conflict resolution, and supportive environment as factors influencing the career progression and development of employees in the workplace. Based on the finding of the study, it was evident that there exists a positive and strong relationship between all the dimensions of the sense of community and career development i.e., employees who perceive high level of belongingness, conflict resolution, and supportive environment in their workplace tend to achieve greater career progression and development, however, conflict resolution was found to contribute more to the employee career development than the others. Similarly, the three elements of sense of community were also found to exert positive and strong influence on employee career progression and

development. Therefore, sense of community is significant and plays fostering role in the employee career success and satisfaction evolving into career progression and development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. To invest in creating cohesive and inclusive workplace culture to ensure employee belongingness, atmosphere for

constructive conflict resolution, and supportive environment.

2. To formulate appropriate policies to facilitate employee career success and satisfaction in the short and long run especially, by screening employee career goal to ensure congruency between individual career goal and organisational objectives.

3. To institute conflict resolution mechanism that will herald harmonious relationship free from bias, prejudice, and subjectivity as well as vendetta.

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