

CAREER PLATEAU AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF OF UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA ENUGU CAMPUS NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study focuses on effect of Career Plateau on Employee Performance Among Academic Staff of University of Nigeria Enugu Campus Nigeria, The specific objectives are to determine the effect of Content Career Plateau on performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus , ascertain the effect of Structural career plateau on employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus and determine the effect of personal Career Plateau on employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus .. The study had a population size of 1482 which are academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu campus Nigeria. Taro Yamane was used to determine the sample size in which a sample size of 315 was derived. The Instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and interview. A total of 315 copies of the questionnaire were distributed while 305 copies were returned and 10 were not returned. The Survey research design was adopted for the study. Three hypotheses were tested using multiple regression statistical tools. The findings indicated Content Career Plateau negatively affects employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus. Structural

career plateau negatively affect employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus., Personal Career Plateau negatively affect employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus. . The study concluded that Career plateauing is an existential phenomenon in the workplace of today. The study recommended that higher institutions should adopt flexible structure that will not hinder career progression of staff, at same time that will allow them to be committed to their job

Keywords: Content Career Plateau, Career Plateau, Structural career plateau and employee performance

Introduction

Careers are important for organizations in terms of their employees' contributions, which most successfully occur when the employees are satisfied with their current positions and feel that they are developing. In this sense, they will display the highest organizational loyalty, and their skills can be benefited as much as possible in achieving their organizations goals (Gürer, Solmaztürk & Tın, 2014), But in today

organizations career stagnation becomes a tradition which promotes the concept of career plateau

Career Plateauing is fast becoming a critical managerial and organizational issue that needs to be managed properly to avoid employee discontent leading to poor performance (Bucke & Mikkelsen, 2006), also, due to the restructuring, downsizing and employment equity. Career plateau is defined as the period in an employee's profession where the possibility of further upward movement is either considerably low or the challenges in the job comes to an end. Career plateau is defined as the point in one's career at which the likelihood of additional hierarchical promotion is very low or impossible (Ongori & Agolla, 2009). Bardwick (1986) identified two types of career plateauing: (a) structural (hierarchical) plateauing and (b) content (job content) plateauing. Hierarchical plateauing results when there is little chance of further vertical movement within an organization whereas job content plateauing occurs when individuals are no longer challenged by their job or job responsibilities, and there is overall staleness of the job itself.

Career plateau is a trap on the way of the organization staff. 99% of the staff during their working lives is engaged with the phenomenon of career plateau. Career plateauing is a term that refers to a feeling of frustration experienced by workers in an organization when opportunities for career advancement are no longer available (Choudhary, Ramzan & Riaz, 2013; Rotondo & Perrewe, 2000).

Dealing with the career plateauing has now become a serious issue for both plateaued staff and human resources practitioners. Career plateau is a point in a person's career life where the probability of promotion is low (Ianga, Hu, and Wang, 2018). Therefore, employees may reach the job plateau when they do not face their current jobs, feel that their work has become routine and boring and that perceiving the job plateau is related to negative individual and institutional outcomes including job dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion, work stress, decreased affective commitment and self-efficacy which impeded career development, turnover and early retirement intentions (Hossain, 2018).

Moreover, career plateau reflects obstacles to promotion and is not a challenge to the job content. Employee remains in the same position in a longer period, so the employee will feel bored of his job. In addition, the plateaued employees have become less optimistic, very nervous and highly stressed. Therefore, career plateau was used as an antecedent for unwanted work outcomes, such as low job satisfaction, low career motivation, low self-efficacy, high turnover intentions, and low work embeddedness (Omar, Anuar, Salleh, and Yaakop, 2014).

Statement of Problem

Career plateauing is a critical aspect in an organizational environment and it's important for organizations to investigate the significant factors that contribute to Career plateauing and strategies of effectively dealing with negative impact of it. It is clear from the recent changes in business environment that Career plateauing is a critical career issue of the next decade and whose consequences on organizations cannot be down played

The advent of flatter organizations in the world, has forced employees to stay at the same level and the same job leading to an early occurrence of Career plateauing which in turn has led to frustration and loss of motivation of the employees.

However which result into undesirable work outcomes such as low satisfaction, high stress, poor performance, withdrawal symptoms, low organizational commitment and increased turnover limitation are attributed to Career plateauing. Thus career plateauing affects the performance of employees and ultimately the performance of the organization.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study focuses on career plateau and employee performance among academic staff of University Nigeria Enugu campus, Nigeria

- i. To determine the effect of Content Career Plateau on performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus
- ii. To ascertain the effect of Structural career plateau on employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus
- iii. To determine the effect of personal Career Plateau on employee performance of

academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated below will guide the study

- i. Content Career Plateau does not affect employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus
- ii. Structural career plateau does not affect employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus
- iii. Personal Career Plateau does not affect employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus

Review of Related Literature: Career Plateau

Career plateau is also defined as a certain period of stagnation in the career process due to the lack of abilities, skills and training, the unavailability of horizontal and vertical positions, or other adversities that may occur in personal or professional life (Aktas, 2015). Appelbaum, Firestone (1994) and Ongori et al, (2009) defines Career Plateauing as the point in one's career at which the likelihood of additional hierarchical promotion is very low or impossible. Career Plateauing is also defined as the immobility of career in organization related to the movement up the hierarchy and the only source of career success. A career plateau resulting from the structure of one's organisation encompasses the fact that they cannot progress on to an upper level job, although the worker has the ability and will to do so (Bolat, Bolat, Seymen & Katu, 2017).

Content Career Plateau and Employee Performance

Content career plateau, which occurs when an individual is no longer challenged by their job or job responsibility and has nothing new to learn, causing him to perceive stagnation in his career (Lentz, & Allen, 2009). Content plateauing happens when an employee becomes saturated with all available job-related information and consequently lacks further challenge to expand vocational expertise. The job content plateauing occurs when staffs are not challenged because of their job or job responsibilities and there is a general recession in the job itself

Structural Career Plateau and Employee Performance

One concept is known as a structural career plateau, which is an assumption for the traditional

model of career paths (Rotondo, & Perrew, 2000), and is defined as a point in one's career at which an individual perceives little chance of further vertical movement within an organization. Structural plateauing: results from the combined effects of organizational structure (pyramidal) and birthrate fluctuations and is largely beyond the control of an individual employee. A Hierarchical plateauing is defined as a point in one's career at which the individual perceives little opportunity for more vertical movement within the organization

Personal Career Plateau and Employee Performance

Life plateauing refers to an individual's feeling of being trapped or stuck in their roles outside of work. The focus of the research literature has been on hierarchical plateauing (McCleese, Eby, Scharlau & Hoffman, 2001)

Empirical Review

Tanjela (2018) did a study on effects of perceived career plateau on their work-related attitudes. Data were collected through a semi structured questionnaire from a sample of 200 employees working in 20 private organizations located in Dhaka city. 40 employees' personally interviewed and other 160 employees were surveyed thorough e-mail and social network sites. A quantitative approach has been taken to analyze the data, it is found that career plateau may be caused by four factors: organization's hierarchical structure, organization's culture, organization's business strategies and employees own psychological factors. Results also indicate that career plateau may cause low level of job satisfaction, poor organizational commitment, higher rate of employee turnover and higher level of job stress. Furthermore, considering career plateauing consequences, this study found that job satisfactions and organizational commitment are negatively related to career plateau whereas intention to quit and job stress are positively related to career plateau. Moreover, the coping strategies for effectively dealing with career plateauing scenarios were discussed from individual and organizational perspectives in my study

Abgasi, Arachie, Onyekwelu (2021) did a study on Career Plateauing and Employee Turnover Intentions: A Civil Service Perspective The study adopted a survey research design with a population of 2318 civil servants working in the

selected States Secretariats. A sample of 328 was arrived at through the application of Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, whose reliability was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha statistics, with a coefficient of .872. The analysis of data was done using a combination of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The result indicated that SCP was significant in predicting turnover intentions ($R\text{-Squared} = 0.916679$; $p\text{value} = 0.0000 < 0.05$). The study concluded that turnover intention is a phenomenon that is influenced by SCP, as plateauing of employees increase, so also does the intention of the employees to quit. Sequel to this, among others, it was recommended that heads of civil service need to ensure that there is equity, fairness and consistency in the promotion of workers, to avoid a feeling of inequity and injustice, which might make the workers less committed and more inclined to leave.

Gaturu (2018) examined career plateauing and its relationship with turnover intentions and pursuit of postgraduate studies among teachers in Nyandarua and Murang'a counties, Kenya. It was based on the Managerial Careers Model by Ference, Stoner and Warren (1977), which sought to provide an understanding of the plateaued employee problem. It employed the correlational research design with a target population of all the 5,022 teachers in all the public schools in Nyandarua and Muranga Counties, except those which were used in the pilot. A questionnaire designed for teachers was used as the main tool for data collection and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was reported according to themes and involved the use of frequencies and percentages. Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient, linear regression, Analysis of Variance and chi-square tests were used at the 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed and concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between turnover intentions in both types of career plateauing

Dhanashree (2020) did a study on career Plateau Phase and Intention to Quit Behaviour of Employees – A view point. It also investigates the relationship between Career Plateau and intention to quit behaviour of an employee working in various organizations. Data were collected from 34 employees working in wide variety of organizations across India through a structured questionnaire and Non-Probability, Convenience

Sampling was used. Results of this study showed that Career Plateau have a great impact towards employees as well the organization. Some employees are undergoing Content Plateau, but very few are experiencing Structural Plateau. There exists a positive relationship between Career Plateau and intention to quit behaviour of employee working in various organizations. There are various causes behind Career Plateau which leads to intention to quit behaviour of employee. Hence, various types of Career Plateau impact the intention to quit behaviour of employee to a great extent.

Theoretical Review

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory

The Motivation-Hygiene theory suggests that once basic hygiene needs occur for employees, they search for job satisfaction. Scholars considered hygiene needs to include the basics of salary, safe work conditions, and relationships with peers, subordinates, and supervisors (Denton & Maatgi, 2016). Once these basic employment needs occurred, substantial motivation should occur through genuine job satisfaction, or workers becoming more unlikely to experience dissatisfaction and frustration (Denton & Maatgi, 2016). Ali (2016) reiterates that hygiene factors help prevent dissatisfaction, but motivational factors help keep employees satisfied. Some of the current factors that can contribute to job satisfaction include achievement, personal and professional development, job growth, the feeling of fulfilment in the job performed, personal achievement, and recognition (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Denton & Maatgi, 2016).

Methodology and Materials

The study focuses on academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu campus Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. The primary source of data was collected through the administration of questionnaire. A total population of the study was 1482 staff comprising of senior and junior staff was used. The study adopted sample size of 315 using Taro Yamane formula, and at of which 305 was returned and used for the study. The validity of the instrument was conducted using face to face content analysis, where experts in management sciences modified and made the necessary corrections so that the instrument can measure what it ought to measure. The reliability was tested using the spearman ranking order correlation coefficient (r). It gave a

reliability co-efficient of 0.87 which indicate high internal consistency. Data were presented in percentage. Five point Likert Scale was used in this order AS = strongly agree, A = agree, U= undecided, D = disagree while SD = strongly disagree. The hypotheses were analyzed using multiple regression tools.

The data obtained from the field were presented and analyzed with descriptive statistics to provide answers for the research questions while the corresponding hypotheses were tested with multiple regressions at 0.05 alpha levels. The five Likert scale form was design as SA = strongly agree, A= Agree, U= Undecided, D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree

Data Analysis and Discussion

Table 4.1: Responses of the Respondents

| s/n | Content Career Plateau on performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus | SA | A | U | D | SD | Total |
|--|---|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------|
| 1 | My job demanding encourage job content career plateau | 150 (49.18%) | 134 (43.93%) | 5 (1.64%) | 8 (2.62%) | 8 (2.62%) | 305 |
| 2 | Challenging task affect career progression | 173 (56.72%) | 120 (39.34%) | 3 (0.98%) | 5 (1.64%) | 4 (1.31%) | 305 |
| 3 | Introducing new process and procedure promote career plateau | 145 (47.54%) | 135 (44.26%) | 7 (2.30%) | 8 (2.62%) | 10 (3.28%) | 305 |
| Structural career plateau on employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus | | | | | | | |
| 4 | My institution use classify journals that slow career progression of our staff | 110 (36.07%) | 180 (59.01%) | 4 (1.31%) | 5 (1.64%) | 6 (1.97%) | 305 |
| 5 | Institutional politics negatively affect employee career advancement | 120 (39.34%) | 160 (52.46%) | 8 (2.62%) | 7 (2.30%) | 10 (3.28%) | 305 |
| 6 | Changing criteria's of promotion at interval promote career plateau | 164 (53.77%) | 124 (40.66%) | 6 (1.97%) | 5 (1.64%) | 6 (1.97%) | 305 |
| Personal Career Plateau on employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Job stress affect commitment to career advancement | 158 (51.80%) | 130 (42.62%) | 7 (2.30%) | 5 (1.64%) | 5 (1.64%) | 305 |
| 8 | Family problems negatively affect promotion | 166 (54.43%) | 115 (37.70%) | 8 (2.62%) | 7 (2.30%) | 9 (2.95%) | 305 |
| 9 | Inability of staff to embark on research delimit promotion | 178 (58.36%) | 114 (37.38%) | 5 (1.64%) | 4 (1.31) | 4 (1.31%) | 305 |
| Employee Performance | | | | | | | |
| 10 | Effective delivery of lecture | 135 (44.26%) | 149 (48.85%) | 7 (2.30%) | 8 (2.62%) | 6 (1.96%) | 305 |
| 11 | Timely summation results | 155 (50.82%) | 130 (42.62%) | 8 (2.62%) | 7 (2.30%) | 5 (1.64%) | 305 |
| 12 | Effective supervision projects | 140 (45.90%) | 152 (49.84%) | 6 (1.97%) | 4 (1.31%) | 3 (0.98%) | 305 |

Source: Fieldwork 2022

Item 1 of table 1 Indicates that 150 (49.18%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that my job demanding encourage job content career plateau. 134 (43.93%) agree with the statement, 5 (1.64%) were undecided, 8 (2.62%) disagree that my job demanding

encourage job content career plateau while 8 (2.62%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

Item 2 of the table 1 states that Challenging task affect career progression. 173 (56.72%) strongly

agreed with the statement, 160 (52.46%) agreed, 3 (0.98%) were undecided, 5 (1.64%) disagreed that Challenging task affect career progression while 4 (1.31%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

In item 3 of the table 1: 145 (47.54%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Introducing new process and procedure promote career plateau, 135 (44.26%) agreed, 7 (2.30%) were undecided, 8 (2.62%) disagreed while 10 (3.28%) strongly disagreed that Introducing new process and procedure promote career plateau.

In item 4 of the table 1: 110 (36.07%) of the respondents strongly agreed that My institution use classify journals that slow career progression of our staff, 180 (59.01%) agreed, 4 (1.31%) were undecided, 5 (1.64%) disagreed while 6 (1.97%) strongly disagreed that My institution use classify journals that slow career progression of our staff

Item 5 of table 1 Indicates that 120 (39.34%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Institutional politics negatively affect employee career advancement, 160 (52.46%) agreed, 8 (2.62%) were undecided, 7 (2.30%) disagree while 10 (3.28%) strongly disagreed that Institutional politics negatively affect employee career advancement.

Item 6 of the table 1 states that changing criteria of promotion at interval promotes career plateau. 164 (53.77%) strongly agreed with the statement, 124 (40.66%) agreed, 6 (1.97%) were undecided, 5 (1.64%) disagreed while 6 (1.97%) strongly disagreed that Changing criteria's of promotion at interval promote career plateau

In item 7 of the table 1, 158 (51.80%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Job stress affect commitment to career advancement, 130

(42.62%) agreed, 7 (2.30%) were undecided, 5 (1.64%) disagreed while 5 (1.64%) strongly disagreed that Job stress affect commitment to career advancement

In item 8 of the table 1, 166 (54.43%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Family problems negatively affect promotion, 115 (37.70%) agreed, 8 (2.62%) were undecided, 7 (2.30%) disagreed while 9 (2.95%) strongly disagreed that Family problems negatively affect promotion

Item 9 of table 1 Indicates that 178 (58.36%) of the respondents strongly agreed that inability of staff to embark on research delimit promotion. 114 (37.38%) agreed, 5 (1.64%) were undecided, 4 (1.31) disagree while 4 (1.31) strongly disagreed that inability of staff to embark on research delimit promotion

Item 10 of the table 1 states that Effective delivery of lecture. 135 (44.26%) strongly agreed with the statement, 149 (48.85%) agreed, 7 (2.30%) were undecided, 8 (2.62%) disagreed while 6 (1.96%) strongly disagreed that Effective delivery of lecture

In item 11 of the table 1, 155 (50.82%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Timely summation results, 130 (42.62%) agreed, 8 (2.62%) were undecided, 7 (2.30%) disagreed while 5 (1.64%) strongly disagreed that Timely summation results

In item 12 of the table 1, 140 (45.90%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Effective supervision projects e, 152 (49.84%) agreed, 6 (1.97%) were undecided, 4 (1.31%) disagreed while 3 (0.98%) strongly disagreed that Effective supervision projects

Hi: Content Career Plateau, Structural career plateau, Personal career plateau do not negatively affect employee performance

Table 4.2a Model Summary^b

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .951 ^a | .905 | .904 | .25942 | .229 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Personal career plateau , Structural career plateau, Content Career Plateau

b. Dependent Variable: Employee performance

Table 4.2b ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 192.609 | 3 | 64.203 | 954.036 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 20.256 | 301 | .067 | | |
| | Total | 212.866 | 304 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Personal career plateau , Structural career plateau, Content Career Plateau

Table 4.2c Coefficients^a

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .141 | .033 | | 4.337 | .000 |
| | Content Career Plateau | -.043 | .036 | -.057 | 11.197 | .000 |
| | Structural career plateau | .185 | .036 | .161 | 5.140 | .000 |
| | Personal career plateau | .776 | .041 | .871 | 19.053 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance

R = 0.951

R² = 0.905

F = 954.036

T = (Content Career Plateau = 11.197, Structural career plateau = 5.140, Personal career plateau = 19.053)

DW = 0.229

Interpretation:

The regression sum of squares (192.609) is greater than the residual sum of squares (20.256), which indicates that more of the variation in the dependent variable is not explained by the model. The significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05, which means that the variation explained by the model is not due to chance.

R, the correlation coefficient which has a value of 0.951, indicates that there is negative relationship between Content Career Plateau, Structural career plateau, and Personal career plateau and employee performance. R square, the coefficient of determination, shows that 90.5% of the employee performance is explained by the model.

With the linear regression model, the error of estimate is low, with a value of about .25942. The Durbin Watson statistics of 0.229, which is not more than 2, indicates there is no autocorrelation.

The Content Career Plateau, Structural career plateau, and Personal career plateau coefficient of 0.951 indicates a positive significance between Content Career Plateau, Structural career plateau, and Personal career plateau and employee performance, which is statistically significant

(With t : Content Career Plateau = 11.197, Structural career plateau = 5.140, Personal career plateau = 19.053). Therefore, the null hypothesis should be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accordingly accepted. Thus Content Career Plateau, Structural career plateau, and Personal career plateau significantly negatively affects employee performance

Summary of Findings

The findings at the end of this study include the following

- i. Content Career Plateau negatively affect employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus
- ii. Structural career plateau negatively affect employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus
- iii. Personal Career Plateau negatively affect employee performance of academic staff of university of Nigeria Enugu Campus

Conclusion

The study concluded that Career plateauing is an existential phenomenon in the workplace of today, that is flatter and always looking for ways to downsize and cut cost. Nowadays, employees reach the plateau at the beginning of their careers

compared to their predecessors. It is important that organizations and individuals prepare to successfully deal with this phenomenon, especially when noticing signs of an impending plateau. The risk of a plateau is lower if organizations accept responsibility for staff development and if staffs are willing to invest time in the development

Recommendations

BASED the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward

- i. Higher institutions should adopt flexible structure that will not hinder career progression of staff, at same time allow them to be committed to their job
- ii. Staff of high institutions should not allow their family problems or personal stress to way them down in order to move to their career ladder
- iii. Staff of high institutions should always make their job interested and challenging, that will bring the best in them

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