The Impact of Career Development on Employee Engagement and Retention

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Abstract: This review examines the relationship between career development, employee engagement, and employee retention in organizational settings. Recognizing the pivotal role of the workforce as an organization's most valuable asset, the paper contends that any organization's long-term sustainability and competitive advantage hinge on effective human resource management strategies. Career development catalyzes optimal performance, enhanced employee engagement, and increased retention. The review establishes that organizations striving for a competitive edge in the global economy must prioritize employee retention as a strategic priority. It posits that career development, employee motivation, incentives, and talent management collectively foster a positive work environment. Pursuing professional advancement is a crucial driver for employees, creating a positive relationship between them and their employers. Empirical evidence supports the assertion that training plays a pivotal role in the career development process, with a constructive approach emphasizing the active involvement of employees. Employee retention is presented as mutually beneficial for both the organization and employees, as it leads to cost savings, competitive advantages, and the preservation of institutional knowledge. The paper explores the intricacies of employee turnover, distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary turnover, and highlights the multifaceted factors influencing such decisions. Personal and organizational factors influencing turnover, such as career development, family considerations, and external job offers, are discussed. Furthermore, the review underscores the positive correlation between employee engagement and retention. Employee engagement is characterized by physical, psychological, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, contributing to a committed and involved workforce. Strategic career development program implementation is a potent means to increase engagement, retain high-performing employees, and enhance overall productivity. The concept of career development is explored from both organizational and individual perspectives. Tailoring career development programs to diverse individual needs is emphasized, recognizing organizations' variability in demands, career stages, and

hierarchical levels. The paper also addresses challenges to career development, including organizational structure, individual factors, political influences, and social considerations. These challenges underscore the complexity of fostering effective career development initiatives.

Keywords: Career Development, Employee Engagement, Employee Retention, Human Resource Management, Talent Management

1. INTRODUCTION

Every organization's most valuable resource is its workforce, which is recognized by effective management. Employees are valuable assets in any organization and play a critical role in helping an organization attain its goals. Hence, the retention of employees is vital in aiding an organization in achieving long-term sustainability, success, and competitive advantage (Abadi, Barhate, Dirani and Garza, 2020). Discussions around strategic human resource management has become essential to the growth of organizations in a period of unparalleled changes in the world economy and dynamic labour markets. Career development and staff retention are interlinked facets that have become increasingly important within human resource management (Wei, 2006).

Employee retention is a crucial strategic concern for organizations looking to maintain a competitive edge in the fast-paced global economy. In the long run, organizations can ensure optimal performance and productivity through the use of human resource management practices that prioritize career development and employee engagement (Alias et al., 2016).

High levels of career development, employee motivation, incentives, performance management, and recognition through talent management programs all stimulate a positive work environment (Alias et al., 2016; Foday, 2014). Pursuing professional advancement has increased importance for organizations seeking to improve efficiency. Most organizations operating in highly competitive and constantly changing environments strategically consider a wide range of elements in their bid to remain competitive. These include changes in the population, technological advancements, and the effective retention of highly qualified staff (Foday, 2014).

Career development opportunities create a motivated, productive workforce and provide a strong base for long-term success for the organization and its employees. According to Dwomoh and Frempong, (2017), many employees join organizations to advance their careers and realize their full potential through their employers' training, growth opportunities, and promotions. This in turn, leads to a positive relationship between the employees and their employers, as argued by (De Vos and Meganck, 2009). In addition, career development is a function of organizational employment that guides employees in making plans for their careers inside and possibly outside the organization so that both the current and future organization and the employees themselves can maximize their potential.

Empirical evidence suggests that training plays an important role in the career development process. The proponents of positive human resource management argue that organizations that consider the growth and improvement of its human resources thrive on strong, skilled, and morally-driven employees through structured training programs (Sugiarti, 2021). Training provides employees with the skills and knowledge needed to perform their work and, in the process, satisfy the demands of their employers. From a constructivist approach, the employees themselves play an active role in the career development process with the possibility of increased employee retention.

An organization's long-term viability mostly depends on employees with the necessary training, expertise, and institutional knowledge. Lahkar Das and Baruah, (2013) posit that employee retention is essential to ensuring the long-term growth of any organization. In human resource management, both the organization and the employee benefit from employee retention. For instance, Aman-Ullah et al., (2020) argue that employee retention allows organizations to save money by reducing the expense of recruiting and onboarding new

employees. Thus, the organization achieves a competitive advantage in a constantly growing market. Organizations that invest in and retain their workforce are better positioned and guaranteed success in their industry or sectors. Additionally, organizations may recover their investment in hiring and training expenses by retaining skilled employees (Aman-Ullah et al., 2020; Kamalaveni et al., 2019). However, in recent years, one of organizations' greatest human resource management challenges is employee retention.

As cited by Keir, (2016) in Noe et al., (2003) there are two types of employee turnover: i.e., voluntary and involuntary turnover. On the one hand, involuntary turnover is initiated by the employer i.e., organization that typically refuses a low-performing employee or persistent in response to external pressure that tend to reduce expenses. The employee's decision to leave depends on their employers' satisfaction. On the other hand, voluntary turnover occurs when an employee leaves an organization of their own free will, meaning they opt to resign (Kamalaveni et al., 2019). Employee turnover is influenced by a myriad of factors, which, over time, leads to low motivation on the employee's path and poor job satisfaction on the employer's path. Personal factors that lead to voluntary turnover include career development, having a family, receiving alluring employment offers from other organizations, and burnout among others (Kamalaveni et al., 2019). Evidently, career development, compensation, employee engagement, and all significantly impact employee retention and subsequently low turnover (Khan, 2010).

Additionally, studies have shown that employee engagement is positively related to employee retention. Employee engagement is expressed in various ways. These include the physical, where participation and energy are obvious; the psychological, where mental focus and alignment with organizational goals are apparent; the emotional, where passion and investment in work are evident; and the cognitive, where careful problem-solving and contributions to creative solutions are evident (Singh and Arumugam, 2021).
Ultimately, the organization will benefit from this thorough engagement, which is manifested as strong commitment and all-encompassing

involvement by employees in their respective positions. According to Ali and Mehreen (2019) employee engagement involves much more than just employee retention. Employees that are fully invested in their work contribute physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Organizations may significantly increase employee engagement, retain high-performing employees, and boost productivity by strategically implementing career development programs. In turn, these employees are able to anticipate long-term career routes within the organization and beyond by intentionally focusing on professional growth opportunities. As established by the literature, career development, employee engagement and employee retention are critical to the progress of organizations (Khan, 2010). This review explores the relationship between career development and employee retention and how the mediating role of employee engagement influence this relationship.

2. CONCEPT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Organizations have long recognized that a comprehensive career emphasis must diffuse every aspect of their human resource management system to promote effective career development. This can be understood from two perspectives: organization's perspective and employee's or individual perspective (Prince, 2005).

From the organization's perspective, this line of action establishes a connection between new performance standards and available human resources for vacant job positions. On the other hand, for employees it could mean a change in direction toward new learning goals and objectives, rewards for prior successes, elevated status, and recognition in the organization or future employment (Prince, 2005). Prince further argues that beyond these two perspectives, there may be a potential indication to both parties that a long-term work-related connection and mutual commitments are expected. Yet, even if the emphasis is on positive organizational outcomes, the inclusion of career development focus into an HR approach provides increased benefits to employees, such that their future job security is protected (Prince, 2005).

Career development programs should be tailored to the needs of each individual working for the firm, as noted by (Baruch, 1996). To him, individuals and employees at large differ greatly in their demands, career stages, levels of hierarchy, and many other work attributes. Thus, career planning and management needs to be broad and varied in order to meet the range of unique needs of individuals. If organizations fail to recognize this, efforts tailored toward employee career development may be irrelevant or inappropriate to the diverse range of individuals employed in an organization (Prince, 2005). According to (Herr, 2001) career development practices are being challenged to find new paradigms and new scientific bases in the emerging world of the present and the future. He argued that in the 1990s, research focused more on career development practices across a wide range of career issues, settings, and populations. However, in recent years the literature on career development has focused on how the concept might influence organizational effectiveness by guiding planned career intervention programs (Herr, 2001).

3. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A structured means of striking a balance between an individual's career needs and the organization's workforce requirements can be accomplished through career development (Hassan et al., 2013). Mita et al., (2014) highlights lack of career development opportunities as one of the reasons in employee turnover. Their research discovered that when career growth opportunities are available within an organization, employees are more likely to exhibit stronger loyalty and stay with the company longer. Empirical evidence suggests that many employees join organizations because of the career development opportunities which put them at a competitive advantage with other employees in similar positions. This is because employees can plan their future careers in the organization with the assistance of career development, which enables both the organization and the employees involved to reach their full potential (Sitohang, 2019). These career retention practices that focus on career development opportunities include training and development, creating opportunities for career progress, high-potential management, and

facilitating internal mobility (De Vos and Meganck, 2009).

Career development opportunities directly impact employee retention (Hassan et al., 2013). In their study exploring views on retention management from a psychological contract, De Vos & Meganck (2009) found that advancement in career development opportunities for employees was a strong predictor of employee retention in organizations. A recent study by Ghani et al. (2022) observed career development opportunities as a means of employee satisfaction influencing employee retention.

4. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement "refers to the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" (Harter et al., 2002). Based on Kahn's theory on engagement, they argued that there is engagement when people are alert in their cognitive processes and emotionally invested in others. To them when employees understand their responsibilities, have access to the tools needed to carry out tasks, feel that their work has a meaningful impact on their livelihood, have a sense of feeling that they make up part of a larger team with reliable colleagues, and have opportunities to grow and learn i.e., career development opportunities, then they are more emotionally and cognitively engaged at work.

Kahn, (1990) conceptualized employee engagement as personal. To him personal engagement is the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performances". To him, it is common for individuals to use and express some aspects of themselves in the best situations. Therefore, individuals alter their personal engagements depending on what they believe to be the advantages, the significant, security or the safety in a given situation. Additionally, employees' levels of engagement differ based on the resources they believe they possess. Thus, employees are able to make informed decisions on remaining or quitting organizations they work for.

However, other factors such as workplace environment and management teams also influence engagement (Harter et al., 2002). For instance, using the job demand-resources JD-R model, (Salanova and Schaufeli, 2008) argues that low job resources such as performance feedback, job control, decision-making participation, and social support influence employee engagement, while high job demands such as physical demands, time pressure, and shift work are linked to burnout which often leads to poor motivation. Studies have shown that employee engagement helps reduce turnover and increase in productivity in organizations (Foday, 2014). Thus, engagement describes a more enduring affective-motivational state that is not concentrated on a particular behaviour, as opposed to a transient and specialized state like an emotion. In addition, they highlight three dimensions of engagement: vigor which is "characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties", dedication, "characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge" and absorption which is "characterized by being fully concentrated and engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work" (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008).

5. EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Employee retention is essential to the long-term growth and performance of any organization. The capacity of any organization to retain its high performing employees or talents is imperative for a number of reasons, including improved customer satisfaction, organizational performance as measured by higher sales, contented co-workers and reporting staff, efficient succession planning among others (Lahkar Das and Baruah, 2013).
According to Foday, (2014) strategies for employee retention are selected and put in place to ensure that employees remain and contribute to the accomplishment of organizational objectives. This position is consistent with literature on retention, which looks at retention from the perspective of organizations that intend to retain their high performing employees. For example, Lahkar Das & Baruah, (2013) views retention as an encouragement process initiated by the organization. They argue that retention is

a process where employees are urged to stay with an organization for as long as possible or until a project is completed. Nonetheless, there are also personal or individualized reasons on the path of the employee that influence whether to stay or quit an organization. These are the personal perspectives as explained by (Kyndt et al., 2009). To Kyndt and colleagues, personal qualities that make each employee unique can significantly impact how committed they are to an organization, either positively or negatively, and this ultimately determines their retention intentions. For instance, he asserts that factors such as self-perceived leadership skills and longer service in the organization positively influenced retention because these individuals have an emotional attachment to the organization. On the other hand, factors such as level of education and fatigue which lead to low employee motivation negatively influence employee retention (Kyndt et al., 2009). Thus, a comprehensive analysis of these individual variations provides important insights into the variables that influence employee retention.

6. MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The mediating role of employee engagement in the career development and employee retention has been established. For instance, Alias et al., (2016) argued that employee engagement mediated the relationship between career development practices i.e., talent management practices and employee retention individually, according to the findings of a hierarchical regression study used to determine the mediating effect of employee engagement.

They established that the effect was direct and significant. Consistent with this was a study by Salanova & Schaufeli, (2008) who used structural equation modelling to test the mediating role of employee engagement using samples in Spain and The Netherlands. The results in both samples demonstrated that the relationship between job resources and proactive behaviour which can potentially influence retention is mediated by employee engagement. The underlying principle of that study was the use of employee engagement as a selected metric to assess intrinsic motivation in the workplace environment. Alias et al., (2016) studied the relationship between employee engagement and employee retention in organizations. Their

results revealed that there was a positive correlation between employee engagement and employee retention.

7. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Employee retention can be promoted or influenced by career development as one of the human resource techniques (Al-sharafi, 2018). Additionally, a number of important processes, including performance management, hiring, and onboarding, training and development, reward and recognition, and employee retention, are linked to career development and employee retention. Together, these systems enhance organizations' performance, retention, and productivity (Foday, 2014). Thus, the influence of employee retention by the successful implementation of career development initiative in any given organization cannot be overestimated. Additionally, Bhattacharya's (2015) study on employee retention as a predictor of retention revealed that the two variables were positively correlated. The study's conclusions offer proof of a strong and favourable relationship between employee retention and employee engagement levels. This suggests that retention rates rise in a positive and proportionate way as employee engagement does.

Setting up strong career development programs in an organization is imperative to creating an environment where employees develop professionally and get a strong sense of ownership in the success of the organization (Nagarathanam et al., 2018). Their study established that the relationship between career development and employee retention was significant and positive. A similar study by Al-sharafi, (2018) found that there was no relationship between career development and employee retention. However, in reality, career development opportunities along with other factors such as work-life balance and job content have a greater impact on employees (De Vos and Meganck, 2009). For instance, Dwomoh and Frempong, (2017) argue that most employees join companies to advance their careers and realize their full potential through training, growth opportunities, and promotions provided by their employers.

8. CHALLENGES TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Structure of Organizations

If training and career growth are taken into account, organizational structure can significantly impact an individual's work condition, according to Tharenous et al. (1994). Men in management are likely to impede the advancement of women in the hierarchy of managers. All things considered, a rigid organization with few job openings has a detrimental impact on career development. Career routes and chances for development and promotion should be considered the same as successful management growth, according to Beardwel et al. (2004).

Individual Factors

According to Torrington and Hall (1995), an individual's role is crucial in controlling their career. Nonetheless, an organization's ability to support certain employees might be crucial. If employees do not take training that aligns with the organization's goals and objectives, their careers will not advance. Mullins (2005) provided support for this claim by stating that training must be pertinent to the objectives and needs of the organization for management to encourage the personal growth of each employee. According to Graham and Bennet (1995), workers must set clear goals, prioritize their careers, and continuously assess their successes and shortcomings.

Political Factors

Career development can be impeded by unclear policies in organizations, particularly when there is corruption, nepotism, or ethnic discrimination present. According to An Nzuve (2007), managers can create situations that prevent certain people from advancing in their careers. However, some organizations, for instance, might need to be viewed within the broader framework of national politics. Without a doubt, The Evergreen Business Group (2006) acknowledges that organizational politics can result in a number of issues that might create victimization, a disregard for ethics, talent, and manipulation by supervisors in their discussion on speeding career achievement. According to Robbins (2005), policies that managers can use to reward and recognize their "favourite" workers demoralize the rest of the workforce.

Social Factors

Once more, a person's career growth begins in childhood. Changing careers to pursue a more flexible work that allows one to raise children also means giving up on goals in a company that had offered steady employment; Torrington & Hall (1998) highlight this disruption of a person's career path. Career may also come into play while deciding how to accommodate a spouse's or husband's professional goals. Feelings of inferiority for women, racial minorities, or social class identities can impede career choices and advancement (Torrington & Hall, 1998).

9. CONCLUSION

This review examines how important it is for organizations to help their employees grow in their careers. It is noted that when companies focus on keeping their employees happy and staying in their jobs, it leads to better overall success. The challenges of employees leaving their jobs, whether by choice or not, highlight the need for organizations to consider things like career growth opportunities, family needs, and other job offers. The positive connection between engaged employees and staying with the company stresses the importance of having committed and involved workers. Career development must cater for both the needs of the company and the individuals working there.

Despite the challenges, the review emphasizes that investing in career development benefits the organization and gives employees a sense of ownership and commitment. Understanding how career development, employee engagement, and retention work together is crucial for organizations to do well. By focusing on helping employees grow, companies can build a motivated and committed team, ensuring long-term success and competitiveness in today's changing work environment. As organizations face the challenges of turnover and shifting workforce dynamics, investing in the growth and development of employees remains a key to lasting success.

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