

Workforce Career Needs and the Organization's Career Management Activities

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Abstract : *The focus of the study was about the extent to which the organization's career management activities matches its employees career needs. Using the theories of career needs and organizational career management, the study attempted to examine the career needs of a group of workers and their employing organization's career management activities to see if the needs were met. A cross-sectional correlational study design was used. The setting was in Kenya, Africa, in a suburb area outside of Nairobi. Using random sampling procedure, 155 questionnaires were distributed to a group of individuals who worked in various organizations in that area. A self-designed questionnaire was used as instrument and was divided principally into two major sections that surveyed the needs and the organizational management activities. The findings showed significant differences in the way individuals view their career needs based on gender, age and tenure. The study also indicated that the organizations do not sufficiently inquire about the career needs of the individual workers. Finally, the study showed that, although the employees agree that the organizations have career management activities, some aspects of the needs are not met.*

Keywords – career, career needs, decent work, organizational career management

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I. Introduction

Among the Sustainable Development Goals set out by the United Nations for 2030 is that of decent work for all. Decent work means to have the opportunity to make a living and to find personal development. In every society, work remains an integral part of the life of individuals. Nevertheless, in the 21st century, technology and global competition are reshaping the way one thinks about work, and the way one works. "Work is in a state of flux as companies change basic work processes, job requirements and expectations, and organizational structures to focus more on customers' needs" [1]. Individuals do more than just make ends meet when they work. The work itself may give a sense of achievement when it leads to a fulfilling career. The fact that someone holds a job does not mean he has a career. Someone is said to have a career if she follows a "path that will end in some kind of career capstone experience"[2]. It focuses on an intentional move to take on more and more responsibility and to perform a job that demands more and more skills to be accomplished well. It is a state of continuous learning [3]. In that sense, it can be said that decent work can lead to a fulfilling career

Africa's labor force is increasing at such a pace that by 2020, 122 million individuals will join the actual workforce of more than 500 million. Every year there are 10 to 12 million new workers ready to enter the work place in sub-Sahara Africa alone [4]. Currently, 70% of Africans are under the age of 25 and the youth population constitutes about 37 percent of the total labor force. These young people will look for employment. Furthermore, by 2040, most of the youth of the continent will be of the female gender [5]. That means that more and more women will need to be absorbed in the workforce. To create decent work for these individuals, thus offering them the opportunity to make a successful career for themselves, is a real challenge that must be taken up.

This study attempts to examine the career needs of a group of workers and their employing organization's career management activities to see if the latter is meeting those needs. The setting of the study is a group of employees, selected at random from various firms located in a suburban area on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya. The study will contribute to the growing number of research done within developing countries, in particular in Africa, regarding work, career needs and the organization's role in managing employees' career.

II. Theory

1. Career Needs

Changes that have swept across the world and have affected the way people work, have opened new opportunities for both the organization and the employee. In an effort to keep his job, the latter needs to reconsider his career needs and development. Globalization, information technology development and

networking has created a platform where employees are in touch with a much wider environment than their predecessors have had just decades before. The situation has also created the need to constantly sharpen the skills of the 21st century employee for her to maintain her job within the organization.

Several studies have shown that personal as well as organizational factors tend to influence career needs. Among the personal factors, gender stereotypes seem to have a significant place [6], [7], [8]. Indeed, gender moderates the relationship between career aspirations and career success [9]. Another study highlight the factors that affect the career aspirations of women [10]. Other studies look into the influence of age, socioeconomic status and the level of education on career aspirations and needs [11], [12], [13].

2. Organizational Career Management.

The term "organizational career management" is defined as the regulations as well as the intentional practices that organizations set up to influence their employees' career development [14]. The motives advanced by companies to do so are, among others, to develop employee performance, empower managers and give more to employees to look forward to than just a salary and a promotion [15]. If correctly introduced and managed, organizational career management can create benefits for the organization in the form of committed employees who will remain with the organization. Indeed, this is the ultimate aim of the organization's efforts [16]. However, other studies have shown that career management activities can also widen the horizon of the employment and encourage them to look for opportunities outside of the organization if the latter lacks career development opportunities [17], [18].

Indeed, in our modern economy employees are encouraged to rely less on the organization and more on themselves to manage their careers. Two options are available to the employee: to stay within the organization and continuously improve her skills and aptitude so as to move along the vertical career ladder or to make a lateral move or to get ready to transfer in another organization and, sometimes, in an altogether different career path. It is up to the individual to make such a decision [19], [20]. That does not mean that the organization has no role to play at all. In fact, the career management activities of the organization influence the career management activities of the individual and vice versa [21].

3. Linking Career Needs and Organizational Career Management

The career needs of individuals are influenced by personal factors (gender, age, family situation, and others) as well as the factors at play in the workplace. In as much as the individuals are the ones who are expected to construct their careers, their interests and needs are shaped and updated through their daily work experience. Because of this, a joint responsibility is expected, where both the individuals and the organizations are engaged in managing the employee careers [22]. Nevertheless, many employees depend more or less heavily on the organization to provide career development opportunities.

4. Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the career needs of the employees?
2. Is there a significant difference in the career needs of the individuals based on personal factors such as gender, age, academic qualification, tenure and occupation?
3. To what extent do the organizations inquire about the individual's career needs?
4. To what extent do the organizations implement career management activities?
5. Are the needs expressed by the employees being met through the career management activities of the organizations?

III. Methodology

A cross-sectional correlational study design was used for this study. The setting is in Kenya, Africa, in a suburb area outside of Nairobi. A random sampling was done among a group of individuals who work in that area of the city. It is estimated that around 300 individuals work in this area. These are mainly individuals who are middle-managers (supervisors) and skilled workers employed in medium-sized, local companies. To satisfy the sampling requirement of the study, 155 questionnaires were distributed and 105 were returned, giving a response rate of 68%. A self-designed questionnaire was used as instrument. The questionnaire was chosen for ease of administration and analysis. It is divided into four sections. The first section was the demographic variables section. A second section comprising a Likert scale deals with the employees' career needs variable. There were 4 items in that section. The needs were categorized in two dimensions: need to develop and be promoted along the same area of expertise and the need to develop and expand one's level of expertise beyond the current situation/organization. The Likert Scale in that section is a 4 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strong Disagree. A third section was to find out if the organization enquires about career needs. Only one item was used for this section. A fourth section addressed the organizational career management variable.

This was also a Likert scale form and had 9 items. For this one, the Likert scale is a 5 point scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. In order to test the inter item consistency reliability for both variables a Chronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated. For the career needs variable the Chronbach's coefficient alpha was 0.82 and for the organizational career management was 0.80. Further a factor analysis was done for the latter questionnaire and it was found that the management activities are actually reduced into three factors from the principal component extraction with varimax rotation analysis. The three dimensions were: a) activities geared towards gaining experience on the job such as "on-the-job training" – in this study called "on-the-job experience"; b) activities geared towards further career development opportunities such as "acting in higher positions", called "stretching" in this study; c) activities upgrading outside of the organization such as "study leave" called "upgrading". These three variables were therefore used during the analysis.

In order to see if the needs of the employees were being met by the career management activities in place by the organization, a correlation analysis was done.

The questionnaires were distributed to the participants with a cover letter and they were asked to respond within two weeks. After two weeks, 86% of the questionnaires were returned. SPSS Version 23 was used to analyze the data.

IV. Findings

5. Demographics

Table 1 below gives a succinct description of the various demographic variables of the respondents. In summary, it is found that the majority of the respondents were male, are between 26-35 years old, hold a B.A., have been with the organization between 2-5 years, and is the sole bread winner of their household. One fourth of them are in administrative posts, and one fifth in finance and accounting occupations.

Table 1: Frequency Regarding the Demographic Variables

<u>Gender</u>		<u>Academic Qualification</u>	
Male	60%	HSC	8%
Female	40%	Diploma	29%
<u>Occupation</u>		Bachelors	51%
Supervision	25%	Masters	13%
Finance and Accounting	21%	<u>Number of income earners in the household</u>	
Information Technology	9%	1 income earner	54%
Sales/Marketing	16%	More than 1 income earner	46%
Education	11%	<u>Age</u>	
Health	12%	Less than 25 years old	2%
Maintenance	6%	26-35 years old	68%
<u>Tenure in the organization</u>		36-45 years old	19%
Less than 2 years	30%	46-55 years old	10%
2-5 years	45%	More than 55 years old	1%
6-10 years	17%		
11-15 years	8%		

6. Career Needs

The first research question dealt with the extent of the career aspirations of the employees. The needs are categorized in two dimensions: need to develop and be promoted along the same area of expertise and the need to develop and expand one's level of expertise beyond the current situation/organization. Table 2 shows the means and standard deviation along those lines. In general, the level of needs of the employees is quite high.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Regarding the Career Needs of the Workers

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Need to develop vertically	105	2	4	3.32	.791
Need to gain expertise within one's field	105	1	4	3.65	.650
Need to expand one's expertise into another area	105	1	4	3.22	.971
Need to prepare to move beyond the current situation/ organization	105	1	4	3.00	.899

Further, an analysis was done to see if there is a significant difference in the level of career needs based on the demographic variables. To that effect, a t-test and ANOVA was carried out for each variable. Table 3 below shows the findings. It was found that a significant difference exists when it comes to gender, age, and

tenure. Men express more career needs than their female counterparts. For age, those who are between 26-35 years old express more needs than the other groups. For tenure, it was found that those who have been longer within the organization in terms of years express less needs than those who have just started their career. This may be explained by the fact that those who have been in employment longer may have had their needs fulfilled already, or on the contrary have been disappointed and have lost hope.

Table 3: Significant differences regarding the needs based on demographic variables

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
For Gender	2.342	103	0.021	.30754	.13131
	2.209	70.403	0.030	.30754	.13921
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
For Age					
Between groups	9.817	3	3.272	8.856	.000
Within groups	37.320	101	0.370		
Total	47.137	104			
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
For Tenure					
Between groups	4.702	3	1.567	3.730	.014
Within groups	42.435	101	0.420		
Total	47.137	104			

7. Inquiry regarding career needs

The second research question was about the extent to which the organizations actually inquire about the career needs of their employees. The findings from Table 4 indicate that the organizations tend not to inquire too much about their employees' career need (mean = 2.67). This is an area of concern, considering the fact the employees do have career needs, based on the previous findings.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics regarding inquiry about career needs

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Inquiry about my career development needs	105	1	5	2.67	1.080
Valid N	105				

8. Career management activities

For the third research question, an analysis was done first regarding the extent to which the organizations have career management activities. Table 5 (below) indicates that the organization does maintain those activities. The upgrading part is slightly lower than the other two types of activities. This may be due to the fact the upgrading requires a monetary investment, and the organizations may not have the means to do so. That would explain why, too, the experience on the job has a higher mean: it is easier to implement since it is within the organization itself.

Table 5: Extent of organizational career management activities

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Upgrading	105	1.00	5.00	2.9365	1.00117
Experience Gained	105	1.33	5.00	3.3302	.75319
Stretching	105	1.50	4.75	3.0167	.75021

The analysis was pushed further to see if there was a significant difference in the organizational career management activities based on the demographic variables. Table 6 shows a significant differences for gender when it comes to the component "experience gained on the job" and "upgrading". This study found that for the component "experience gained on the job", males' rating regarding the intervention of the organization is significantly lower (mean =3.1) compared to females' (mean = 3.6). For the component "stretching", males rated the intervention of the organization at 2.9 whereas females rated at a 3.2. For the component of organizational career management, "upgrading" there is no significant difference based on gender.

Table 6: Significant differences regarding the organizational career management based on gender

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Upgrading	1.399	103	.165	.27778
	1.420	92.303	.159	.27778
Experience	-3.364	103	.001	-.48148
	-3.448	95.014	.001	-.48148
Stretching	-2.389	103	.019	-.34921
	-2.271	72.624	.026	-.34921

For the variable age, an ANOVA test was applied and a significant difference was found both on upgrading and experience gained, but not for stretching (see Table 7 below). A post-hoc test showed that there were differences at all the levels of age.

Table 7: Significant differences regarding organizational career management activities

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Upgrading	Between Groups	14.787	3	4.929	5.565	.001
	Within Groups	89.457	101	.886		
	Total	104.243	104			
Experience Gained	Between Groups	13.728	3	4.576	10.209	.000
	Within Groups	45.271	101	.448		
	Total	58.999	104			
Stretching	Between Groups	3.642	3	1.214	2.234	.089
	Within Groups	54.892	101	.543		
	Total	58.533	104			

9. Matching career needs with organizational career management activities

The last research question analyzed whether the employees' needs were being met by the organization career management activities. A significant correlation was found when it comes to the needs within the confines of the organization (need to develop for promotion, and need to gain expertise within one's own field). However, for the needs to expand and develop and be prepared to move out of the current line of expertise and/or organization, no significant correlation was found, as depicted in table 8 below.

Table 8: Correlation analysis regarding expressed career needs and organizational career management activities

		Stretching	Experience	Upgrading
Need to develop vertically	Pearson Correlation	.125	.239*	.472**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.205	.014	.000
	N	105	105	105
Need to expand to another work area	Pearson Correlation	-.121	-.017	.054
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.220	.867	.584
	N	105	105	105
Need to gain expertise within one's own field	Pearson Correlation	-.062	.135	.236*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.531	.169	.015
	N	105	105	105
Need to prepare to move beyond the situation/organization	Pearson Correlation	-.150	-.170	-.167
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.127	.082	.088
	N	105	105	105

V. Conclusion

The findings in this study suggest that organizations still play a role in the individual worker's life. The individual career needs differ based on their gender, age and tenure. This confirms literature that indicates the same. The implication of this is that organizations need to consider the needs of each group of individuals within the workplace. The study also indicated that the organizations in general do not sufficiently inquire about the career needs of the individual workers. There is room for improvement in that domain. Finally the study shows that employees view the level of activities regarding career management differently based on their gender, and age. Again, this study confirms other studies in the sense that career management activities should not be done with a one-size-fit-all approach. Various groups perceive, and therefore, can potentially react, differently to the organizational interventions. The career needs expressed by the employees are met only partially through the career management activities. Indeed, a weak but significant correlation was found between the needs that pertained to development that would serve the organization only – promotion and

acquisition of skills for inside use. However, when it comes to expanding in another field (thus gaining more knowledge outside of the current field of work) or preparing to move beyond the current situation or the organization, it was found that not much is being done by the employing organizations. That implies that the individuals need to find ways to expand their expertise outside of the organization.

The paper does not pretend to have touched all the areas of the concept of career needs and organizational career management. The study needs to be replicated in other parts of the continent, and comparisons can be made to find new insights into the issues. Other studies could also consider the aspect of career satisfaction in the construct, and analyze the impact of career needs and organizational career management on career satisfaction.

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