

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAREER PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS AND JOB SATISFACTION IN A CITY BASED LOCAL AUTHORITY

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Abstract

According to the human resource development literature, career program has two salient characteristics: career planning and career management. Recent studies in this area reveal that the ability of management to properly implement such career program characteristics may have a significant impact on job satisfaction. Although the nature of this relationship is interesting, little is known about the role of career program characteristics as an important antecedent of job satisfaction in the workplace career models. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the relationship between career program and job satisfaction in a city based local authority in Sabah, Malaysia. A survey research method was used as the main instrument to gather data from employees in the organization. The outcomes of testing hypothesis using a stepwise regression analysis showed two important findings: first, career planning insignificantly correlated with job satisfaction. Secondly, career management significantly correlated with job satisfaction. Statistically, this result demonstrates that the career planning does not act as an important determinant of job satisfaction, career management act as an important determinant of job satisfaction in the career model of the organizational sample. In addition, discussion, implications and conclusion are elaborated.

Keywords: Career Planning, Career Management, Job Satisfaction

JEL classification: M10, M12

1. INTRODUCTION

The career program is a crucial dimension of human resource development where it emphasizes on the job, process, attitude, behavior and the state of affairs related to the employees' work life (Ferreira, Santos, Fonseca, & Haase, 2007; Janeiro, 2010; Puah & Ananthram, 2006). Under this perspective, an employer often designs and administers career programs to enable employees to match their interests and capabilities with organizational opportunities and easily adapt with current and future organizational changes. Thus, it may lead to an improved the progression of employees' career in organizations (Baruch, 2004; Greenhaus, Romero, Valle & Dolan, 2000; Martin, et al., 2001; Theodossiou & Zangelis, 2009).

The workplace career program gives more attention on two salient characteristics: career planning and career management (Conger, 2002; Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002; Nancarrow, 2005; Post, Koch & Roberts, 2007). Surprisingly, recent studies in the workplace career reveal that the ability of management to properly plan and manage the development of employees' careers may have a significant impact on employees' job satisfaction (Chen, Chang & Yeh, 2004; Puah & Ananthram, 2006; Theodossiou & Zangelisa, 2009). Although the nature of this relationship is interesting, little is known about the role of career program as an important predicting variable in the workplace career models (Jepsen & Dickson 2003; Puah & Ananthram, 2006; Wilkens & Nermerich, 2011). Many scholars reveal that career program has been given less attention in previous studies because they have much emphasized on the internal properties of employees' career program, and used describing the concepts of employees' career and job satisfaction separately. As a result, findings of this research approach may not be able to clearly explain the effect size of career program on job satisfaction in dynamic organizations (Theodossiou & Zangelis, 2009; Wilkens & Nermerich, 2011). Thus, it motivates the researchers to further explore the nature of this relationship.

1.1 Purpose of the study

This study has two major objectives: firstly, to measure the relationship between career planning and job satisfaction. Second objective is to measure the relationship between career management and job satisfaction.

1.2 Explanation of the constructs

This study highlights four important constructs: career planning, career management, and job satisfaction. Firstly, career planning is often seen as an ongoing activity whereby management designs a career planning using proper assessment tools (e.g., vocational counseling, workbooks and/or career resource centre) to identify career options and preferences, set up development objectives and establish action plans to help employees match their interests and capabilities with organizational opportunities (Appelbaum & Shapiro, 2002; Greenhaus et al., 2000; Mondy, Noe & Premeaux, 2002; Puah & Ananthram, 2006). In the context of this study, career planning is defined as the ability of managers to properly design career plans and use this plan as a milestone to upgrade employee professions in organizations.

Secondly, career management is often viewed as a continuous activity whereby management monitors the progression of individual employees in order to easily adapt with organizational changes (e.g., turbulent working environment, job stability and security, flexible work practice and multi skilling) and thus help them to achieve higher in their career ladders in organizations (Greenhaus, et al., 2000; Martin et.al., 2001; Whymark & Ellis, 1999). In the context of this study, career management is defined as the ability of managers to consistently implement career management in order to enhance the progression of employee professions in organizations.

Finally, job satisfaction is often related to as a form of attitude towards work related conditions, employees' judgment and their process of thoughts with regards to their jobs, facets or aspects (Linz, 2003; Mobley et al., 1974; Wiener, 1982), individuals' positive emotional state, pleasurable feelings and/or attitudes towards job resulting from their appraisals about the job (Appelbaum, et al. 2002; Gregson, 1987; Linz, 2003; McShane & Glinow, 2005). In the context of this study, job satisfaction is defined as an employee satisfied with his/her job in organizations.

Within a career program model, many scholars view that career planning, career management, and job satisfaction are distinct constructs, but strongly interrelated. For example, the ability of management to properly plan and manage the development of employees' careers may lead to an enhanced job satisfaction in organizations (Chen, Chang & Yeh, 2004; Puaah & Ananthram, 2006; Wilkens & Nermerich, 2011).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The workplace career literature provides the relevant theories and empirical studies supporting the relationships between career program and job satisfaction.

2.1 Empirical Evidence Supporting the Relationship between Career Program and Job Satisfaction

Several recent studies used an indirect effects model to examine employees' career using different samples, such as 367 R&D personnel from Hsinchu Science-based Industrial Park in north Taiwan (Chen, Chang & Yeh, 2004), 26 staff from two immediate care services in South Yorkshire (Nancarrow, 2005), 505 employees of a leading international Singaporean hotel in Singapore (Puaah & Ananthram, 2006), 5500 household taken from British Household Panel Survey (Theodossiou & Zangelisa, 2009), and 13 in-depth interviews with workers from knowledge intensive working context (Wilkens & Nermerich, 2011). Findings from these studies reported that the ability of management to properly plan and manage the development of employees' careers had been an important predictor of job satisfaction in the organizations (Chen, Chang & Yeh, 2004; Nancarrow, 2005; Puaah & Ananthram, 2006; Theodossiou & Zangelisa, 2009; Wilkens & Nermerich, 2011).

2.2 Theoretical Evidence the Relationship between Career Program and Job Satisfaction

The studies are consistent with the notion of motivation theory, namely Herzberg's (1959, 1966) motivator-hygiene theory, ERG theory (Existence, Relatedness and Growth theory) (Alderfer, 1972), and learned needs theory (need for achievement, need for affilia-

tion and need for power) (McClelland, 1962). According to the notion of these theories, the progression of employees' career are often influenced by several motivational factors, such as work characteristics (Herzberg, 1959, 1966), individuals' needs from their job (Alderfer, 1972), and individuals learn needs from their job (McClelland, 1962). Application of these theories in the workplace career program shows that the ability of managers to properly plan the objectives and mechanisms of career program, and manage the progression of employees' career ladders may lead to higher job satisfaction in organizations (Chen, Chang & Yeh, 2004; Greenhaus, et al. 2000; Pua & Ananthram, 2006).

2.3 Conceptual Framework and Research Hypothesis

The literature has been used as a foundation in developing a conceptual framework for this study as shown in Figure 1.

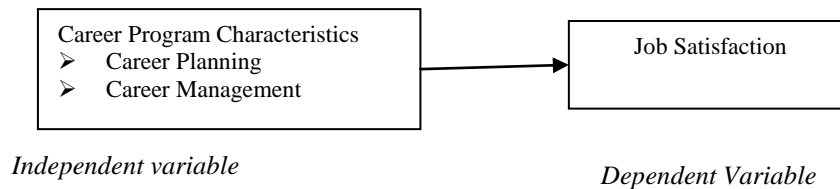


Figure no. 1 Conceptual Framework

Based on the framework, it seems reasonable to assume that effect of career program on job satisfaction would influence the studied organization employees' job satisfaction as the same practice does in Western countries. Motivation theories like Herzberg's (1959, 1966) motivator-hygiene theory, Alderfer's (1972) ERG theory and McClelland's (1962) learned needs theory suggest that the ability of managers to properly plan and manage the development of employees' career may lead to an enhanced job satisfaction in organizations. Therefore, it was hypothesized that:

H1: Career planning positively related to job satisfaction

H2: Career management positively related to job satisfaction

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used a cross-sectional research design, which allowed the researchers to integrate the workplace career literature, the in-depth interview, the pilot study and the actual survey as a main procedure to gather data for this study. The use of such methods may gather accurate and less biased data (Cresswell, 1998; Sekaran, 2000). The location of this study was a city based local authority in Sabah, Malaysia. At the initial stage of this study, in-depth interviews were conducted involving two experienced employees, namely one executive officer and one assistant administrative officer who had worked for more than seven years in the studied organizations. They are selected based on a purposive sampling tech-

nique because they have good knowledge and experience about the workplace career program.

Information gathered from the in-depth interview showed that management often establishes career plans by outlining the means to move up employees' career ladder, identifying employees' knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes whether they fit or not with their organizations' goals and values, and what training programs needed by employees. In order to support this career plan, managers have improved the management of career programs like job rotation, potential appraisal, career counseling and on the job training in order to match employees' interests and capabilities with their organizational growth and opportunities (e.g., save cost, downsizing and technological change). If such career programs are properly prepared, developed and monitored they may increase employees' awareness about their careers, such as understand goals, prospects and ways of improving productivity. Thus, this positive change can lead to decreased job dissatisfaction in the organization. Although the nature of this relationship is significant, little is known about the role of career program as an important predicting variable in the organization.

The information gathered from the interview method was compared to the workplace career research literature in order to develop the content and format of the survey questionnaires for the pilot study. Next, a pilot study was conducted by discussing the items in survey questionnaires with the above participants in order to verify the content and format of the questionnaires for the actual study. Further, the back translation technique was used to translate the survey questionnaires in Malay and English; this may increase the validity and reliability of the instrument (Hulland, 1999; Wright, 1996).

3.2 Measures

Table no. 1 shows that the survey questionnaires consisted of three sections. These items were measured using a 7-item scale ranging from "strongly disagree/dissatisfied" (1) to "strongly agree/satisfied" (7). Demographic variables were used as controlling variables because this study focused on employee attitudes.

Table no. 1 Measurement Scale

Variable	Items	Source
Career Planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have a plan for my career. 2. I know my career goals and objectives. 3. I know my career interests and how to apply these to my job. 4. I am able to analyse and assess my potential to determine my career option. 	8 items were adapted from career program literature (Baruch, 2004; Desimone & Harris, 1998; Granrose & Portwood, 1987; Greenhaus et al., 2000; Martin et al., 2001; Whymark & Ellis, 1998).
Career Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I can predict how my career path will be in the future. 2. I spend time reviewing my career goals that I have achieved. 3. I can predict where my position will be 5 years from now. 4. My job progression is according to plan. 	

Variable	Items	Source
Job Satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I'm satisfied with the management culture in this organization. 2. I'm satisfied with my work responsibility. 3. I'm satisfied with the recognitions received 4. from my work accomplishment. 5. I'm satisfied with the chances given to show my real capabilities in implementing my work. 	8 items were adapted from job satisfaction literature (Chen et al., 2004; Knop, 1993; Linz, 2003; Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002).

3.3 Population and Sampling

The population for this study was 1147 employees who have worked in the studied organization. In the first step of data collection procedure, the researchers obtained permission from the HR manager to conduct this study, but the list of registered employees was not given to the researchers and survey questionnaires had to be distributed to employees through the HR office. Considering this situation, a convenient sampling technique was used to distribute 250 survey questionnaires to employees through the contact persons (e.g., secretary of department heads, assistant managers and/or human resource manager) in the organization. Of the number, 140 usable questionnaires were returned to the researchers, yielding a 56 percent response rate. The survey questions were answered by participants based on their consent and a voluntary basis. The number of this sample exceeds the minimum sample of 30 participants as required by probability sampling technique, showing that it may be analyzed using inferential statistics (Sekaran, 2000; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

3.4 Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 was used to analyze the data. Firstly, exploratory factor analysis was used to assess the validity and reliability of measurement scales (Hair et al, 1998; Nunally & Bernstein, 1994). Relying on the guidelines set up by these statisticians, a factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation was first done for all items that represented each research variable, and this was followed by other tests: Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test (KMO), Bartlett's test of sphericity, eigenvalue, variance explained and Cronbach alpha. These statistics were useful to determine the acceptable standards of validity and reliability analyses for the measurement scales before testing research hypotheses. Secondly, Pearson correlation (r) analysis and descriptive statistics were conducted to analyze the constructs and the usefulness of the data set (Tabachnick et al., 2001; Yaacob, 2008). Finally, a stepwise regression analysis was undertaken to assess the direct relationship between variables as well as show the causal relationship and the nature of relationship between variables. Stepwise regression can accurately quantify the magnitude and direction of many independent variables and one dependent variable (Berenson and Levine, 1992; Foster et al., 1998). In this regression analysis, standardized coefficients (standardized beta) were used for all analyses (Jaccard, Turrissi & Wan, 1990).

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Participant Characteristics

Table no. 2 shows that majority of the participant characteristics were female (57.1 percent), ages between 26 to 35 years old (42.9 percent), SPM/MCE holders (43.2), employees who served more than 21 years (25.2 percent), and non-management employees (82.1 percent).

Table no. 2 Participant Characteristics (N=140)

Participant Characteristics	Sub-Profile	Percentage
Gender	Male	42.9
	Female	57.1
Age	18-25	12.9
	26-35	42.9
	36-45	28.6
	>46	15.7
Education	Master Degree	1.4
	Bachelor Degree	10.1
	Diploma	22.3
	STPM/HSC	6.5
	SPM/MCE	43.2
	SRP/LCE/PMR	16.5
Length of Service	<1 years	7.2
	1-5 years	24.5
	6-10 years	19.4
	11-15 years	15.8
	16-20 years	7.9
	> 21 years	25.2
Position	Management	17.9
	Non-management	82.1

Note:

SRP/LCE/PMR Sijil Rendah Pelajaran Malaysia/Lower Certificate of Education/
Penilaian Menengah Rendah
SPM/MCE Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia/ Malaysia Certificate of Education
STPM/HSC Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia/Higher School Certificate

4.2 Validity and Reliability Analyses for Measurement Scales

Table no. 3 shows the results of validity and reliability analyses for measurement scales. The original survey questionnaires consisted of 16 items, which related to five variables: career planning (4 items), career management (4 items), and job satisfaction (8 items). The factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation was done for all variables. After that, Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test (KMO) which is a measure of sampling adequacy was conducted for each variable and the results indicated that it was acceptable. Relying on Hair et al. (1998) and Nunally and Bernstein's (1994) guideline, these statistical analyses showed that (1) the value of factor analysis for all items that represent each research variable was 0.5 and more, indicating the items met the acceptable standard of validity analysis, (2) all research varia-

bles exceeded the acceptable standard of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's value of 0.6, were significant in Bartlett's test of sphericity, (3) all research variables had eigen-values larger than 1, (4) the items for each research variable exceeded factor loadings of 0.40 (Hair et al., 1998), and (5) all research variables exceeded the acceptable standard of reliability analysis of 0.70 (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994). These statistical analyses confirmed that measurement scales used in this study met the acceptable standard of validity and reliability analyses as shown in Table 3.

Table no. 3 The Results of Validity and Reliability Analyses for the Measurement Scales

Measure	Item	Factor Loading	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
Career Planning	4	0.66 to 0.86	0.75	228.65, p=.000	2.66	66.58	0.80
Career Management	4	0.40 to 0.80	0.77	156.62, p=.000	2.44	61.08	0.79
Job Satisfaction	8	0.53 to 0.90	0.87	612.60, p=.000	4.59	57.39	0.89

4.3 Analysis of the Constructs

Table 4 shows the results of Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics. The mean values for the variables are between 5.3 and 6.1, signifying the levels of career planning, career management, career development and job satisfactions ranging from high (4) to highest level (7). The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., career planning and career management) and the mediating variable (i.e., career development), and the relationship between the dependent variable (i.e., job satisfaction) were less than 0.90, indicating that the data were not affected by serious collinearity problem (Hair et al., 1998). These statistical results confirm that the measurement scales used in this study satisfactorily met the standards of validity and reliability analyses as shown in Table 3.

Table no. 4 Pearson Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Pearson Correlation (r)		
			1	2	3
Career Planning	6.1	0.62	(1)		
Career Management	5.3	0.86	0.53**	(1)	
Job Satisfaction	5.3	0.92	0.18*	0.30**	(1)

Note: Significant at *p<0.05;**p<0.01

Reliability Estimation is shown in a diagonal

4.4 Outcomes of Testing Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2

Table no. 5 shows that the results of stepwise regression analysis in the two steps. Demographic variables were entered in Step 1 and then followed by entering the independent

variable (i.e., career planning and career management) in Step 2. Job satisfaction was used as the dependent variable.

Table no. 5 Results for Stepwise Regression Analysis

Variable	Dependent Variable (Job Satisfaction)	
	Step 1	Step 2
Controlling Variable		
Gender	0.65	0.07
Age	0.56	0.07
Educational Level	0.93	0.04
Length of Service	-0.39	-0.02
Position	0.13	0.12
Independent Variable		
Career Planning		0.22
Career Management		0.28**
R Square	0.21	0.35
Adjust R square	0.00	0.07
R square change	0.05	0.08
F	1.04	2.22*
F Δ R Square	1.04	5.54**

Note: Significant at *p<0.05, **<0.01

Table no. 5 shows the result of hypothesis testing in Step 2. Firstly, career planning insignificantly correlated with job satisfaction ($\beta=0.22$, $p>0.05$), therefore H1 was not supported. Secondly, career management significantly correlated with job satisfaction ($\beta=0.28$, $p<0.01$). In terms of explanatory power, the inclusion of career development in the Step 2 had explained 35 percent of the variance in dependent variable. Statistically, this result sends a message that career planning does not act as an important determinant of job satisfaction, but career management does act as an important determinant of job satisfaction in the organizational sample.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study shows that career planning does not act as an important predicting variable of job satisfaction, while career management act as an important predicting variable of job satisfaction in the studied organization. In the context of this study, the majority employees perceived that managers have properly planned and managed the development of their employees' careers based on the broad policies and procedures set up by the stakeholder. According to the interviewed employees, the ability of managers to properly implement career management in developing employees' careers may act as an influential factor that lead to an enhanced job satisfaction in the organization.

The implications of this study can be divided into three major aspects: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology, and contribution to practitioners. In term of theoretical contribution, this study reveals two important findings: firstly, the implementation of career planning in developing employees' careers has not influenced job satisfaction in the studied organization. The finding of this study is not consistent with studies by Chen,

Chang and Yeh (2004), Puaah and Ananthram (2006), Nancarrow (2005, Puaah & Ananthram, 2006; Theodossiou and Zangelisa (2009), Wilkens and Nermerich (2011). A careful observation of the in-depth interview results shows that career planning has not been an effective determinant of job satisfaction may be affected by external factors. Firstly, the respondents of this study have different needs and expectations about their career programs. For example, the respondents have different attitudes and values in appreciating and accepting the style of their managers in planning the various types of career programs. Secondly, managers have different backgrounds, experiences and capabilities this may affect the way they plan the various kinds of career program for their staff. For example, the various styles of managers used in planning the progression of their employees' careers may not be recognized and supported by all employees.

Secondly, the implementation of career management in developing employees' careers has affected job satisfaction in the studied organization. This result explains that the ability of managers to properly manage the progression of employees' careers will increase their motivation to learn and use necessary knowledge, up to date skills, new abilities and positive attitudes in executing jobs. Consequently, it can act an essential motivating factor that lead to an enhanced job satisfaction in the organization. The finding of this study has supported and extended career management research by Chen, Chang and Yeh (2004), Puaah and Ananthram (2006), Nancarrow (2005, Puaah & Ananthram, 2006; Theodossiou and Zangelisa (2009), Wilkens and Nermerich (2011).

With respect to the robustness of research methodology, the survey questionnaires used in this study had met the standards of validity and reliability analyses; this could lead to the production of accurate and reliable findings. Regarding practical contributions, the findings of this study can be used as guidelines by management to improve career programs in organizations. Some improvement efforts that can be done are: firstly, managers need to be encouraged to practice social value based leadership style (e.g., people oriented and transformational styles) more than economic value based leadership style (e.g., task oriented and transactional style) in planning and implementing the various types of career programs for their employees. Secondly, training and development program for managers and employees need to emphasize on imparting necessary knowledge, latest skills, new abilities and good moral values through practical training methods (e.g., case study and team building). This method may help managers and employees to transfer what they learn in the workplace.

Thirdly, positive organizational support needs to be highly encouraged in promoting helping, respect and guidance between supervisors and co-workers, and between employees and co-workers. These support systems may enhance caring environment, deviant behavior and commitment in organizations. Finally, performance management culture needs to be given priority by enhancing performance appraisal development more than performance appraisal evaluation. This practice may attract, retain and motivate high performers to increase their contributions in organizations. If organizations heavily consider these suggestions this may increase positive employees' attitude towards career program and thus lead to support organizational strategy and goals.

6. CONCLUSION

This study proposed a conceptual framework based on the career management literature. The measurement scales used in this study satisfactorily met the standards of validity and reliability analyses. The outcomes of stepwise regression analysis confirmed that career

planning did not act as an important determinant of job satisfaction, but career management did act as an important determinant job satisfaction in the studied organization. Therefore, current research and practice within the career program models needs to consider career planning and career management as key driving factors of the workplace career program. This study further suggests that the readiness of management to improve the design and administration of career programs according to external and internal organizational changes will help to positively develop employees' careers. As a result, it can strongly invoke subsequent positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, performance, integrity, trust, justice and organizational citizenship behavior) in organizations. Thus, these positive outcomes can lead to maintained and increased organizational competitiveness in a global economy.

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