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# **Organisational development programmes and employees' career development: The moderating role of gender**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** - This study investigates the relationship between different organisational development programmes (360-degree feedback; Coaching; Job assignment, Employee assistance programmes; On-the-job training; Web-based career information; Continuous professional development; External education provision) and employees' career development. The implications of the moderating effects of gender on the relationships between these eight organisational programmes and career development are assessed.

**Design/methodology/approach** - To examine hypothesised relationships on eight organisational programmes and career development, we computed moderated regression analyses using the PROCESS macro (3.5), for a two-way ANOVA (Hayes, 2018). The data collected are based on a survey sample of employees (n=322) working in Scotland.

**Findings** - Two main findings arose from our empirical study. First, there are significant direct relationships between seven out of the eight organisational development programmes and their influences on employees' career development. Second, gender is a significant moderator for four of the programmes' relationship with career development, namely, coaching, web-based career information, continuous professional development, and external education provision. However, gender failed to moderate the four other programmes' (e.g.i. 360-degree feedback, job assignment, employee assistance programmes, and on-the-job training) relationship with career development.

**Originality** - We conclude that closer attention should be given to the organisational design of

these development programmes and consideration of potential gender differences in employees' perception of their importance for career development in their organisation. To-date, the majority of research in the literature has concentrated on the impact of training on career development, so this study contributes to the body of knowledge on a set of organisational development programmes and their effect on career development moderated by gender.

**Keywords** Organisational development programmes, Gender, Career development, Scotland.

## **Introduction**

Organisational development programmes have the capacity to contribute to employees' skills growth and to management and leadership development in numerous fields of work (Bell *et al.*, 2017; Dachner *et al.*, 2021; Pinnington, 2011; Tourish and Pinnington, 2009). Managers seeking to implement employee development programmes for new recruits as well as for developing existing employees, need to have access to efficient human resource management (HRM) systems within their organisations (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Kaya and Ceylan, 2014; Shin *et al.*, 2020). Meyer and Smith (2000) argued that perceptions of training tend to be related to organizational commitment when training programmes are tied to career development. These programmes should demonstrate the capacity to enable employees to make appropriate progress in their organisations from the outset, assisting them with determining viable future career paths, removing obstacles to their individual skill growth and career development, as well as facilitating work flexibility and sufficient career stability. It is frequently argued that organisations supporting employees' skills development and individual career goals are more likely to retain valuable employees (Çalık and Ereş, 2006, Memon *et al.*, 2016; Stankevičiūtė and Savanevičienė, 2018; Waqanimaravu and

Arasanmi, 2020).

A substantial amount of research reports strong evidence that well-designed training and development programmes deliver significant benefits for individuals, teams, organisations, and society (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009; Noe, 2019; Pinnington *et al.*, 2015; Salas and Stagl, 2009). For employers, there are strategic reasons for encouraging employee development and the acquisition of new skills and knowledge capabilities to enhance organisational success (CBI, 2015; Maurer and Chapman, 2013; OECD, 2001; Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013). Training and development is a central concept in the human resource development (HRD) and learning and development (L&D) disciplines (Bell *et al.*, 2017) and some government policy and industry reports document the considerable investments made by organisations (Bersin by Deloitte, 2016; Guide2Research, 2020; Scottish Government, 2021). For society, organisational programmes designed for employee development contribute to sustaining individuals' employability and incomes, as well as reducing the costs of state welfare (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2017; McNair, 2012; OECD, 2001). Effective employee training and development programmes have the potential to assist employees with leveraging their knowledge and skills for combined individual and organisational advantage (Baldwin *et al.*, 2009; Blume *et al.*, 2010; Combs *et al.*, 2006, Islam *et al.*, 2020; Noe, 2019; Storey, 2002).

In this study, we compare and contrast the career development of employees from the position of gender. We concentrate on one country where skills formation and how they are acquired and deployed in the workplace have been important matters of public policy for over two decades (Keep, 2017; Scottish Government, 2007, 2010, 2017; Warhurst and Findlay, 2012). It is often observed that women tend to be underrepresented in various sectors and levels of the workforce, and have faced many barriers to their progression and difficulties in securing and sustaining employment in the more gender stereotyped roles and industries. Female employees are generally

highly vulnerable to employment competition due to challenging obstacles ranging from motherhood norms, gender discrimination and stereotyping (Iqbal and Ahmad, 2020; Kara *et al.*, 2012). How employees perceive work and define career success is known to differ according to cultural values including the degree of gender egalitarianism (Benson *et al.*, 2020). Various organisations led by national governments have been tackling these and other complex issues, for example, in the United Kingdom (UK), the Equality and Human Rights Commission has been active since 2007.

This empirical study provides an insight into what organisations across Scotland are doing in terms of their formal employee development initiatives; analysing specifically how organisational programmes influence women's individual development and career development. Our research contributes to the literature since there is a need to understand more about which employee development initiatives actually make a difference to employees' individual development and career development.

A few studies have investigated the influences of organisational programmes and practices on employees' development and career development as well as the moderating role of gender on these relationships (BarNir *et al.*, 2011; Dolan *et al.*, 2011; Lyness and Judiesch, 2008; Orser and Leck, 2010; Reskin and Bielby, 2005). These however tend to reveal more about career development and success than organisational development programmes. BarNir *et al.*, (2011) found that role models had a stronger impact on self-efficacy for women than for men, which in turn influences women's entrepreneurial career intentions. Based on an empirical study of engineering graduates in Peru, Dolan *et al.*, (2011) concluded that women's career aspirations are more closely linked to career security and work-family balance than they are for men. In a cross-national study, Lyness and Judiesch (2008) found that work-life balance ratings and career advancement potential were

positively related for women in high egalitarian national cultures, but were non-significant in low egalitarian national cultures. In a survey of 521 executives and managers, Orser and Leck (2010) found that gender moderated the predictive influence of international experience on compensation, ascendancy, and perceived career success, and therefore recommended that models of career development should incorporate systemic gender differences in career success outcomes. Reskin and Bielby (2005) argued that whereas formalised recruitment and selection reduces bias and, in some organisations, women and men are becoming more equal, job segregation continues to be a problem in organisations where women's work is devalued and men have greater pay and career opportunities.

Employee, management and leadership development initiatives typically incorporate a variety of both formal and informal learning activities, including traditional training, one-on-one mentoring, coaching, action learning, and feedback (Barber, 2004; Burke and Day, 1986; Cullen and Turnbull, 2005). We therefore investigate a group of learning and development programmes. Since it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the influence of all employee development activities relevant to individual development and career progress, this study focuses on eight common organisational development programmes, including 360-degree feedback, coaching, job assignment, employee assistance programmes (EAPs), on-the-job training, web-based career information, continuous professional development (CPD), and external education provision.

We concentrate on organisational development programmes intended to deliver mutual benefits for employers and employees working in competitive labour market conditions. Specifically, in relation to our country context selected for empirical study, we deliberate on organisational development programmes designed to increase individual and organisational innovation, productivity and competitiveness. In Scotland, during the late 1990s, the skills policy largely

focused on interventions in the supply side of the labour market, and adopting an ‘active labour market policy’ (Scottish Executive, 2001, p.5) intended to increase education and training. This policy for development of the workforce stimulated organisational change and business developments as employers responded to the state opportunities provided. However, in the first decade of 2000, government thinking on skill supply for raising workforce skill levels started to give more attention to demand side issues to increase innovation, productivity and competitiveness (Keep and Mayhew, 1996, 2010; Skills Development Scotland, 2012; Warhurst and Thompson, 1999).

Our survey study addresses two research questions:

*RQ1.* What are the most effective organisational development programmes in relation to employees’ career development?

*RQ2.* Does gender moderate the relationship of organisational development programmes and employees’ career development?

To accomplish our objectives, the paper commences with a description and explanation of organisational development programmes and their influences on career development, according to the literature. The research methodology is explained, findings, discussion, limitations and conclusions, are then presented. We analyse data from a sample of 322 survey returns using a set of standard statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, independent sample T-test, and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Hayes, 2018). In response to our two research questions and set of related hypotheses, we find that seven out of eight of the organisational development programmes are considered important by employees for their career development. Further, in four of these programmes, gender moderates employees’ perceptions of their organisational significance for career development.



## Literature review

### *Connecting organisational development programmes and employees' career development*

Appropriate organisational systems supporting employee development and continuous learning accord with government strategies to maintain competitive organisations and employment markets while increasing the employability of the whole workforce (McNair, 2012; OECD, 2001). Implementing viable career development systems offer advantages to employees and employers and benefit organisational performance (Berger and Berger, 2003). Subjective and objective career success can be defined as the positive psychological and work-related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences (Judge and Bretz, 1994; London and Stumpf, 1982; Stumpf, 2014). Employees' career development includes employees' subjective feelings of accomplishment and objective progress of their careers.

Some research studies argue there is demonstrable empirical evidence for positive relationships between employee development programmes, employee job satisfaction, professional development and productivity (Birdi *et al.*, 1997; Chen *et al.*, 2004a, 2004b; Demerouti *et al.*, 2021). Organisational change, globalisation and competition often encourage organisations to instigate employee development programmes (Smith *et al.*, 2019) in order to improve workforce capabilities that supports a range of meaningful training, learning, and development experiences resulting in career progression and success which is valued by employees. For mutual benefits to occur, development outcomes should be perceived by employees as worthwhile as well as create value enabling organisations to achieve strategic goals.

A large amount of research indicates a 'positive relationship' between training practices, organisational growth and success (Bartel, 1989, 1994; Carliner, 2004; Demerouti *et al.*, 2021;

Eerde *et al.*, 2008; Holzer *et al.*, 1993; Oludare *et al.*, 2020; Shen and Tang, 2018). The evidence is particularly strong in management and leadership development, where organisations tend to make more consistent investments. As Salas and his colleagues (2012) concluded, given the wide range of evidence that training and development improves manager and leader effectiveness, there are reasonable grounds for advocating organisations should support employee development more broadly across the workforce, in addition to making continued efforts with people occupying managerial and leadership roles.

A group of scholars have consistently argued that training and development enhances organisational performance including productivity, innovation, customer service quality and financial performance (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009; Kanapathipillai and Azam, 2020; Kim and Ployhart, 2014; Kraiger *et al.*, 2015; Nerstad *et al.*, 2018; Noe *et al.*, 2014; Shanahan *et al.*, 2014; Shen and Tang, 2018). We therefore selected from the literature a group of well-known areas of organisational activity that are designed to facilitate employee development, training and organisational career progress: 360-degree feedback, coaching, job assignment, EAPs, on-the-job training, web-based career information, CPD, and external education.

### *Conceptual framework and development of hypotheses*

The United Nations Development Programme state in their Gender Inequality Index that “Gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development. Girls and women have made major strides since 1990, but they have not yet gained gender equity” (GII, 2021). Within this context, it is apparent that numerous industry reports and academic publications document gender differences for common outcome measures of career success (Calabrese *et al.*, 2018; Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005; Shriver, 2009, Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). Policy initiatives for skills growth and employment specifically in Scotland acknowledge that equality requires attention to specific needs

and individual differences, including gender differences (2007, 2010, 2017, 2021).

Given the weight of evidence for gender differences in career progress, gender is incorporated as a moderating variable in this study. The role of gender is examined on the influences of employee development programmes and individuals' perceptions of their importance for career development in their employing organisations. Application of mainstream, traditional theories of individual motivation, work design and job satisfaction (Alderfer, 1972; Herzberg, 1959, 1966; McClelland, 1962) support the use of organisational development programmes to improve employees' opportunities for individual development and career progress leading to higher job satisfaction (Chen *et al.*, 2004a, 2004b; Greenhaus *et al.*, 2018; Puah and Ananthram, 2006; Ocen *et al.*, 2017). The abundant literature on organisational behaviour and development is the foundation for the conceptual framework proposed in this study. Figure 1 displays the relationship between eight employee development programmes and employees' career development. It is proposed that the relationship between employee development programmes and employees' perception of its importance for career development in their organisation is moderated by gender.

*360-degree feedback* - The practice of using multi-rater feedback systems is usually referred as 360-degree feedback. Gaining increasing acceptance since the late 1980s, 360-degree feedback systems have been more established in many developed countries for over two decades mainly in large organisations (Fleenor *et al.*, 2020). 360-degree feedback has been defined as “a contrived method of providing a flow of feedback to employees from all directions” (Garavan *et al.*, 1997, p.134). We anticipate that feedback to employees on their performance, strengths and areas requiring development, has the potential to contribute positively towards their career development. Consequently, we investigate the direct relationship between 360-degree feedback, and any conditional role in these relationships, such as gender, motivating us to assert two hypotheses:

H1(a). 360-degree feedback is positively related to career development

H1(b). Gender moderates the relationship between 360-degree feedback and career development

*Coaching* – Coaching should be distinguished from mentoring, which is another important organisational programme. Coaching can be defined as “The organizational skills focused, goal-oriented training necessary to develop in one’s position” while mentoring is more concerned about “The open-ended, reciprocal relationship to guide and support the development of one’s professional career” (Hussey and Campbell-Meier, 2021, p.520).

Workplace or executive coaching is a one-to-one learning and development intervention that uses a collaborative, reflective, goal-focused relationship to achieve professional outcomes valued by the coachee (Smither, 2011). Interactions between coach and coachee might be face-to-face or by phone or online, and can involve very different budgets (Fontes and Dello Russo, 2019). Effective coaching contributes to improved work-based outcomes, including goal accomplishment (Fischer and Beimers, 2009), professional relationships (Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008), positive effects for learning, resilience, workplace well-being and performance outcomes (Grant *et al.*, 2009; Jones *et al.*, 2015). Based on the above definitions and arguments, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2 (a). Coaching is positively related to career development

H2 (b). Gender moderates the relationship between coaching and career development

*Job assignment* - The goals of a job assignment are to increase an individual’s ability to participate in group activities and develop managerial and leadership skills (Berger and Berger, 2003). Job

assignments aim to identify and develop the capabilities of participants (Baker *et al.*, 1994; Bernhardt, 1995; Dachner *et al.*, 2021). Job assignments intended to develop employees' skills and experience are often applied in organisations, however, academic concepts of job assignment are less evident than are many other mainstream concepts of development. For the purpose of this empirical study, it is defined as a task identified by the management and given to the employee to perform within a determined time frame to achieve specific work and individual learning objectives. Job assignments assist employees to improve their productivity and performance. They are also intended to enhance employees' confidence in their potential which may lead to progress in their career. Acquiring additional job skills and knowledge can increase employees' competitive abilities to gain wage increases and promotions (Ryu and Moon, 2019). Based on the above argument, we hypothesise that job assignments relate to career development and there might be evident gender differences in the effects:

H3 (a). Job assignment is positively related to career development

H3 (b). Gender moderates the relationship between job assignment and career development

*Employee assistance programmes* - EAPs are defined as employer- or group-supported programmes designed to alleviate employee issues (EAPA, 2020; The Employee Assistance Trade Association, 2015). Through EAPS, employees can receive specialised counselling to develop their coping skills in dealing with personal and professional challenges. Counseling, like other forms of social support, can help employees improve their sense of self (Nunes *et al.*, 2018). There is evidence of gender differences in the use of EAPs in so far as researchers have argued that men are less likely to seek help than women and therefore may fail more often to derive benefits from these schemes (Bartram *et al.*, 2020). Based on the above definition and argument, we propose our

hypotheses:

H4 (a). Employee assistance programmes is positively related to career development

H4 (b). Gender moderates the relationship between employee assistance programmes and career development

On-the-job training - The goal of on-the-job training is to develop competencies in current work tasks (Berger and Berger, 2003). Sitzmann and Weinhardt (2018) argue that the vast majority of training delivered in organisations focuses on what they describe as hard skills or the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are directly applicable to the job. Employees in organisations with more training provision have reported higher overall job satisfaction, possibly as a result of improved competencies and career options (Tharenou *et al.*, 2007). On-the-job training can be critical for employees to succeed in their work by enhancing their capabilities which potentially can also contribute to career advancement. Given the relevance of training to career development, it would be interesting to know if there are any gender effects in this relationship, possibly due to attitudinal differences or unfair discrimination. Therefore, we propose two hypotheses:

H5 (a). On-the-job training is positively related to career development

H5 (b). Gender moderates the relationship between on-the-job training and career development

*Web-based career information* - The majority of organisations must invest at least some resources in web-based tools and environments. Web-based learning is the same as other training systems and media, in that its effectiveness depends on numerous factors including its design, appropriateness and implementation (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Brown, 2006; Chen *et al.*, 2010;

Cook, 2007; Kraiger and Jerden, 2007). Moreover, web-based career information should be accurate and up-to-date, if it is not then employees will lose confidence in the provision of information related to their work and careers. Many organisations develop intranet portals which encourage more interaction and communicate information about career opportunities in the organization. Based on the potential of web-based services we propose the hypotheses below:

H6 (a). Web-based career information is positively related to career development

H6 (b). Gender moderates the relationship between web-based career information and career development

*Continuous professional development* – CPD has been defined as “a fundamental component that lies along the continuum of lifelong learning” (Ryan, 2003, p.505). The purpose of CPD programmes is to develop fundamental knowledge and skills in particular work areas and individual needs (Berger and Berger, 2003, Kennedy, 2011). Professional development concentrates on the stock of knowledge, skills and learning for work and potential career progression (Harris and Ramos, 2013). We argue the CPD offers mutual benefits for employees (e.g. career development) and organisations’ performance. CPD supports continuous learning and for competitive reasons more organisations are encouraging participation in lifelong learning and CPD programmes. Therefore, we assert two hypotheses on CPD and career development:

H7 (a). Continuous professional development is positively related to career development

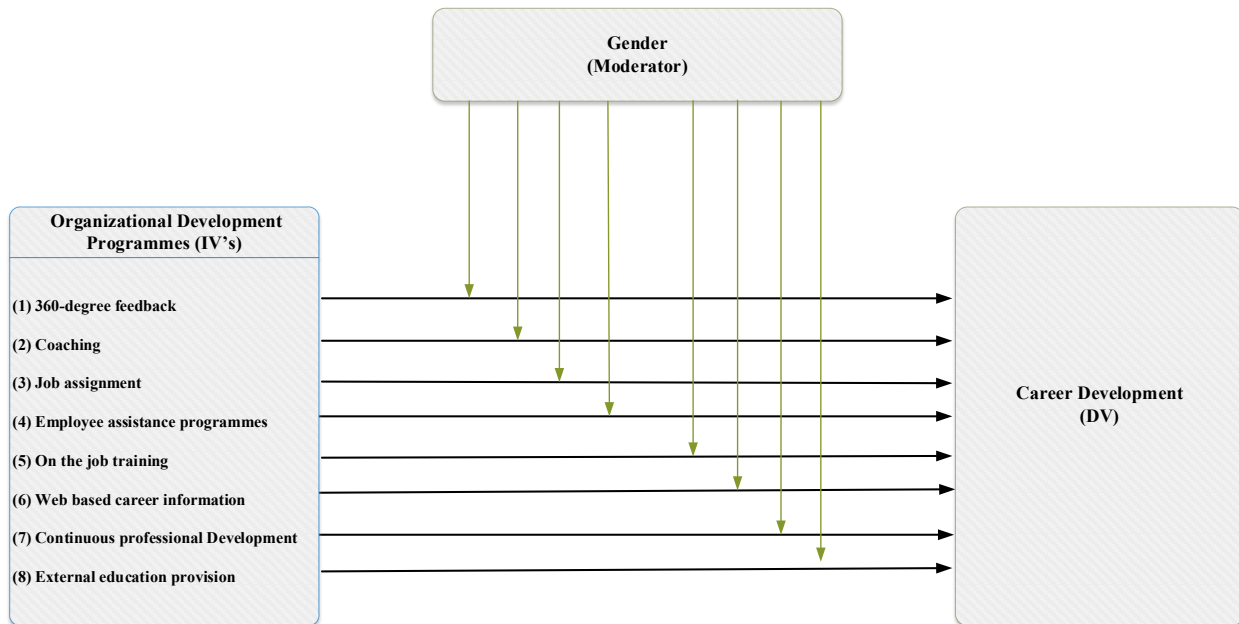
H7 (b). Gender moderates the relationship between continuous professional development and career development

*External education provision* – External education and training is a common, traditional form of investment in the general competence of employees applied to specific needs (Berger and Berger,

2003, Stachová *et al.*, 2019) and over a long-term perspective (Jacobs *et al.*, 2000, Wilson, 2011). The general importance of external education programmes for many employees' career development is apparent, however, we predict that there may be more challenges and barriers experienced by women wanting to attend these programmes particularly since, except for in some Scandinavian countries, traditionally the expectation is that the majority of study will be outside standard working hours and thus is likely to encroach on family time and commitments. Thus, in the final two hypotheses, we assert that external education provision is associated with career development and there is a moderating effect for gender.

H8 (a). External education provision is positively related to career development

H8 (b). Gender moderates the relationship between external education provision and career development



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework



## **Methodology**

To empirically examine our hypotheses, survey research methods were used.

### *Survey sample and procedures*

This study examines gender imbalance in the workplace through surveying employees' opinions and attitudes on a set of organisational development programmes. A questionnaire survey was sent to employees working in organisations in a variety of sectors throughout Scotland. We chose to sample only employees holding management roles and positions, including junior level managers. A limitation of our approach is that we did not seek to obtain responses from non-managerial employees. A random sample of participants were contacted across different sizes of organisation and industry sectors. We endeavoured to obtain a proportion of returns by organisation size and by sector which was similar to the distribution of the workforce employed in Scotland at the time. We sent a standard letter, information sheet and ethical consent form through the postal system and respondents had the opportunity to fill-in and return the questionnaire survey on paper or complete it online. The survey consists of personal and organisation details, and a set of questions on organisational development programmes for employees. Our aim was to assess to what extent organisations in Scotland were implementing initiatives to assist in the individual and career development of their female employees, and to evaluate issues of gender imbalance in the workplace.

The sample for this study was drawn from organisations across the whole of Scotland including the private, public and non-for-profit sectors. The questionnaire was sent in 2006 to a random stratified sample of the Scottish organisations in these lists. Ten years later, a second survey questionnaire was issued during the early stages of December 2016. Formal approval for

conducting the research was obtained from the university research ethics committee in both periods. A letter of invitation and a link to the questionnaire were sent out to organisations. A total number of 633 responses were received. After eliminating returns with missing data, 322 completed responses were analysed, giving an overall usable response rate of 50.8%.

### *Measures*

#### *Independent variables*

Eight organisational development programmes were considered in this survey, all programmes were coded on a (Yes/No) basis as to whether or not the individual respondent had participated in each of them in his/her organisation. We assigned answers with No = 0 for those who were not attending the programme and Yes = 1 for those who were attending the programme. To reiterate these organisational programmes are: 360-degree feedback, coaching, job assignment, EAPs, on-the-job training, web-based career information, CPD, and external education provision.

Table 1 below lists each organisational development programme stating the number of employees who participated in them.

**Table 1. Organisational Development Programmes and Participants**

<b>Organisational Development programmes</b>	<b>Participated</b>	<b>Not Participated</b>	<b>N</b>
360-degree Feedback	168	154	322
Coaching	217	105	322
Job assignment	202	120	322
Employee assistance programmes	191	131	322
On the job training	260	62	322
Web based career information	174	148	322
Continuous professional development	207	115	322
External education provision	175	147	322

### *Dependent variable*

We asked employees about the effect of each programme (360-degree feedback; Coaching; Job assignment, Employee assistance programmes; On-the-job training; Web-based career information; Continuous professional development; External education provision) on their career development. A 5-point Likert scale was deployed ranging from 1= the least important, to 5= very important. A limitation of the single item question is its lower predictive power than multiple items (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2016), however, we employed one single question because it is directly related to our two research questions. Furthermore, some researchers have argued “the use of single-item measures should not be considered fatal flaws in the review process” (Wanous *et al.*, 1997, p. 251).

### *Moderator variable*

We assessed one moderating variable, Gender. We coded Female = 1 and Male = 0.

### *Method of analysis*

Descriptive information was produced including descriptive statistics on the sample of respondents and means and standard deviations for the independent, dependent and moderating variables. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Direct relationships were examined through correlations and regression series analyses. T-independent sample tests were executed to assess whether there is a significant difference in gender; we found no significant difference in gender within the sample. Since gender is employed as a moderator in our conceptual model, we used a two-way factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) through implementation model 1 (Hayes, 2018). “When both X and W are dichotomous variables and interest in the interaction between X and W, factorial ANOVA is most commonly used” (Hayes, 2018, p. 293). Based on the previous argument this can be implemented by using a PROCESS macro, Model 1 by testing each independent

variable (X) separately (each of 8 organisational development programmes) with career development through our moderator (Gender) (W).

## **Results**

### *Sample demographics*

Data were collected from a sample of male and female managers, directors, and executives. The demographic information on the respondents is summarised in Table 2. As reported in Table 2, responses were received from a fairly even balance of females (59%) and males (41%) which should limit any gender bias in these responses. Questionnaire survey returns were obtained predominantly from individuals holding more junior position in the organisations, with 68% in junior and middle management, and only 32% at senior management levels and above. This helps to explain the age distribution of the sample, with 37.27% in the 45+ category, 22.36% in the 35-44 range, and 40.37% below age 35. For the purpose of this study, the sectors were categorised into two broad groups based on the UK SIC codes for economic activity with those in sections A-I such as agriculture and manufacturing being taken together as “established industries”, and those in sections J-R such as real estate and education consisting of the “public and service sectors”. The majority of females were employed in the public and services sectors (65.45%) compared to established industries (34.55%), while the percentage of males working in public and services sectors was 50.38% and the established industries 49.62%. The majority of male and female respondents (45.96%) were employed in large organisations, with 19.88% from medium and 34.16% from small size organisations.

Table 2 below presents the descriptive statistics for the sample (n=322) of survey respondents.

**Table 2. Sample demographics**

Position	Gender					
	Male	Percent	Female	Percent	Total	Percent
Chair/ Chief executive	9	3%	6	2%	15	4.66%
Director/ Partner	14	4%	18	6%	32	9.94%
Non-executive director	7	2%	11	3%	18	5.59%
Senior management	17	5%	21	7%	38	11.80%
Middle management	31	10%	28	9%	59	18.32%
Junior management	53	16%	107	33%	160	49.69%
<b>Total</b>	131	41%	191	59%	322	100.00%
Age						
45 and above	62	19%	58	18%	120	37.27%
35-44	22	7%	50	16%	72	22.36%
below 35	47	15%	83	26%	130	40.37%
<b>Total</b>	131	41%	191	59%	322	100.00%
Industry						
Established industries	66	20%	66	20%	132	40.99%
Public and services sectors	65	20%	125	39%	190	59.01%
<b>Total</b>	131	41%	191	59%	322	100.00%
Employee no (size)						
Large (250 and over)	62	19%	86	27%	148	45.96%
Medium (50-249)	25	8%	39	12%	64	19.88%
Small (1-49)	44	14%	66	20%	110	34.16%
<b>Total</b>	131	41%	191	59%	322	100.00%

As shown in Table 3, the Pearson's correlation ( $r$ ) between employees' career development and two organizational development programmes is non-significant, namely, 360-degree feedback ( $r = -.091, p > .05$ ) and web-based career information ( $r = -.073, p > .05$ ). However, all other 6 employee development programmes reveal a significant relationship with career development. There are significant relationships between career development and coaching ( $r = -.144, p < .01$ ), career development and job assignment ( $r = -.120, p < .05$ ), career development and EAPs ( $r = -.144, p < .01$ ), career development and on-the-job training ( $r = -.175, p < .01$ ), career development and CPD ( $r = -.162, p < .01$ ), and career development and external education ( $r = -.157, p < .01$ ). However, the

r values of the correlations are low and in the range of [.144 to .175] for the relationship between employee development programmes and career development.

**Table 3. Mean, standard deviations and correlations between variables**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender	1												
2. Position	.112*	1											
3. Age	.137*	-.022	1										
4. Industry	.158**	.086	.044	1									
5. 360-degree Feedback	.008	.066	-.104	.027	1								
6. Coaching	-.017	.038	-.047	.014	.554**	1							
7. Job assignment	-.002	.000	-.086	.029	.509**	.628**	1						
8. Employee assistance programmes	.068	.026	-.022	.022	.587**	.557**	.669**	1					
9. On-the-job training	.125*	-.008	.010	.039	.447**	.618**	.568**	.477**	1				
10. Web-based career information	-.035	.021	-.103	-.017	.552**	.502**	.514**	.606**	.450**	1			
11. Continuous professional development	.010	.025	-.048	.120*	.454**	.532**	.458**	.557**	.507**	.587**	1		
12. External education provision	.010	.028	-.004	.054	.558**	.520**	.428**	.599**	.454**	.606**	.670**	1	
13. Career development	.018	.057	-.105	-.090	-.091	.144**	.120*	.144**	.175**	-.073	.162**	.157**	1
Mean	0.593	4.783	2.031	1.590	1.478	1.326	1.373	1.407	1.193	1.460	1.357	1.457	3.848
Std. Deviation	0.492	1.562	0.882	0.493	0.5	0.47	0.484	0.492	0.395	0.499	0.48	0.499	1.061

### *Test of hypotheses*

#### *Test of the direct effect*

Hypotheses predict that there is a significant relationship between the organisational development programmes and employees' career development in Scotland's workplaces. As shown in Table 4 below, there is a significant relationship between career development and coaching ( $B=.625$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), career development and job assignment ( $B=.404$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), career development and EAPs ( $B=.381$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), career development and CPD ( $B=.668$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), career development and

external education provision ( $B=.698, p<0.001$ ), career development and web-based career information ( $B=.610, p<0.01$ ), and career development and on-the-job training ( $B=.737, p<0.01$ ). All of the above organisation development programmes are in a positive significant relationship with career development. This can be interpreted as meaning that practicing coaching, job assignment, EAPs, web-based career information, CPD, external education provision, and on-the-job training significantly increases employees' career development. In addition, since there is not a significant relationship between career development and 360-degree feedback ( $B=.340, p>0.05$ ), practicing this programme would not influence employees' career development significantly in our sampled study. To summarize, all hypotheses asserting a direct effect between the organisational development programmes and employees' career development are significant except for 360-degree feedback (H1a).

#### *Test of the moderating effect of gender*

To examine the second research question and related hypotheses, correlations among all variables were obtained and a simple moderation analysis utilised (Hayes, 2018). Hypotheses (H1b, H2b, H3b, H4b, H5b, H6b, H7b, H8b) predict that gender moderates the influences of organisational development programmes on career development in Scotland's workplaces. As shown in Table 4, gender moderates the influence of coaching ( $B= -.512, p<0.05$ ), web-based career information programme ( $B= -.770, p<0.01$ ), CPD programme ( $B= -.518, p<0.05$ ), and external education programmes ( $B= -.613, p<0.05$ ) on the career development of employees. Therefore, hypothesis H2b, H6b, H7b, H8b are supported. However, as shown in Table 4, the results revealed that gender does not moderate the influence of 360-degree feedback ( $B= -.246, p>0.05$ ), job assignment ( $B= -.240, p>0.05$ ), EAPs ( $B= -.110, p>0.05$ ), and on-the-job training programmes ( $B= -.532, p>0.05$ )

on career development (see Table 4). Therefore, hypothesis H1b, H3b, H4b, H5b are not supported.

**Table 4. Regression coefficients results**

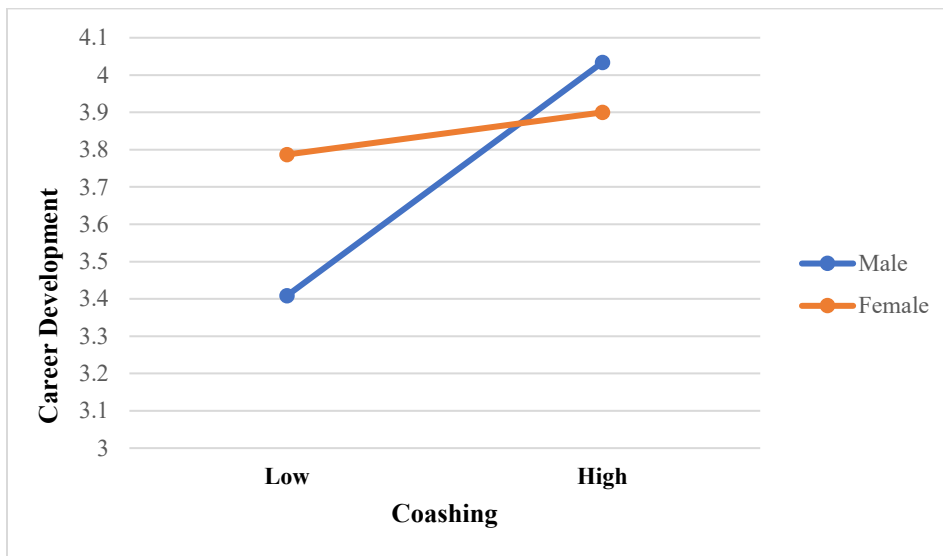
Variables	Career Development			
	Beta Coeff.	SE	t	
<b>Programme 1. 360-degree feedback</b>				
constant	3.645***	0.135	27.081	R <sup>2</sup> =.012, F (3,318)
360-degree feedback	0.340 <sup>ns</sup>	0.185	1.835	
Gender	0.17 <sup>ns</sup>	0.174	0.976	
Gender X 360-degree feedback	-0.246 <sup>ns</sup>	0.241	-1.024	
<b>Programme 2. Coaching</b>				
Constant	3.409***	.158	21.571	R <sup>2</sup> =.033, F (3,318)
Coaching	.625**	.194	3.225	
Gender	.3781 <sup>ns</sup>	.207	1.822	
Gender X Coaching	-.512*	.253	-2.024	
<b>Programme 3. Job assignment</b>				
Constant	3.571***	.151	23.654	R <sup>2</sup> =.018, F (3,318)
Job assignment	.404*	.191	2.118	
Gender	.189 <sup>ns</sup>	.196	.964	
Gender X Job assignment	-.240 <sup>ns</sup>	.248	-.967	
<b>Programme 4. Employee assistance programmes</b>				
Constant	3.583***	.152	23.544	R <sup>2</sup> =.022, F (3,318)
Employee assistance programmes	.381*	.191	1.990	
Gender	.128 <sup>ns</sup>	.191	.667	
Gender X Employee assistance programmes	-.110 <sup>ns</sup>	.245	-.448	
<b>Programme 5. On-the-job training</b>				
Constant	3.273***	.182	17.999	R <sup>2</sup> =.040, F (3,318)
On-the-job training	.737**	.210	3.508	
Gender	.417 <sup>ns</sup>	.266	1.568	
Gender X On-the-job training	-.532 <sup>ns</sup>	.298	-1.788	
<b>Programme 6. Web-based career information</b>				
Constant	3.508***	.132	26.614	R <sup>2</sup> =.037, F (3,318)
Web based career information	.610**	.183	3.333	
Gender	.445**	.174	2.559	
Gender X Web-based career information	-.770**	.238	-3.235	
<b>Programme 7. Continuous professional development</b>				
Constant	3.391***	.154	22.015	R <sup>2</sup> =.040, F (3,318)
Continuous professional development	.668**	.191	1.895	
Gender	.377 <sup>ns</sup>	.199	1.895	
Gender X Continuous professional development	-.518*	.248	-2.090	
<b>Programme 8. External education provision</b>				
Constant	3.441***	.136	25.363	R <sup>2</sup> =.045, F (3,318)
External education provision	.698***	.183	3.816	
Gender	.378*	.175	2.153	
Gender X External education provision	-.613*	.237	-2.584	

Note: n= 322, bootstrapping resampling= 5000. Unstandardised beta coefficients are reported. \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001. ns: not significant.

The four models that are significant are plotted below.

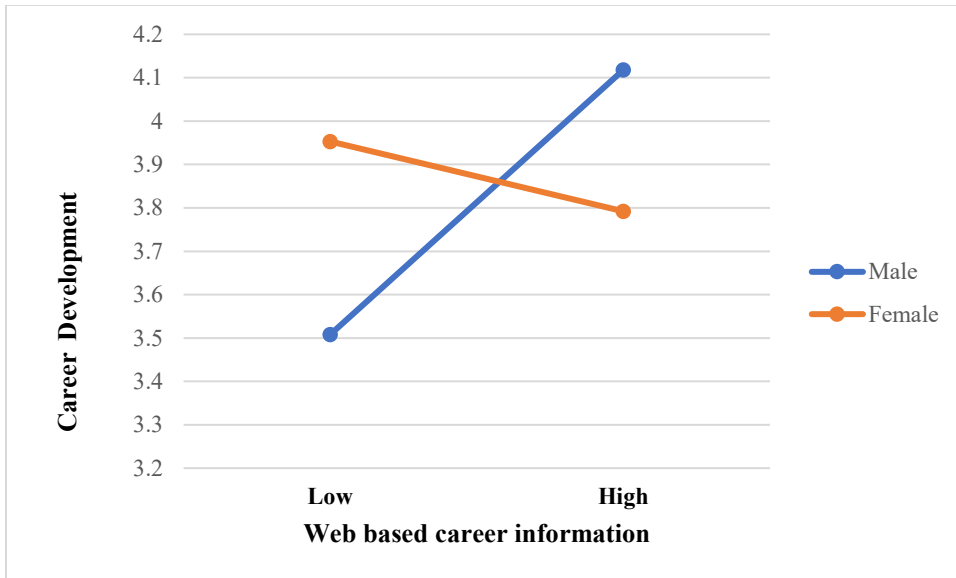


Programme 2: Coaching and career development: the direct relationship is significant at 0.1%, the moderator is significant at 5%, and the effect is higher for male employees as shown in the Figure 2.



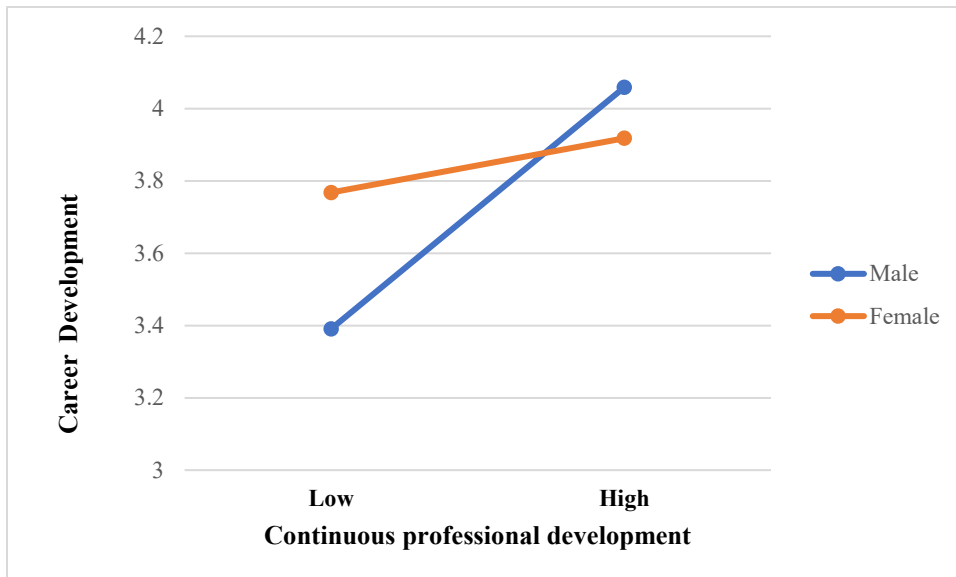
**Figure 2. Coaching**

Programme 6: Web-based career information and career development: the direct relationship is significant 1%, the moderator is significant at 1%, the effect is higher for male employees as shown in Figure 3.



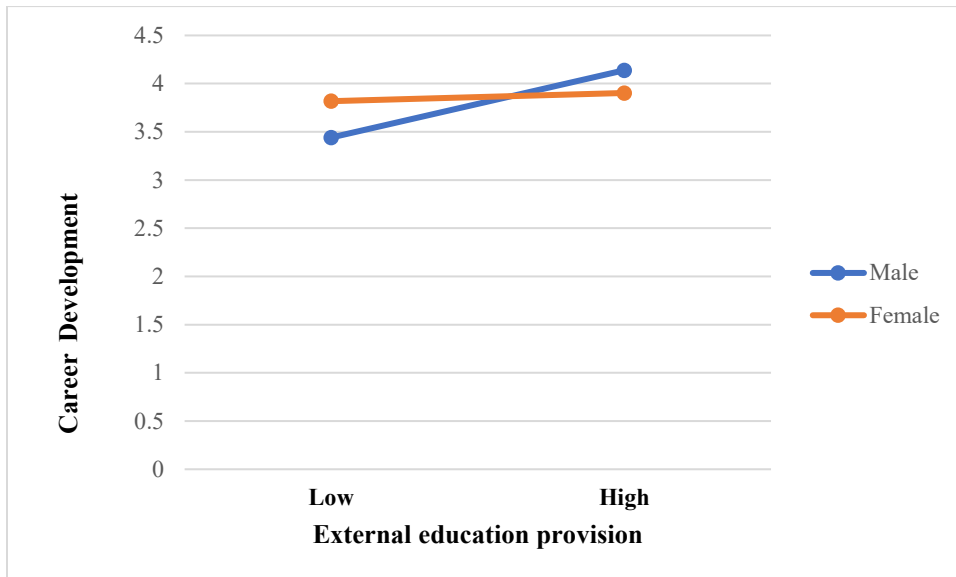
**Figure 3. web-based career information**

Programme 7: CPD and career development: the direct relationship is significant 1%, the moderator is significant at 5%, the effect is higher for male employees as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: CPD**

Programme 8: External education provision and career development: the direct relationship is significant 0.01%, the moderator is significant at 5%, and the effect is higher for male employees as shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5. External education provision**

## **Discussion**

### *Direct influence*

The main finding for the first research question is that there is a significant relationship between organisational development programmes and career development 7 out of 8 of the selected programmes were found to significantly influence ratings of its importance. These programmes are ordered now according to how much each programme accounts for career development (external education provision, CPD, on-the-job training, web-based career information, coaching, EAPs, and job assignment). All of these programmes influence employees' career development significantly and positively. Only one programme, 360-degree feedback, did not have a significant relationship with career development. We interpret this result as implying that practicing this

programme is less likely to influence employees due to their perception of its relative unimportance.

*Coaching* - The significant relationship for coaching with employees' perceptions of organisational importance is consistent with previous studies examining the effectiveness of coaching in improving work-based outcomes including goal accomplishment (Fischer and Beimers, 2009), professional growth (McGuffin and Obonyo, 2010), improved professional relationships (Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008), increased productivity (Olivero *et al.*, 1997), improved resilience and workplace well-being (Grant *et al.*, 2009), positive effects for learning and performance outcomes (Jones *et al.*, 2015) and potentially, enhanced perceptions of the learning environment (Daniëls *et al.*, 2021).

*Job assignment* - The significant relationship for job assignment with employees' perceptions of organisational importance is consistent with studies reporting that organisations use job assignment programmes as a signal of employee ability (Baker *et al.*, 1994; Bernhardt, 1995; Waldman, 1984). Employees with supervisory experience are more likely than lower-level employees to be considered for promotion to higher managerial levels (Baptista *et al.*, 2012) and additional organisational resources tend to be allocated to employees with greater supervisory abilities (Mayer, 1960; Rosen, 1981; Spurr, 1987; Williamson, 1967). Participation in a focused problem-solving team or project task force assignments are common means of employee development for new and career track leaders (Krewson, 2003).

*Employee assistance programmes* - The significant relationship for EAPs with employees' perceptions of organisational importance is consistent with studies reporting organisations that implement EAPs achieve positive outcomes including improvements in work productivity and

organisational performance (Attridge, 2012; Berger and Berger, 2003). McLeod (2010, p.245) concluded in a review of the literature on EAPs that their counselling element "... has a consistent and significant impact on important dimensions of work behaviour".

*Web-based career information* - The significant relationship for Web-based career information with employees' perceptions of organisational importance is consistent with studies reporting organisations implementing web-based learning programmes demonstrated a positive relationship between positive psychological capital and performance (e.g. Luthans *et al.*, 2007; Luthans *et al.*, 2008), satisfaction and commitment (Larson and Luthans, 2006; Luthans *et al.*, 2007; Luthans *et al.*, 2008). Gegenfurtner *et al.* (2020) found that trainees who participated in webinar-based training programmes were more satisfied with a higher level of interaction with their trainers and peer trainees during the sessions, using webinars for virtual consultation hours with their trainers and having after-work webinars lasting no longer than 90 minutes.

*Continuous professional development* - The significant relationship for CPD programmes with employees' perceptions of organisational importance is consistent with previous findings in the literature. Several research studies report that organisations implementing CPD programmes achieve improved employee work performance, work outcomes, well-being and feelings of empowerment (Mackay, 2017a, 2017b; Marshall *et al.*, 2008; Rothwell and Arnold, 2005; van Huyssteen *et al.*, 2020).

*External education provision* - The significant relationship for external education provision with employees' perceptions of organisational importance is consistent with previous findings in the literature. Some studies report that organisations facilitating external education provision motivated employees to engage in proactive initiatives and voluntary contributions toward

organisational goals, which are crucial sources of organisational innovation (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002, Wilson, 2011). Training and development investments nurture a culture of learning and overall organisational learning (Gómez *et al.*, 2004; Noe *et al.*, 2010), which can increase employees' willingness to advance their capabilities and engage in various independent learning activities. Participation in corporate training and external education programmes encourages employees to become more learning-oriented as well as urges them to actively pursue diverse information and knowledge needed to perform work tasks more effectively (Chen and Huang, 2009; Shipton *et al.*, 2006).

*On-the-job training* - The significant negative relationship for on-the-job programmes with employees' perceptions of organisational importance is inconsistent with numerous findings in the literature (Huang and Jao, 2016). It contradicts human capital theories which assert employees acquire productivity-enhancing abilities through education and on-the-job training (Becker, 1962, 1993; Ben-Porath, 1967). Arthur *et al.*'s (2003) meta-analysis of 1152 effect sizes from 165 sourced found that in comparison with no-training or pre-training states, training had an overall positive effect on job-related behaviours and performance. A group of studies analysed by Tharenou *et al.*, (2007) led these authors to conclude that training will sometimes be negatively related to HR, performance, and financial outcomes (e.g. Aragón-Sánchez *et al.*, 2003; Birley and Westhead, 1990; Deng *et al.*, 2003; Ghebregiorgis and Karsten, 2007; Ngo *et al.*, 1998; Shaw *et al.*, 1998; Wiley, 1991; Wright *et al.*, 1999). While there are a number of possible explanations for this study result, it still remains puzzling especially given the fact that it is set within the context of respondents rating a group of employee development programmes.

*360-degree feedback* – This study's result that 360-degree feedback programmes do not have a significant influence on employees' perceptions of organisational importance is inconsistent with

much of the previous literature. A group of previous studies conclude the function and benefits of 360-degree feedback on employees' progression and organisational performance are positive and significant (Deshpande *et al.*, 2015; Fleenor *et al.*, 2008; Karkoulian *et al.*, 2016; Markham *et al.*, 2017; Shrage, 2002; Fleenor *et al.*, 2020). One explanation for the ineffectiveness of 360-degree feedback could relate to its inadequate organisational implementation. Short term commitments and time constraints frequently lead to inadequate design and administration of the instrument, ineffective presentation of feedback, and missed opportunities for follow-up (Lepsinger and Lucia, 2003). To achieve synergies between HRM practices, organisations should integrate their employee development programmes with other HRM practices such as employee selection, rewards, performance management, talent management and others (Aguinis, 2009, Aguinis and Pierce, 2008, Cascio and Aguinis, 2004, Fleenor *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it is possible that 360-degree feedback was insufficiently integrated with other organisational practices for this particular sample of respondents to rate it efficiently and effectively around the dates of issuing the survey.

#### *Gender effects*

The main findings for RQ2 “Does gender moderate the relationship of organisational development programmes and career development?” are that gender significantly moderates four of the programmes and career development. The hypotheses that were supported are the following organisational development programmes: coaching, web-based career information, CPD, and external education provision. More specifically, the highest programme effect on career development programmes is external education provision with a variation of 4.5% followed by CPD (4%), web-based career information (3.7%), and lastly, coaching (3.3%). Table 2 shows organisations in the sample of established industries employ less women (33.33%) than the public and services sectors, and a lower proportion of women occupy senior roles, for example, 3% of

the women (6/191) were chair or chief executives. Gender differences of representation at the managerial levels have been reported in a number of studies such as in Calabrese *et al.*, (2018), Catalyst (2019), Li and Wang Leung (2001), OECD (2008, 2017, 2019), Schaap *et al.* (2008), Shriver (2009), Skalpe (2007), and Statistics Canada (2007).

As was previously mentioned, there is a group of published studies on the moderating effects of gender (Ng *et al.*, 2005; Orser and Leck, 2010; Iqbal and Ahmad, 2020). However, in contrast to the amount of studies concentrating on direct effects, the number investigating the moderating effect of gender is comparatively low. Tharenou *et al.*, 's (2007) meta-analysis of 67 studies found only 30% of these publications on training and development examined moderators of the relationship. In a content analysis of 219 studies, Garavan *et al.*, (2019), observed that just 13% percent of the total examined moderating influences on the relationship between training and organisational performance. None investigated the moderating role of gender between employee development programmes and employees' perceptions of career development. The results of this study reveal that gender does moderate the influence of four employee development programmes on employees' perception of importance (coaching, web-based career information, CPD, and external education provision) and the influence of gender on these four programmes is positive and higher for men.

These moderation relationships concur with much of the literature on gender differences in work and careers. One possible explanation for these differences could be the lack of mentoring opportunities for women. For example, it is reported that women employed in small- and medium-sized Canadian enterprises have fewer mentoring and networking opportunities (Orser *et al.*, 2008). Consequently, some governments' affirmative action policies and workplace equality interventions include mentoring and networking initiatives to promote women's career



development (Scottish Government, 2017). Moreover, due to traditional gender and racial stereotypes which Equal Opportunities organisations are addressing, it is reported that women and ethnic minority groups may be less likely to be chosen for career development (Kanter, 1977; Ng *et al.*, 2005). Earnings differentials have been found to occur immediately after graduation, for instance female MBA graduates in Asia, Canada, Europe, and the USA were significantly more likely to take a first job at a lower rank and with fewer responsibilities compared to male MBA graduates, even when researchers controlled for career aspirations and parenthood (Carter and Silva, 2010). Recent career theories arguably are addressing systemic gender differences in the factors associated with career success (Donald *et al.*, 2019; Jyrkinen and McKie, 2012; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009) than occurred in previous decades (O’Leary, 1997; O’Neil *et al.*, 2008).

Our findings indicate that employees in our survey sample view 50% of the organisational programmes (coaching, web-based career information, CPD, and external education provision) as crucial to their career development. Men valued the effect of these four programmes more highly than women. The explanation for these different evaluations by men and women are not discernible from our findings. However, if similar gender differences are also found either in research on the national workforce or in organisations’ internal evaluations through surveys and other methods, then they do merit consideration. Clearly, if men consistently rate organisational programmes and their relevance to their careers significantly higher than women, then, this might create unequal opportunities. Furthermore, if either men or women consistently rate more highly organisational development programmes that were designed to be of identical value for everyone regardless of gender, then, this problem should be addressed by employers and HR practitioners. There are numerous formal and informal methods of review that can be instigated to discern whether these gender differences impact on career opportunities. Whenever strong significant gender differences

are identified that require some further assessment, then organisations could probe the issue, for example, through informal discussions, reviews or in team meetings or ad hoc focus group sessions. The careers and HRM research literatures recommend that managers responsible for organisational development programmes should periodically assess their aims, design, delivery and development outcomes, particularly given we know that gender differences may occur in their impact on self-efficacy, career intention, work-life balance, and employees' perceptions of career success (BarNir *et al.*, 2011; Dolan *et al.*, 2011; Orser and Leck, 2010).

If convincing explanations for consistent gender differences in evaluations of organisational development programmes are identified through internal reviews by groups of organisations or in broader research on the national workforce, then, this has implications for organisations' and government policies. In some cases, it might be that the funding or the training design and delivery has to be altered to ensure fair and equal treatment in relation to employee development and career opportunities. In this study, we were unable to identify any significant differences of perception between the four occupational categories of executive board, senior, middle and junior levels of management that are represented in our survey sample. The set of organisational development programmes we have studied are all relevant to managers, but inevitably there are some constraints on the extent that individuals and groups will be able to utilise these opportunities. In some cases, these programmes will be more accessible to managers in the early and middle stages of their careers, nevertheless, it is still the case that senior managers and executives are often involved in activities of self-development and developing others, such as in coaching and external education provision.

Double the number of women compared to men are represented in our sample of junior managers. Since junior managers are a group who routinely encounter periods of informal and formal

development, there is some evidence therefore from our survey that supports closer attention being given to diversity management and equal opportunities in organisations in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2010, 2017, 2021). A limitation of this survey on organisational development programmes is we did not examine the role of diversity management practices and equal opportunities policies. Therefore, we do not have data on how such policies and practices might influence the effectiveness of these programmes on career development. There are also implications for talent management where the design and implementation of organisational development programmes should produce career outcomes that attract, recruit and retain talent by promoting well-being and mutual gains (Guest, 2017). Further, we did not address issues of intersectionality where the interplay of sets of categories of difference (e.g. gender, ethnicity, class) has complex economic and social effects for individuals and organisations. Future intersectional studies on organisational development programmes and career development that are emic and etic in research design would be appropriate and worthwhile (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012).

The design of this research study is based on the business and management literature and is mainly relevant to the disciplines of development and careers. For development, we propose that scholars should theorise more comprehensively the combined effects of multiple organisational programmes and activities. Both formal and informal development practices should be included. In particular, it would be useful for researchers to have access to more fine-grained frameworks and models of development input, processes and outcomes, which seek to explain the effects of a range of organisational development methods and practices. For the diverse range of theories of career, it would be worthwhile academic researchers developing more rigorous theory on the links between groups of organisational development programmes and career issues. In our study, we have concentrated on one dependent variable, career development. With reference to the extant

careers literature, clearly, career intention and career success, amongst others, are two equally important areas for further theory development. Our recommendation for conditional processes would be for future research to theorise more fully opportunities and challenges related to gender and occupation.

### *Limitations*

The authors acknowledge a number of limitations. This study employed a quantitative survey approach and time series analyses would be beneficial for examining a wider set of individual and organisational variables connected with development. The survey concentrated exclusively on managers and more research on non-managerial employees would also be valuable for understanding relationships between organisational development programmes and career development. Additional qualitative research methods such as case studies and interviews could assist exploration of subjective phenomena relating to individual development and career progress. To assess gender differences, this study relied on analysis of self-report surveys and dependence on data collection from a single source is prone to well-known measurement error issues, low reliability and statistical inference problems (e.g. Sanders and Frenkel, 2011). Wall and Wood (2005) highlight the need to secure assessments from two or more persons and whenever feasible, the use of the same raters across different organisations. Research designs incorporating subjective and objective factors of career development could add to our understanding of individual differences in their assessment and evaluation of career relevance, career development and career progress. Another limitation of the study derives from the fact that it has a cross-sectional design that considers the influence of organisational development programmes on employees' career development at two isolated, specific points in time; it does not allow for analysis of changes in career aspirations for the same respondents across different stages of the career life cycle.

Accordingly, there is a need to utilise longitudinal designs to track these organisational programmes over time, and identify their impacts on employees and organisations with less ambiguity about the direction of causality. Finally, future research could assess organisational and occupational factors as a moderator in the relationship between organisational development programmes and career development.

## **Conclusion**

Organisational development programmes are essential for employees, organisations and societies. Private and public organisations and employees invest numerous resources in organisational development programmes and so it is important to understand their influences and the moderating effects of gender. For the first research question, the results of our study reveal that there is a significant relationship between organisational development programmes and employees' perceptions of their importance for career development within their organisations. There is almost full support, therefore, for Hypotheses (1a,2a,3a,4a,5a,6a,7a, and 8a) with significant relationships for 7/8 programmes. The majority of programmes examined in the study are perceived by employees to be important to their internal career progress: coaching, job assignment, EAPs, web-based career information, CPD, and external education provision. However, 360-degree feedback programmes were considered by employees to be insignificant to their careers in their employing organisations.

For the second research question, the influence of four out of the eight organisational development programmes was found to be moderated by gender. Thus, Hypotheses (1b,2b,3b,4b,5b,6b,7b and 8b) are partially supported. In this survey study, gender moderates the influence of coaching, web-based career information, CPD, and external education programmes on employees' career development. Additionally, for these four programmes, the influence of gender was higher in our

sample for men. Moreover, external education provision is one of the strongest programmes leading to career development.

The research shows that organisational development programmes are perceived by employees to have different levels of importance in their organisations and therefore relative influence on their careers. The integration of these programmes with other HRD and HRM systems could be further investigated by researchers for the extent that it influences employees' evaluation of their importance to their work, careers and employing organisations. The ways that these organisational programmes are designed, delivered, and implemented is likely to matter, and managers should reflect more on how these programmes have different effects on employees. Such evaluations should include consideration of gender differences in employees' perceptions of their value to their careers and employing organisations. Sharing such knowledge and information could assist employees, in particular women, with developing viable career strategies. Finally, identifying possible gender imbalance in organisational development programmes is valuable information for human resource and training professionals, policy makers, and all organisations aiming to ensure equitable employment opportunities.

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