

CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND HRM EFFECTIVE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The main aim of the study was to examine the role of proactive personality in the relationship between organizational sponsorship and career success of the managerial staff in large scale manufacturing firms in Kenya. Consequently, two hypotheses were formulated with the aim of achieving the set objective. The study was guided by positivist research paradigm and descriptive cross-sectional research design was adopted, primary data was collected from managerial staff of large scale manufacturing firms in Kenya. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. All the measurement items met reliability and validity tests. Hypotheses were tested using linear regression model. The findings indicated that proactive personality moderates the relationship between organizational sponsorship and career success. The study supports leader member exchange (LmX) theory which advocates for organizational sponsorship for career success of employees and social cognitive career theory (SCCT) that advocates for interaction.

Key Words: organizational sponsorship, proactive personality, career success

Introduction

The nature of jobs as well as organizations have changed, this has created challenges on how to define, describe, to estimate and to achieve career success. Jobs have been subjected to many contextual changes following organizational restructuring (Frese, 2001) the emerging new concepts on career such as boundaryless career and protean career are a pointer to the changes in roles in career management from the companies to individuals (Hall, 2004). changes have seen a major alteration in the traditional hierarchical organizational structures. Organizations today are less structured with many becoming flatter. With these changes, the relationship between the business owners and staff has been altered. Individuals can no longer be assured of assistance from their organization for the fulfillment of their own career success. in turn has facilitated the need for people to look for new ways of managing their careers (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Proactive personality is perceived to play a major role in not only defining career strategies adopted by an individual but also the possibility of an individual obtaining organizational sponsorship and succeeding in their careers (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2006).

In the quest for career success employees are bound to face many challenges that calls for support from the organization. Even for proactive individuals, despite their ability to

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overcome obstacles and challenges that may hinder the achievement of their career goals, there are situations that are beyond their control such as decision on salary increment and promotion which are never left at the discretion of an individual. Consequently, organizations need to respond to individual initiatives to career success through provision of resource, training, mentorship, supervisor support and generally providing conducive working environment that will enhance employees' career success without which career success will still remain a challenge to most employees (Barnet & Bradley, 2007).

focus in manufacturing sector in Kenya is based on its strategic role in the achievement of vision 2030. there is need for managerial staff in this sector to spearhead the growth and development of the sector towards the achievement of this vision. Unfortunately, the sector has not been making major contributions to the country's GDP as expected given its strong manufacturing base in the country as compared to other countries like Tanzania and Uganda (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2017). moon and Choi (2017) observe that employees' career success, which is a product of the effort made by both individual and organization, determines the expected outcomes of the firms in which employees are engaged in. Organizational sponsorship programs like training and development help in improving the skills and competences of the staff which is an added advantage as far as performance of the job is concerned. Furthermore, mentoring of talented individuals prepares the organization for future replacement of those in managerial positions in case of retirement or untimely exits by the staff. Staff also gains satisfaction and commitment when their career goals and plans are aligned to the goals of the organizations. Therefore, in as much as the employees need to have a direct control of their careers, organizations still need to provide necessary support aimed at enhancing the staff's career success (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom, 2005).

Organizational Sponsorship

The level of assistance provided by organizations to the employees to enable them to succeed in their careers has been described by authors in several ways: organization support (Barnet & Bradley, 2007), organization career management (Ndegua, 2016), career development practices (Kamau, 2017) and organizational sponsorship (Ng, Eby, Sorensen & Feldman, 2005). This study adopted the term organizational sponsorship in corroboration with the study by Ng. et al (2005) who used the term to define the level of special assistance organizations provide to their staff to facilitate their career success. Furthermore, the study by Ng. et al (2005) also identified the components used to describe organizational sponsorship as training and development, mentorship, supervisor support and organization resources that have been used in this study. Organizational support perspective upholds that reciprocal engagement between staff and management begins when the company provides an authentic and good working environment for employees who in return feel obligated to accomplish the set objectives of the organization (Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). Organizational sponsorship is perceived by the staff as an aspect of value attached to them and their contribution towards the success of the organization by the employer, this perception generates positive feelings such as self-esteem, and career satisfaction (Nayir, 2012). According to Ng. et al (2005) organizational sponsorship consist of four main components: mentorship, training, supervisor support and organization resources.

mentorship refers to socialization and reciprocal association that helps transforms the behavior of the people involved (Brockbank & mc Gill, 2006). mentoring can be categorized

into two, formal and informal. Formal mentoring is carried out by a staff assigned by the firm. The association ranges from 6 months to 1 year. A contract is approved by the mentor and the mentee (Allen et al., 2006). The contract spells the schedules for the meetings. The formal mentoring programs are based on training, staff orientation, individual and career growth, it also acts as a form of sponsorship and offers the mentee exposure in the organization. The formal mentoring is defined by the organization and is more related to work aspects within the organization and takes place for an agreed period of time. On the other hand, the informal aspect is not controlled by the organization, but the mentee has his or her own discretion to choose his or her mentor who acts as a role model. The association relies on the agreement made by both parties and is marked with closeness. The mentee gains the necessary guidance and support whereas the mentor gains satisfaction from the mentoring offered and acknowledgement from the company. With informal mentorship the period is not restricted, and the relationship may last as long as it is deemed appropriate (Bozionelos, 2004).

mentoring is observed as an association between a person who is more enlightened and a less experienced one. A mentor offers counseling, guidance and modeling (Hall, 2007). These relationships are initiated with the view of developing career functions. mentorship can range from several activities offered to the mentee such as provision of challenging assignments, provision of exposure and visibility in the organization by participating in various activities, paying attention to the mentee's level of competence, giving the mentee adequate and proper information on what the job involves, informing the mentee of important issues affecting the company (Bozionelos, 2004). The process of mentoring is beneficial to both parties; the mentor and the mentee. Apart from facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills to the mentee, the mentor also gains career satisfaction just like the mentee.

Training is the process of improving the capacity of the workforce by allowing them to advance their level of education, through attending seminars and workshop and through engaging in the job itself (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Training imparts knowledge, skills and competences to the employees thus improving their efficiencies and effectiveness in job performance. It is regarded as an investment in human capital regardless of whether the investment is as a result of the effort by the individual or by the organization. Organizations in offering training to their employees not only enhance the staff's performance on the job but also fulfill their obligation as part of the psychological contract with their employees (Lewis & Arnold, 2012). Individuals who are offered training gain feelings of appreciation from their organization and endeavor to devote their time and effort to work towards the fulfilment of the goals and strategies of the companies. Opportunities for training are a major step as far as employees' career success is concerned. The skills acquired through training prepare the individuals involved for future job openings and higher positions.

Supervisor support is the level of assistance offered to the staff by the managers or superiors on the aspects of the job and can be geared towards enhancing an individual's achievement of career success. Supervisors can provide assistance to the employees through offering them protection especially in cases of victimization arising from either management staff or the co-workers, providing appropriate feedback for job performance which motivates as well as enable the employee to improve on their performance, providing practical support whenever

necessary, adopting a collaborative approach in supervision through consultation with the employee in matters pertaining to job performance, providing support to accomplish tasks or meet the set deadlines, assigning their staff more responsibilities that increases their contact with influential people in the organization as well as creating visibility of the staff in the company and potential for consideration for a higher position in the organization (Ng, et al., 2005).

Organizations can as well offer financial support and non-financial support to their staff (Ng, et al., 2005). financial support can take different forms: For instance, scholarship, certain organization provide finances to their staff to further their education with a commitment on the part of the employees that they will have to work for the firm for agreed period of time on completion of their studies before seeking for other employment outside the organization, others still, will provide paid study leaves to the staff in order for them to pursue their studies. Basically, the main intention of providing financial support to the employees is to help them improve on their skill and knowledge and to help them prepare for future high position that may arise within the organization (Bozionelos, 2008). The non-financial aspects are non-monetary resources that can include time to further one's studies, this can be in form of study leaves, off duty during particular times of the day to attend to career related issues, flexibility on time to allow for skill development and opportunities for career growth within the organization. Apart from enabling employees to develop a more balanced work life, employees generally utilize these opportunities to advance in their career, while others derive career satisfaction from such jobs that are more flexible.

Proactive personality

trait was introduced by Bateman and Crant (1993). It is defined by self-directed behavior and tendency to control obstacles and situational forces and the ability to define and direct one's own career. Proactive personality is a trait that distinguishes individuals based on the extent to which they control and manipulate their environments for their own good. Typically, people with proactive personalities are not constrained by obstacles and situations but instead fight and to the end enduring to bring about the necessary changes in their environment.

It generally describes the ability to create and sustain actions that can directly change the environment (Bateman and Grant, 1993). Proactive personality is a fundamental personality because it considers the possibility that people can alter their environments instead of allowing themselves to be bent by these changes. It is built on the premise that one's behavior can be controlled both from within and outside, and that circumstances are as much a consequence of people and vice versa. Consequently, there exist a reciprocal causal relationship between a person, environment, and behavior (Bandura, 2002). Therefore, people can deliberately alter their present situations to facilitate the achievement of their career objectives.

Proactive individuals usually excel in scanning the environment for opportunities and spotting these opportunities. also develop their objectives, take necessary actions that are geared towards the achievements of the set objectives, and endure until they meet these objectives (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Consequently, proactive individuals initiate constructive change through: striving to change the normal order of things, engaging in constant search of new ways of doing things, fixing what they don't like and correcting faulty

procedures within and outside their organizations. Furthermore, these individuals are more result oriented in their action.

On the contrary, people who are not proactive display the opposing behavior, such people are not able to recognize and maximize on the existing opportunities to improve on their situations. They are less motivated to put forth effort in order to realize their objectives (Sun & Zang, 2014). They demonstrate less initiative in initiating changes and depend on other people to bring the expected changes. These individuals lack control of their situation and are usually deterred by obstacle and circumstances of their environment hence they basically conform to their Situations (Yang & Chau, 2016).

Career Success

Career is regarded as a descriptive and evaluative term. The descriptive term refers to a person's occupational life course that is characterized by job changes, relocations, unemployment period, times of further development and promotions. Career as an evaluative term refers to upward mobility and climbing up the organizational ladder. The term career has further been defined as making sense of one's professional and occupational development (Arthur, et al., 2005). The term success, on the other hand, is used to describe progress as well as to evaluate desirable outcomes in an individual's personal and professional life. People have different ways of evaluating their own success. Therefore, from the foregoing, the term career success can be said to be subjective or objective accomplishment throughout one's work life (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen & Barrick, 1999).

Career success is conceptualized in two dimensions; objective and subjective (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986; Heslin, 2003, 2005; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Ng et al., 2005). The objective dimension of career success describes the intrinsic aspect which has been defined traditionally on the basis of pay level, the number of promotions received, rank or position held by one in the organization and salary increment (Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008). The objective measures of career success are perceived to involve aspects that can be observed, measured and verified by an independent third party (Abele & Wiese, 2008; Arnold & Cohen, 2008). These measures are perceived to be beyond the control of an individual and can only be determined by the employer or the organization and other external factors (Nicholson & De Waal-Andrews, 2005).

current trends in organizations such as flattening the organization structures, downsizing, and outsourcing some of the organizational operations have not only minimized the scope of some of the traditional objective measures such as; hierarchical progression through promotion but also increasingly made it difficult to define the objective measures of career success as a whole (Hall, 2002). Furthermore, there are marked differences on the perception of status and power, systems of taxation and general societal stratification across countries which make it difficult to define fixed indicators of objective career success and compare across different nations (Hollenbeck and McCall's, 2003). Similarly, issues have been raised regarding inadequacies of traditional measures of career success, such as pay and advancement. The fact is that there are other career outcomes apart from these which people look for in their careers. Besides, the ever-changing patterns in career has seen the emergence of other new career forms for instance boundaryless career that has totally changed peoples' perception on what should define their career success. Individuals no longer seek for career growth within a single organization but rather a life career and satisfaction that goes beyond

their professional life. This sparks the need to consider both subjective with objective career attainments (Ng et al., 2005).

subjective dimension describes the intrinsic aspect and is based on people's evaluation of their own accomplishments in their occupations (Gattiker & Larwood, 1988). Subjective career success is generally expressed in terms of job satisfaction or career satisfaction. Although some studies (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Dries et al., 2008) have considered job satisfaction as an intrinsic measure of career success, the two constructs have been argued to be distinct (Heslin, 2005). While Job satisfaction refers to contentment arising from aspects related to the work and performance of the job, it does not reflect on success, consequently, it might not be a true measure of career success. Subjective career success describes contentment covering prolonged duration. It is also characterized by wide outcomes, for example, sense of purpose and creating an equilibrium between work and life, as opposed to job satisfaction, that is more or less confined to the current job, it describes positive and pleasurable feelings that one derives from his or her own career itself (Heslin, 2005). The inconsistency in the measures of subjective career success is demonstrated in the review carried out by Arthur et al. (2005) who considered a total of thirty-one studies. From the reviewed studies, twenty studies used career satisfaction as a measure of intrinsic career success while the remaining eleven studies used job satisfaction. These findings point to the need for researchers to firmly ascertain the measures of career success. the relationship between the Study variables

Organizational Sponsorship, proactive personality And career Success

Empirical studies reviewed have conceptualized proactive personality traits as an independent variable in the study of career success for example Erdogan and Bauer (2005) carried out a study on proactive personality and career success in the education sector. Although the results were positive, job satisfaction was used as a measure of career success, however, this study used career satisfaction as a measure of career success since from the reviewed literature the two terms had been distinguished and termed distinct, job satisfaction is perceived to measure only job related elements of satisfaction unlike career satisfaction that measures career aspects (Heslin, 2005). Yang and Chau's (2016) study that was carried out among supervisor-subordinate association from mainland China indicated positive relationship between personality and career success. Despite these findings, the study used data from one organization thus bringing in the challenge in establishing external validity in addition to allowing for generalization of the findings. The study conceptualized personality as the independent variable. Nevertheless, given the obstacles and challenges encountered in the pursuit of career success, this study proposes the need to use proactive personality as a moderator in the relationship between organizational sponsorship and career success. Seilbert and Kraimer (2001) used longitudinal design in the study of the relationship between proactive personality and career success among staffs and managers of various occupations. Results were in support of the relationship. This study deviates from the previous by conceptualizing proactive personality as the moderating variable and adopting a cross-sectional design. leads to the following hypothesis:

Research Methodology

This study used descriptive cross-sectional survey. The design was deemed appropriate since the study sought to establish relationships among variables and data was collected across a

large number of organizations at one point in time (mugenda & mugenda, 2003). The unit of analysis in this study was individual managers. Sampling was done in three stages: sector, firm and managerial level. In carrying out the sampling, all the twelve relevant sectors were considered. To determine the number of firms to be used in the study, the decision was made based on Stanley and Gregory's (2001) proposition that at least 10% sample of a population is appropriate when selecting sample size in cross sectional surveys. Thus, the 51 firms which is 10% of the 511 large manufacturing companies was used for this study. The selection was done randomly from each of the twelve sectors. To establish the number of managers to be used for the study, roscoe's (1975) sample size determination procedure for unknown population was used because it was difficult to get the population of managers in large manufacturing companies. The procedure suggests that a sample larger than 30 and less than 500 is appropriate. managers being the unit of analysis, it was important that the sample have a reasonable number of them. For this reason, it was assumed that at least five managers from each firm would be adequate given that most firms tend to have an average of five departments. This therefore given the total number of firms as 51, a total of 255 managers was considered for this study. The managers were randomly selected from the three levels of management.

Primary data was collected using five-point Likert-type semi-structured questionnaire. It comprised four sections: Section A addressed organization profile and personal background information of the respondents, section B sought information on organizational sponsorship, section C focused on proactive personality and section D was directed at career success. They comprised scales that were anchored on five points ranging from 1(not at all) to 5 (to a very large extent). Organizational sponsorship items were derived from studies by Ng et al.,

(2005) and Barnett and Bradley (2007). Proactive personality on the other hand, utilized the items proposed by Bateman and Crant (1993). The dimensions of career success were adopted from studies by Yean and Yahya (2011), Seilbert and Kraimer (2001) and Heslin (2005). A description on how these variables were measured is described in the Tables under reliability and validity.

questionnaire was administered through mail and through drop-and-pick-later method by the researcher and three trained research assistants. The questionnaires were accompanied by an introduction letter from the university explaining the objectives and importance of the study. This was also backed up with a letter of authorization to conduct research obtained from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). After distribution of the questionnaires, a follow up was done through text messages, telephone calls and personal visits so as to increase the rate of response. The participation in the study through filling the questionnaires was on a voluntary basis thus some managers chose not to participate. 255 questionnaires were sent to the respondents, out of which 205 questionnaires were returned. However, 2 of the questionnaires were incomplete leaving a total of 203 usable questionnaires. The human resource managers in all the companies where the data was collected were responsible for distributing the questionnaires within their respective organizations and collecting them after they were filled. In this study the researcher and the assistants approached the human resource managers and explained to them the purpose of the study and the support required from them. Particularly, the human resource managers

were requested to issue the questionnaires randomly to the managers in the three levels of management.

Conclusions, Implications And Future Research

This study has established that offering organizational sponsorship leads to the staff's career success and that this relationship is moderated by proactive personality. Consequently, the study recommends that manufacturing firms should enhance their managers' career success by providing them with organizational sponsorship programs. The identified beneficial programs include training mentorship, supervisor support and financial and nonfinancial resources. Secondly, the study shows that proactive personality is a moderator in the study with career success as the dependent variable, something that had been ignored by the previous studies that had conceptualized it as an independent variable. Apart from this, to a larger extent it helps to provide direction on the unresolved argument in the existing theoretical literature on whether proactive personality is a desirable or undesirable trait with respect to organizational sponsorship and career success. At the same time the study provides direction on the measures of subjective career success through successful use of career satisfaction as a measure of subjective dimension of career success.

The findings have implications for managerial practice particularly in recruitment and selection of managerial staff. Hiring firms might consider individuals with proactive personalities who can better fit and are proactive in bringing the necessary acceptable changes to the organization while at the same time being capable of achieving career success to the benefit of the organization through their commitment in their jobs. In this era where most organizations perceive career development as the responsibility of the individual staff, firms can take advantage of the situation to offer these practices to their employees not only to enhance their individual career success but also to capitalize on these practices to make their employees more competent, more loyal and committed to the organization and maintain a competitive edge over the companies within the industry.

The use of cross-sectional survey design may not measure the causal effects accurately on the observed relationships between study variables and therefore may not depict the exact association that exist between organizational sponsorship, proactive personality and career success of managers in large manufacturing companies in Kenya. Longitudinal study would have been appropriate though this was not possible because of the limited time. Further, career success was measured using perceptual data only; secondary data would have added more value by verifying the information given by the respondents. This was not possible since most organizations were reluctant to provide their secondary data. The prevailing fear was on the leakage of information to their competitors. For measuring objective CS, secondary data would have been very necessary to provide more valid results on the association among between the variables. The study was undertaken among managerial staff in manufacturing sector only. measures of objective career success for instance; salary may differ in different sectors and professions. The variation may be in terms of the perceived prestige attached to the profession or job groups and grades. These findings hence must be used with caution because they may not be applicable to other sectors like education sector and so on.

This study used cross-sectional research design, future research should employ longitudinal research design to assess the relationship between organizational sponsorship and career

success and also organizational sponsorship, proactive personality and career success. The causal relationship between organizational sponsorship and career success requires time, career success is not a one-time off experience but a life-long experience. Besides, employees have to be in an organization for a given period of time to benefit from sponsorship. In addition to this, career success was assessed using perceptual data only, Future research may benefit from using multiple sources of data and especially secondary data when measuring objective career success. The current study was carried out among managerial staff in manufacturing sector. Future studies can focus on other sectors and on other professionals. It would be interesting to find out what employees in other sectors, professions and countries perceive as career satisfaction and also what they value as far as objective career success is concerned. Furthermore, it would be important to find out whether proactive personality is considered an important trait across other professions and sectors when it comes to organizational sponsorship.

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