

## Predicting hierarchical level: An evidence from Nepalese organizations

Gyan Bahadur Tamang, Ph.D.

Faculty of Management and Law, Nepal Open University, Nepal

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### **Abstract:**

**Background:** As hierarchical status, an objective indicator of career success, is still remained on priority of generation Y and millennial in protean career. The paper, therefore, aims to examine the model predicting securing hierarchal status. The paper examined the human capital variables and networking behavior as social capital to predict hierarchical status.

**Method:** The paper is based on 479 usable responses gathered through self-administrated survey conducted among the civil service officers and bankers from Kathmandu valley. The dependent variable, hierarchical level, has been classified into upper level [as observed characteristic] and officer level. To measure human capital, independent variable, education, tenure [occupational and organizational tenure], and training [domestic training and foreign training] were used. Similarly, maintaining relationship and internal visibility were taken to measure networking behavior as another independent variable. The binomial logistic regression analysis was performed to examine the proposed model.

**Results:** The proposed model was found significant with excellent discriminant ability. Both human capital variables [except domestic training] and networking behavior [except maintaining relationship] were found significant to predict the likelihood of being upper level of organization.

**Conclusion:** Investing in building human capital contributes to increase the likelihood of upper level. Rather than maintaining relationship, increasing internal visibility would contribute to increase the likelihood of upper level.

**Keywords:** binomial logistic regression, hierarchical level, human capital, Nepalese organizations, social capital

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### **I. Introduction**

Getting ahead in the career ladder is popular indicator of career success. It is objective, tangible (1), observable (2), and publicly assessable indicator (3) measuring objective career success. It is also called extrinsic career success, measured in terms of salary and promotions (4); or hierarchical status, salary growth (5), refers to outcomes that are instrument rewards (6) from job or occupation and are objectively observable (7). These outcomes have long been considered the hallmarks of career success across a wide range of societies (8).

Conceptualization the career for new generation is not limited by organizational boundary. One's career is conceptualized by his/her own way rather than by organization. The concept has been coined as protean career defined as self-directed and value-driven career characterized by freedom and growth (9; 10; 11). After coining the concept of protean career, the measurable objective career success outcomes like salary, recognition, number of promotions and hierarchical status (9) are taken as indicators of conventional / traditional career orientation (10). However, being in upper level has been continuously taken as measuring rod of career success. Furthermore, in recent years many studies on career choice and career success orientation have also used it as attributes of career choice (11; 12; 13) with terminology like advancement, and career path. This shows one of generation Y or millennial is also expecting to be in upper level of organization though their career is self-directed and value-driven.

But it is unquestionably one of the utmost important challenges to nearly everyone in adulthood (14). In this connection, "How do people move up the career ladder?" is one of the major career development questions concerned in organizations (15). In response, many studies relating to career success have focused examining the determinants of career outcomes so far (4; 16; 17; 15; 18; 7; 19; 10; 20; 21). Very few studies were conducted in the context of Nepal. In this connection, the paper aims to find the factors influencing leading to upper level of organization. The findings of the paper would be the input for those potentials to plan their career.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Human Capital and Hierarchical Level**

Human Capital is knowledge-based assets of any organization that leads to competitive in market. It is capabilities of individuals that gained through investments of time, effort, and money on education, tenure and training (22). Therefore, human capital consists the resources possessed by individual such as education, training and experiences. In other words, it is the quality of people and deals with “what” a person knows. The fundamental assumption of economic perspective of human capital investment theory (23; 24; 25; 26; 22) is people will invest in education up to a point where marginal benefit is equal to marginal cost (27) indicating an individual decides to spend his/her money, effort and time in every additional year of education at least when he/she assures him/herself that such spending will be compensated. Moreover, the contest-mobility norm of career mobility has identified the ability, education, and training of employees as determinants of organizational rewards (28). Based on this norm, making investments in human capital components result in increased rewards from the employer: higher salary, more promotions, and managerial advancement.

Reaching at upper level by investing in human capital has been supported by many empirical evidences. Formal schooling is likely to provide more in-depth, analytical knowledge of subject area, cognitive ability and conscientiousness (20) resulting better job performance leads to greater objective career success (29; 30). Likewise, research has shown that educational attainment to be positively related to managerial advancement (31). Training and developmental opportunities, human capital variable, are positively related to managerial level and salary (31; 32). Similarly prior studies show that tenure is positively related to career outcomes (33; 16; 17; 4; 34; 35; 36).

### **2.2 Social Capital and Hierarchical Level**

Social capital is the resources available to an individual as a result of his/her personal relationship. It is individuals’ accessed resources - quality created between the people dealing with “who” a person knows. It is individuals’ ability to access the benefits from their social networks (37; 38). Therefore, it is connected with networking behaviour maintaining contacts with people relating to work, participating in social gathering, involving in socializing program, taking part in visible task in organization and professional circle. It is an act of building up and maintaining a set of informal cooperative relationships with individuals other than reporting relationships (39). Further, it is individuals’ proactive attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career and includes behaviors such as socializing, maintaining internal contexts, engaging in professional networking, enhancing internal visibility and participating in community activities (19). Such behaviors bring together people having similar professional qualification, and interest in order to provide information and share knowledge (40). So, it has been taken as proven strategy to enhance professional recognition and skills while promoting career development (41). Integration of three theories - e.g. Weak tie theory, Structural holes theory, and Social resource theory (6) leads the literature to depict the outcome of networking like career opportunities.

Network structure (weak ties and structural hole) and its content (contacts in other functions and contacts at higher levels) of an individual’s provide access to information, resources, and career sponsorship, which turned into salary, promotions, and career satisfaction (6). Many others studies (42; 43; 44; 19) have also found networking is related to such career outcomes. Individuals who excel at networking more likely excel in their careers compared to those who do not (45). With the support of these relationships of networking and career outcomes, networking was a crucial ingredient of success in an academic career, as there are many advantages to be gained by those involved (40). The advantages are, for instance, information exchange, collaboration, career planning and strategy, professional support and encouragement, and ultimately the impact on upward career mobility (40).

Based on aforementioned theoretical and empirical evidence explaining to causal relationship of investing in human capital and involvement in networking behavior with career outcomes leads the study to examine that human capital components and networking behavior are explanatory variable contributes to explain the attainment of upper level of organization. Following hypotheses, therefore, were formulated for the paper.

H1: At least one of variable influence on explaining the likelihood of being upper level of organization.

H2: Human capital variables (education, tenure, and training) predict the likelihood of upper level of organization.

H3: Networking behaviors (maintaining relationship and internal visibility) predict the likelihood of upper level of organization..

### III. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Approach and Design

The paper has adopted objectivist philosophy of research (46) and deductive relationship to theory as it is needed to address the research question and test the hypothesis for the study developed based on previous literature and empirical studies. Therefore, the paper has adopted causal analytical research design.

#### 3.2 Data, sampling, collection procedure and analysis technique

The paper is based on primary data gathered from self-administrative survey. The survey was conducted among officers from civil service and banking sectors. Offices and departments under the respective 31 ministries, and branches and head offices of 29 commercial banks within Kathmandu valley were taken as sampling frame. 532 respondents were collected and 479 were remained as usable form.

The paper has performed a binomial logistic regression to determine the effects of human capital, and networking variables on the likelihood of reaching at upper level of organization. Binomial regression was performed with backward entry aiming to removing insignificant determinants from model.

#### 3.3 Variables and Measures

*Hierarchical level* is an observable, tangible and publicly assessable indicator of career success outcome. One in upper level is considered as succeed in his/her career. The paper measured the hierarchical level by asking their designation. Later, they have been classified as upper level and lower level. Upper level includes the under-secretary, joint-secretary, and secretary in civil service; and 8<sup>th</sup> level onwards and equivalent in banking sectors.

*Education* is human capital variable indicates the highest academic degree earned by participants, which has been classified into “graduate and post graduate”, and “M. Phil and above”. Increased level of education indicates having additional academic degree of “M. Phil and above” for the study.

*Tenure* is another human capital variable refers to the numbers of years employees spend in their service, which make them more experienced in their work. Tenure has also been measured as occupational tenure and organizational tenure. *Occupational tenure* refers to numbers of years civil servants and bankers spend in their civil service and banking profession. *Organizational tenure* is numbers of years they spend in their current working commission / ministry, and bank respectively.

*Training* is third human capital variable for the study operationalized as numbers of training and development program they attended in their service period either in Nepal or foreign country. Attending training and development program in foreign country enhances international exposure to some extent.

The *networking behavior* is social capital variable has been operationalized for the study by two variables: i] maintaining relationship within work and professional circle, ii] being visible in official activities based on items developed by Forret and Dougherty, (19). 7-point Likert scale was used to measure networking, and all the items were translated into Nepali language.

### IV. Analysis and Finding

#### 4.1 Model predicting upper level

To test hypothesis one, the current study performed the logistic regression model and found statistically significant,  $\chi^2(5) = 162.938, p < 0.0005$  with 74.6 percent variance explained (indicated by Nagelkerke  $R^2$ ). The model has correctly classified 86.5 percent of cases. Assumptions of logistic regression model were tested and allowed to perform the model. The hierarchical level, dependent variable, is measured on a dichotomous scale. Second, all the continuous independent variables were found to be linearly related to the logit of the dependent variable. Third, fifteen residuals with value greater than  $\pm 2.0$  identified were removed from the analysis.

Of the seven variables entered in first run, five variables: four human capital variables – education, occupational tenure, organizational tenure, and foreign training; and networking variable – internal visibility plus constant were remained in 3rd step. Maintaining relationship and domestic training were removed in step 1 and 2 respectively as they were found insignificant. The results for the logistic regression model performed in step 3 are summarized in table 1. According to the result found, following binomial logistic regression model is fitted and hypothesis 1 is supported:

$$\text{logit [upper level]} = -8.998 + 3.049 \text{ Education} + 0.200 \text{ Occupational tenure} + 0.144 \text{ Organizational tenure} + 0.813 \text{ Foreign training} + 0.193 \text{ Internal visibility} + \epsilon$$

Table 1: Logistic Regression Model Predicting Upper Level

No of Steps	Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	p.	Odds ratio	95% C.I. for odds ratio	
								Lower	Upper
Step 3	Education	3.049	1.272	5.743	1	.017	21.089	1.742	255.244
	Occupational tenure	.200	.038	27.902	1	.000	1.222	1.134	1.316
	Organizational tenure	.144	.044	10.761	1	.001	1.155	1.060	1.259
	Foreign training	.813	.191	18.023	1	.000	2.254	1.549	3.281
	Internal visibility	.193	.066	8.456	1	.004	1.213	1.065	1.381
	Constant	-8.998	1.461	37.932	1	.000	.000		

Note: Education is for “M. Phil and above” compared to “Bachelor and Master’s”

4.1.1 Discriminant ability of fitted model

*Sensitivity*, true positive, was recorded 81.1 percent indicates the model correctly predicted the 81.1 percentage of case that had the observed characteristics [i.e. upper level]. Similarly, *specificity*, percentage of cases that did not have observed characteristics – officer level, called true negative, 89.6 were correctly predicted by model.

*Positive predictive value*, the percentage of correctly predicted cases with the observed characteristics compared to total number of cases predicted as having the characteristic, was 81.08 percent. *Negative predictive value*, the percentage of correctly predicted cases without the observed characteristics compared to total number of cases as not having the characteristic, was 89.55 percent.

In addition to sensitivity and specificity, the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve was also figured out coupled with area under the curve presented in figure 1 and table 2. The area under the curve was recorded 0.952 (95% CI, 0.929 to 0.976) caused by very high sensitivity and specificity. As a result ROC curve was found very close to top left corner of the plot. All these evidences clearly showed that the fitted model has excellent level of discrimination (47).

Table 2: Area Under the Curve

Test Result Variable[s]: Predicted probability					
Area	Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Asymptotic Sig. <sup>b</sup>	Asymptotic 95% Confidence Interval		
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
.952	.012	.000	.929	.976	

a. Under the nonparametric assumption

b. Null hypothesis: true area = 0.5

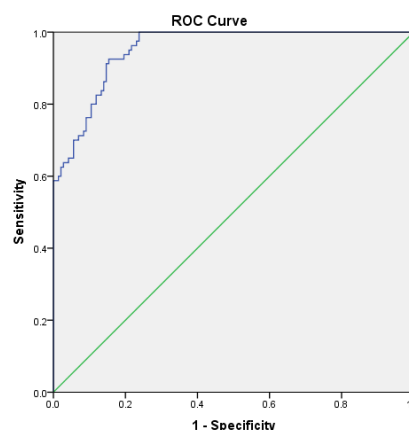


Figure 1 ROC Curve

4.2 The Influence of Human Capital

Referring to table no 1, one is having “M. Phil and Ph.D.” increases the odds of likelihood of exhibiting upper level in organizational hierarchy by 21.089. Similarly, an increase in one unit of occupational tenure (i.e. one more year of tenure in occupation) and increment of single unit of organizational tenure (i.e. one more year of tenure in working organization) increase odds of likelihood of exhibiting upper level in hierarchy by 1.222 and by 1.155 respectively. Single unit of increment in Foreign Training (i.e. attending one more training and development program in foreign country or additional one more chance of being internationally exposure) increases odds of likelihood of exhibiting upper level by a factor of 2.254. Therefore, hypothesis two is supported as all human capital variables (except attending training in home country) have positive influence on predicting the likelihood of exhibiting upper level in hierarchy

4.3 The Influence of Social Capital

Table no 1 shows increment in internal visibility by a single unit increases the odds of likelihood of exhibiting upper level by a factor of 1.213. This leads to partial acceptance of hypothesis three indicating positive influence of being more visible on predicting the likelihood of exhibiting upper level in organizational hierarchy. In contrast, maintaining relationship didn’t produce any significant positive influence.

V. Discussion

The study dealt with investigating the hypotheses of predicting ability of independent variables (human capital components and networking behaviors) on likelihood of exhibiting upper level in hierarchy. Hypotheses testing results indicates that individuals who developed their human capital, and who involved in networking behavior, were substantially more likely to be in upper level in hierarchy. However, two variables (attending training organized in home country and maintaining relationship) were excluded from final model. This exclusion indicates attending domestic training and maintaining relationship would not produce any influence on predicting the likelihood of upper level.

Education, a human capital variable, was appeared as significant predictor for likelihood of exhibiting upper level indicated that having the academic degree “M. Phil, Ph. D and Post Doc” was likely to be in upper level of organization. Achieving higher academic degree transforms varieties of skill into individuals making

them able to handle upper level of organization. Therefore it might be the cause of predicting the likelihood of being in upper level. The finding was consistent with the theoretical concept of positive relationship for schooling-objective career outcome (25; 48; 4).

Occupational tenure and organizational tenure were used to measure the second human capital variable “Tenure”. Occupational tenure refers to years of experience in profession and organizational tenure to years of experience in current working organization.

The human capital perspective (26) argued that work experience produces an individual specific knowledge and skills that are valuable to the organization; in return individual receives reward in the form of higher compensation and/or hierarchical status. In line with this argument, occupational tenure in current study was found as significant predictor of exhibiting upper level. Those who were more years in ones’ occupation would have been more experienced that leads to predict the likelihood of being in upper level of organization. The result was found consistent with theoretical justification and empirical evidence (4). In addition, several other studies (49; 50; 32; 19) also claimed that the work experience that gained in one’s tenure is a strong determinant of objective career outcomes.

In consistent with several previous studies (51; 52; 36; 53; 17; 19), the study found positive impact of organizational tenure on exhibiting upper level. The statement “longer the organization tenure more entrenchment in the power structure of organization” (21) has also supported the positive influence on exhibiting upper level. Moreover, some others were like – those with more years in service became more familiar with the boarder set of work process within an organization and skillful in performing multiple occupations within an organization, which is seen as important determinant of career success (54; 18). Therefore, tenure is a more specific form of human capital investment as it generates maximum returns to individuals only if they remain with their particular employers for longer period of time (20). In consistent, the current paper has shown that staying longer period of time in single organization would attain upper level.

Training, another human capital variable for the study, has been examined from two indicators: training and development program attended in Nepal and in foreign country. The significant positive beta weight indicated that foreign training was one of the major predictors of likelihood of being in upper level of organization. Participating more foreign training is likely to hold upper level of organization. The result is consistent with findings of previous studies – participating in training is determinant of managerial level (31; 21). Moreover, foreign training provides individuals international exposure. Consequently, more internationally exposure individuals were likely to be in upper level of organization. In addition, individuals might gain differed skills and ability required to hold upper level in foreign training as compared to domestic training.

In contrast to training attained in foreign land, domestic training was removed from model indicating that no influence on exhibiting upper level. The reason might be the domestic training might have perceiving less quality or less priority by respondents. It could have been undervalued. Whereas attaining foreign training might have been overvalued. One more possible justification is training in home town might not be effective as trainer might have encountered from multiple social commitments whereas in foreign land they would be free from all these and can be more focused on learning objectives.

On examining the impact of networking variables, maintaining relationship within work and professional activities was found as excluded variable in final model, indicating maintaining relationship did not influence on exhibiting upper level. In this case, network content (i.e. contact and maintaining relationship with “whom”) might have been matter (6).

The study found, however, visibility predicted positively to upper level of organization, indicating more visible were likely to hold upper position of organization. The result is consistent with theoretical argument of signal theory (55). The theory suggests that being visible is a method of sending information to higher level management about one’s ability and potential capability. This might be helpful to visible individuals for being selected on upper level of organization as it feeds to decision maker.

## **VI. Conclusion**

To conclude, understanding the determinants of being in upper level of organization is most essential for individuals in career ladder in order to help in their career plan. In this respect, the paper has examined them via fitting the model. It is evidenced that getting higher academic degree, more years of tenure and additional training in foreign land lead to upper level of organization. Increasing internal visibility influences the likelihood of exhibiting upper level. However, domestic training and maintaining relationship were found insignificant and removed from the final model.

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