

FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEES' CAREER GROWTH IN EMPLOYING ORGANIZATIONS: A REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS OF THE LITERATURE

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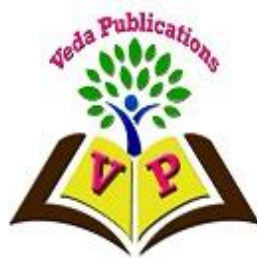
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Abstract

The paper investigates the factors influencing the career growth of employees in employing organizations. It also explores the superlative managerial practice, and the moderating variables influencing career growth. Being a review of extant literature, results amassed are synthesized into factors resident in employees' antecedents, demography, individual differences and personality, organizational culture, employment-related government policy and moderating mechanisms influencing employees' career growth within and across employing organizations. It finally recommends that employing organizations should investigate the peculiar growth needs of their employees with a view to meeting them, and organizational psychologist/guidance counselor should be employed in the personnel department to meet employees' personal and career-related challenges to enhance the employees' career growth, among other implications for practice.



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Introduction

In the past, employees seemingly perceived that career growth potentials were entirely within the dictate of employing organizations; presently, career growth potentials are agreed to be domiciled in employees, and employing organizations. Because employees' career growth could predict organizational growth (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999), which could further translate into national development, career growth may be said to have assumed multifunctional dimensions, necessitating intermittent update of factors that could advance it. This paper, thus, investigates the variables influencing employees' career growth, and synthesizes these factors, including a model to understand these influencing factors.

Career Growth

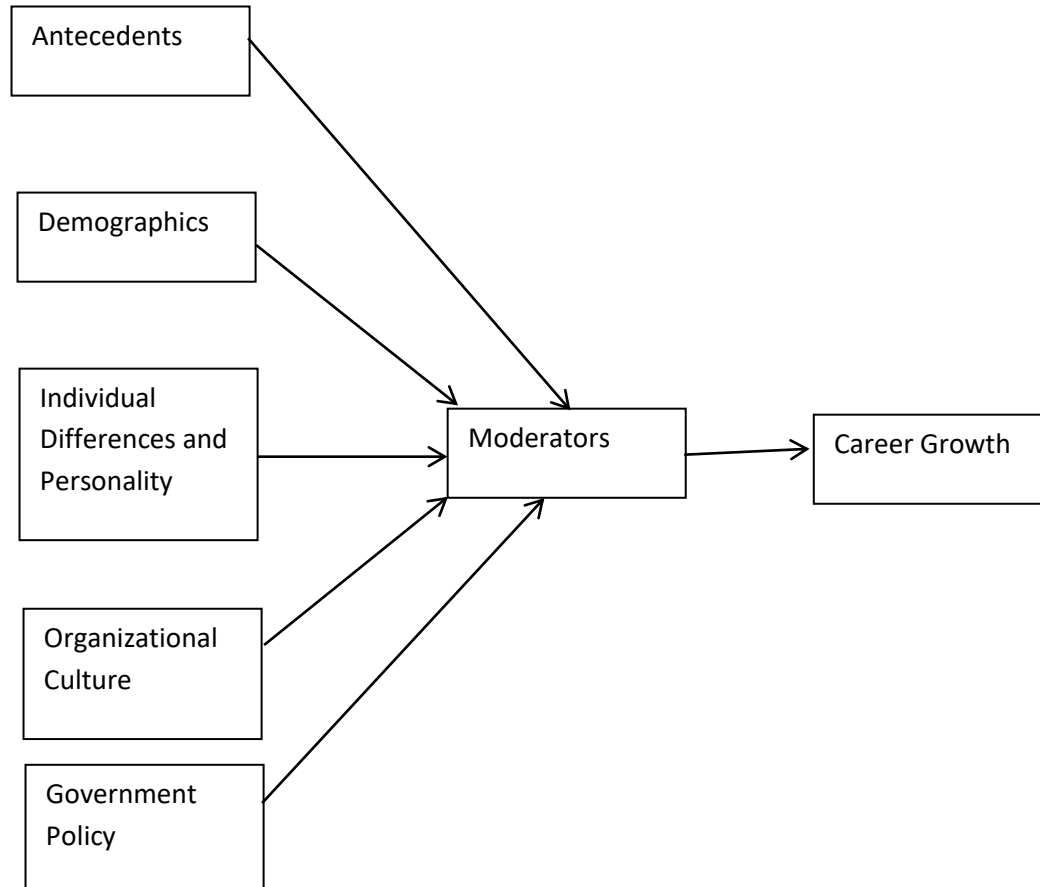
Career has been described (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989; Poon, 2004) as the evolving sequence of work experiences that cover a period of time. Growth in one's career (Judge et al. 1999) refers to accumulated achievements arising from experiences from the career. Two perspectives exist in literature in describing career growth. Spector (2003), as well as Weng and McElroy (2012) saw career growth as the improvements attained in the positions of employees, consequent upon acquisition of necessary skills which result in improved productivity within an organization. Thus, these scholars position career growth as immovably tied to an employee's current organization. Weng and McElroy (2012) tagged the career growth domiciled within an organization as *organizational career growth*. Contrariwise, career growth has been presented as objective and subjective assessment of employees' career success over their career trajectories spanning their worklife (Bedeian, Kemery, & Pizzolatto, 1991; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). This view reveals career growth as accomplishments accruable to employees within their current employing organizations, and future accomplishments in other organizations they may further work during their worklife.

To Weng (2010), career growth has four components, namely: career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth. Explicitly, career goal progress is the extent to which employees' current job is contributing to, and offering potentials for realizing their career goals; professional ability development is the degree to which employees' current job enhances acquisition of modern skills and knowledge; promotion speed, refers to employees' views of the frequency and probability of

periodic advancements; while remuneration growth explains employees' perceptions of the rate, degree and probability of increment in compensation (Weng, 2010; Weng & McElroy, 2012). Career development researchers have used career success synonymously as career growth. Seibert and Kraimer (2001) having viewed career success as accumulation of positive work and psychological outcomes arising from individual's work experiences, career growth is relatively transitory while career success is permanent. Because accumulated career growths invariably yield career success, the two concepts are interwoven; there cannot be career success without career growth.

Considering that career growth is always evolving, Judge et al. (1999) posited that individual's career success invariably translates into organizations' success, implying that the growth of organizations in a nation would translate to national growth and development. Given this relevance, what therefore, are those factors influencing employees' career growth within and across organizations? Are these factors mutually exclusive? Are there moderating variables in the influences? Amassed results are synthesized as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: The model for the study



Factors Influencing Employees' Career Growth

Career development researchers have identified numerous factors that potentially influence the career growth of individuals in organisations. Some of these shall be examined. In this paper, these are synthesized into antecedents, demographics, individual differences and personality, organizational culture, governmental policy, and moderators.

Antecedents

Antecedental factors are influences that are resident in individual's parents, and the earliest schools attended that are propitious for career growth, prior to the individual's entry into the career world. In this paper, these include parental pressure and influence of career guidance in the schools attended.

Parental pressure

Parents usually have great influence in the career choice of their children. Mau and Bikos (2000) established that college students and young adults reported parents as having great influence on their career choice. Thus, some parents motivate their children's entry into certain careers because they foresee the possibility of success in those careers. This could be because one of the parents or a significant other has attained success in such careers. Such ones could providing modeling, due to observation of successful people in the careers, or by providing realistic career worldview to their children. Olatomide and Omoyemiju (2019) found parental influence rated third in relevance among the factors that motivated positive change of interest to study Guidance and Counseling (G & C) among the first set of students admitted to study the course in Obafemi Awolowo University. Connectedly, Modood (2004) reported that South Asian parents always push their children to attain qualifications to enhance their upward mobility in certain careers.

Guidance and counseling services in schools

One of the services embedded in guidance and counselling services in educational institutions such as primary school, particularly secondary school, colleges, polytechnics and universities is career and vocational guidance. One of the objectives of the career guidance is to assist individual's self-understanding that could lead to realistic career choice. Therefore,

benefitting from career guidance could promote increased success in job search after graduation (Graverson & Van, 2008; Liu, Huang, & Wang, 2014); widens opportunities for person-suitable career entry (Hughes & Borbely-Pecze, 2014; Taylor & Hooley, 2014); and enhance individuals in the management of their careers and potentials (Hooley, 2014).

Personal interest and its positive influencers

Personal interest and its positive metamorphoses prior to entering into a chosen career could potentially determine career growth. Olatomide and Omoyemiju (2019) established that from the first set of students admitted to study Guidance and Counseling (G & C) in Obafemi Awolowo University, none of them chose G & C on the anchor of personal interest, as over half of them reported that Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) (the body charged with the responsibility of admitting students into tertiary institutions in Nigeria) offered them G & C, while the rest of them reported they obtained change of course forms to transfer into the course of study in order to forestall non-admissibility into university of their choice that academic year. Also found was that their reported level of interest at the start of the course of study in the first semester of year one changed from moderate to high by the end of the second semester of year one, motivated by internal factors domiciled within the Department, such as courses taken in the first year, lecturers, parents, and other students – all of which helped them to ponder on the potentials for success in G & C. The changing interest subsequently nullified their hitherto nurtured intention to obtain inter-faculty transfer form to process their portability away from Faculty of Education where G & C is hoisted to other Faculties if interest at the end of their first year.

Demographics

Demographic factors are characteristics of a group, such as gender, age, and social class (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007). Demographics in this paper are age, gender, educational attainment, marital status, career stage, status/job description, as well as race/ethnicity.

Age of employees

Because career growth accrues over time, individuals' age may be a reasonable consideration regarding their career growth. Connectedly, Sullivan, Martin, Carden, and Mainiero (2003) established that age influences the degree to which employees withstand social pressures

concerning value of hierarchical promotion. Also, age has been found to positively correlates with objective career success, and potentials for career success (Chen, 2011; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 2005; Ng et al. 2005; Okurame, 2014).

Gender

Because gender is societal role expectations from people in reference to their sex, gender has been used to be inclusive of sex. Gender is usually a consideration for success in certain careers than others. Although the influence of gender on workplace outcomes are contentious, more research evidence support that gender positively influences career growth than studies that have failed to establish this influence. For instance, female medics (British English for Medical Doctors) were generally more extrinsically successful than males (Ferguson, James, & Madeley, 2002; Kilminster, Downes, Gough, Murdoch-Eaton, & Roberts, 2007), and among the UK post-graduate medics, women were less likely to attain consultancy or General Practice status in relation to men, and if they ever attained this position, it took them a relatively longer time than men due to tendency to work part-time or taking career-breaks than men (Taylor, Lambert, & Goldacre, 2009).

Educational attainment

Although findings on the influence of employees' educational attainment on their career growth have remained contentious findings in career growth literature; this, however, there are more evidence to support that educational attainment positively influences the career growth of employees than those that do not support it. A volume of studies support that educational attainment correlates positively with employees' career growth or development (Such studies include Koekemoer, 2014; Okurame, 2014; Nabi, 1999; Eddleston, Baldrige, & Veiga, 2004; Ng et al., 2005; Judge et al., 2005).

Marital status

Being married may be good evidence to employing organisations that employees who are married possess positive qualities such as stability, responsibility and maturity. This is because, spouses often provide emotional support, resources relating to job matters, and assist with household duties (Pfeffer & Ross, 1982). Also, as related to being married is having a child (or children). Therefore, women with children were more likely to be satisfied with

their careers than men with children (Carr, Ash, Friedmen, Scaramucci, Barnett, & Szalacha, 1998). But again, having children resulted into job dissatisfaction among the US women physicians (Frank, McMurray, Linzer, & Elon, 1999).

Career stage

Career stage here includes employees' tenure, work experience, and tenure within the organisation. Employees' career status is in itself a form of investment that enhances human capital that could positively influence employees' career development or success. Much earlier, Super (1963; 1990) had established that individual's career development normally progresses through five invariant stages. Impliedly, each stage of career development dictates employees' career goals, career accomplishments, workplace productivity, and employees' career stage potentially influence their career growth. Furthermore, tenure of employees positively influences their career growth (Judge & Bretz, 1994). Similarly, employees' career stage (such as job and organisational tenure) positively influence employees' career growth (Eddleston et al., 2004; Ng et al., 2005; Chen, 2011; Weng & McElroy, 2012; Okurame, 2014).

Status and job description

Employees with relatively higher status may be better advantaged to understand the working of the employing organisation, learn from their work, acquire expertise considered valuable to the organisation, among others, which may lead to increased potentials for further development (Judge & Bretz, 1994). Also, employees' job status (or rank) is positively predicable of their objective career success (Powell & Butterfield, 1994; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001; Cheramine, Sturman, & Walsh, 2007; Chen, 2011; Okurame, 2014).

Race/ethnicity

Being a complex (and relative) variable, ethnicity has different meanings and interpretations in different situations (Malik, 2008). This is because it can refer to differences disparities between a main culture and its sub-cultures (such as Whites and minority Whites, Whites and non-Whites group, dominant Yoruba and minority Yorubas, among others). Thus, White minority doctors trained in the UK were found less intrinsically successful than White doctors; they are more likely to be referred to General Medical Council (Esmail & Abel,

2006); they are comparatively at greater risk of exposition to discriminations in applications for jobs (Esmail & Everington, 1993); they are less likely to be selected for General Practice training (Brown, Wakefield, & Bullock, (2001); and they are more likely predisposed to fail membership examinations relating to Royal Colleges (BMA, 2006; Dewhurt, McManus, Mollon, & Vale, 2007). On intrinsic successes, ethnic minority doctors exhibited less job satisfaction, and were more likely to leave patient-facing jobs (Sibbald, Bojke, & Gravelle, 2003). More specifically, Ng et al. (2005) established that race positively correlates with career success.

Individual differences and personality

Self-efficacy

Attitudes, belief system, and individual behaviours (individual differences) influence career growth and development. For instance, pursuing career growth in organisations is in itself an attitudinal disposition. It is worthy to note that Thus, employees who set goals for career growth have higher expectations for career growth provisions in their organisation (Chang, 1999). Also, self-efficacy is equally influence employees' career growth. Self-efficacy is the belief within an individual to show the motivation and ability to perform a given task successfully (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, self-efficacy has been found to be positively related to task performance across occupations (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, and Rich (2007), as well as Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, and Rich (2007); it also influences salary, job satisfaction, and occupational prestige (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012).

Locus of control

Locus of control (LOC) also could influence employees' career development. Locus of Behaviour is the belief that someone can control one's environment. This is positively related to job satisfaction, and salary (Ng et al. 2005). Also, individuals with internal LOC to correlate with career success (Ng, Sorensen, & Eby, 2006). Earlier, Bandura (1997) had revealed that the higher employees' self-efficacy, the higher their perception of career growth potentials; and self-efficacy beliefs has been found to enhance positive perceptions of power

to manage career growth prospects (Schwarzer & Scholz, 2000; Malherbe, Stell, & Theron, 2003).

The big five factor personality

Personality is the unique, relatively enduring covert and overt aspects of a person's character that influence his/her behaviour in diverse situations (Schultz & Schultz, 2005). Cattell's (1965) 16 traits of personality was believed to have too many factors; and Eysenck's (1947; 1997) personality types was assumed to have too many dimensions. Therefore, contemporary personality researchers (McCrae & Costa, 1985; 1997a) identified the big 5 factors of personality (also Five Factor Model, FFM). These are: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness (O), Agreeableness (A), and Conscientiousness (C). Thus, researchers have investigated how each of these personality dimensions relates with different kinds of work-related attitudes and behaviors.

Neuroticism (N)

This is associated with worry and low mood. While low N (stable) people are calm, emotionally stable and poised, high N individuals exhibit hostility, anxiety, vulnerability, impulsivity, self-consciousness, insecurity and depression (Barrick & Mount, 1991; McCrae & Costa, 1997a). Neuroticism relate positively with continuance commitment because they often exhibit apprehension about encountering a new work environment that could expose them to more severe workplace experiences should they leave their current organisation for new ones (Erdheim, Wang, & Zickar, 2006). Neurotics negatively associate with job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991); and they do not mostly experience job happiness (Mehryar & Golparva, 2015).

Extraversion (E)

Low Extraversion (introverted) people display risk-avoidance, and prefer their own company, while high E individuals display sociability, assertiveness, ambition, expressiveness, talkativeness, and gregariousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991). They usually do well, and thrive on careers requiring interpersonal skills (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001); they show positive association with extrinsic career success; and they show job happiness and career success (Mehryar & Golparvar, 2015)

Openness (O)

People rated as low O prefer concreteness to abstract. High O exhibit creativity, originality, broad mindedness, imagination, curiosity, artistic sensitivity, intelligence, and are also cultured (Barrick & Mount, 1991; McCrae & Costa, 1997b). The high O usually look for opportunities to have autonomy, and exhibit personal growth initiatives through imagination, curiosity, and creative behaviors in workplaces (Mount, Barrick, Scullen, & Rounds, 2005). Such individuals do not show good prediction of workplace productivity (Barrick et al. 2001), although openness to experience positively relates with intrinsic and extrinsic career success (Ng et al. 2005).

Conscientiousness (C)

Conscientiousness people are hard-working. While low C individuals are non-conformists and disorganised, high C people display achievement-striving, very orderliness, they show risk-avoidance, competence, self-discipline, thoroughness, responsibility, and perseverance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; McCrae & Costa, 1997a). On job behaviors, C people are high job performers (Barrick & Mount, 1993; Barrick et al. 2001), relate positively with achievement striving (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002).

Agreeableness (A)

Agreeableness (A) individuals categorised as low A are arrogant, aloof, and uncaring, but high A are forgiving, tolerant, trusting, cooperative, courteous, flexible, and good nurtured. On job behaviours, they performed weakly in with job performance (Barrick et al. 2001; McCrae & Mount, 1997a); agreeable individuals associate positively with job happiness, and with career success (Mehryar & Golparvar, 2015)

Organizational culture

Organizational culture in this paper consists what obtains within an organization; it includes work context, organizational politics and social capital, situational workplace phase, and managerial practice capable of influencing employees' career growth.

Work context

Weng and McElroy (2012) established each of career growth dimensions (career growth progress, professional ability development, promotion speed and remuneration) to negatively associates with employees' turnover intentions. Impliedly, conducive work environment promotes employees' organizational attachment while unconducive work environment would obstruct employees' organizational attachment. Furthermore, Tsui, Pearce, Porter, and Tripoli (1997) established that whenever an organization offers provisions for employees' career growth, it yields employee-organizational mutual investment relationship, leading to employees' organizational commitment (Weng et al. 2010). Similarly, organizational sponsorship and developmental organizational culture variables (such as opportunity for career sponsorship, supervisors' assistance, provisions for training and skill development, etc., influence employees' career growth (Koekemoer, 2014; Ng et al. 2005).

Organizational politics and social capital

Believed by Harrel-Cook, Ferris, and Dulebohn (1990) to be the subjective evaluation of organizational phenomena (often) perceived as political and unjust by employees, an invaluable resource that could influence employees' career growth is organizational politics. Thoughts that organizational outcomes are hinged on organizational politics could be threatening to employees' resources, which could result into diverting their (employees) potentials from investing them on attaining personal career goals to the pursuance of organizational politics (Grimland, Vigoda-Gadot, & Baruch, 2012). Related to organizational politics, an employee's social capital involves the "knowing whom" aspect of the employee's social network of connections (Parker, Khapova, & Arthur, 2009; Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2009), thus the most relevant resource prospect available for employees in the workplace (Brotheridge & Lee, 2012; Hobfoll, 2002). Specifically, Seibert, Kraimer, and Linden (2001) found that social capital positively correlates with employee's career satisfaction and hierarchical promotion; the development of social capital is also a predominant factor in attaining career growth (de Janasz & Forret, 2007).

Situational workplace phase

The prevailing organizational phase such as expansion, cash crunch, downsizing, etc., may influence employees' career growth. Koekemoer (2014) established that employees' time of entry into an organization could influence their career growth. For, an illustration, if employee A enters an organization during the organization's growth phase, the phase may predispose him or her to enjoy certain rights and timely opportunities such as improved pay, organization-sponsored human development program, and promotions, etc. On the contrary, however, if employee B enters into the same organization when it is becalmed, opportunities for receiving some rights and timely career growth prospects may be relatively reduced, delayed, or withheld.

Managerial practices

Realizing that organizations' mission and vision statements, workforce composition, and operating environment, etc., are dissimilar from one organization to another, there cannot be any single universal managerial best practices. Rather, efficient managerial practices must be contextual. Notwithstanding, however, there appears to be certain generic managerial practices that could potentially advance career growth prospects of employees. Prominent among these practices is flow of information. The flow of information from management to employees should be timely, consistent, accurate, and comprehensive, to make such information useable (Okere, 2006). Information on the criteria for promotion, available human development programs and pre-retirement education, etc., should be disseminated timely, accurately, and consistently. If such information is selectively, inadequately, or untimely disseminated, employees may be put into suspense, leading to unhealthy speculations about management decisions; this could be detrimental to the attainment of employees' career growth. Also, democratic management style should be institutionalized. In addition, retroactive laws should be avoided; but if it becomes inevitable, especially with regards to benefits, the liberal approach (where the benefit goes largely to employees in lieu of management) should be adopted (Oshio, 2015).

Prevailing government policy on organizational operation

Organizations operate under different government policies; this could directly or inadvertently influence employees' career growth. Aligning with this, Koekemoer (2014) established that government policy on business operations such as the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), and employment equity legislation in South Africa influenced organizations' offering of career prospects for their employees. Relatedly, Ng et al. (2005) found that political knowledge and skills positively relate to career growth. Still on influence of government policy, although it is unclear if the increment in the number of ethnic minority doctors practicing medicine in UK (Goldacre, Davidson, & Lambert, 2004) nor the well-representation at the medical school (BMA, 2004) was due to any known government legislation, in Nigeria, however, certain law exists that compels equal representation of the various zones of the nation in matters of federal appointments in Federal Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). Thus, the same positions that masters' degree holders compete for among candidates from certain zone(s) are opened for candidates with first degree from another zone(s). Resultantly, in many careers, promotions are always faster to fill-in top-place positions for candidates from one zone ahead of the other(s) on the grounds of federal character principle. Believed to have enthroned mediocrity in governance in Nigeria (Bello, 2012), it nonetheless has remained a potent factor in the determination of career success of many Nigerians in many careers.

Moderators of employees' career growth

Moderators are variables that affect the strength of the relation between an independent and a dependent variable (Kraemer, Wilson, Fairburn, & Agras, 2002). The moderators could be categorical (a quality) such as race, gender, class; or could be continuous (i. e. quantitative) like age, level of income, and level of rewards. Given the amphibious nature of some variables like gender and personality, each can function both as an independent variable and as a moderator.

Factors influencing the career growth of employees are not mutually exclusive; they mutually interact to bring about the reported influence in studies. On this, Ng et al. (2005) established that gender moderated the relationship between human capital and objective career success and between organizational sponsorship and objective career success on the

one hand, and gender moderated between human capital and subjective career success and between organizational sponsorship and subjective career success on the other hand. Also, while Ng et al. (2005) found time of study as a moderator between gender and objective career success, Grimland et al. (2012) established that chance events moderated the relationship between social capital, organizational politics, protean attitude towards career and internal and external dimensions of career success. Similarly, Okurame (2014) established a significant interaction effect between self-efficacy and personal growth initiative on career growth prospects.

More empirically, gender, which Weng and McElroy (2012) and Biswakarma (2016) could not establish as independently correlating with career success was found to correlate with career success at the intervention of time of study as moderator in Ng et al. (2005). Relatedly, gender moderated the relationship between human capital and objective career success and between organizational sponsorship and objective career success in Chen (2011); it is doubtful if the independent variables would have influenced career growth unsupported. Furthermore, chance events were established by Grimland et al. (2012) to moderate the relationship between social capital, politics within organization, protean attitude towards career and internal as well as external facets of career success. Given this finding, it is very unlikely that the manipulated variables would have affected the observed influence without the assistance of the moderators.

Conclusion

From the review of extant literature on the variables influencing the career growth of employees, it can be concluded that some of the factors are from birth, some are domiciled in the family and schools attended prior to entry into the workplace, some are located within employing organization offerings, and some are resident in government legislation on business and employment. These factors are not mutually exclusive, as they interact to bring about the measurable impact on employees' career growth. The major limitation in this paper, however, is its failure to involve any data analysis. Notwithstanding this, it has provided a model and a synthesis of variables influencing employees' career growth, including a vista of deepened need for studying moderating mechanisms.

Implications for practice

From Weng et al. (2010) multi-faceted conceptualization, career growth flows in two complementary directions: from employees' efforts and organizations' preparedness to reward employees' strives. Thus, organizations should institute desirable working environment, and developmental practices to meet the diverse needs of employees, while also striving to weaken those factors that could obstruct employees' career growth potentials, using orientation, seminars and workshops. On their part, employees should maximize opportunities for career growth offered by their organizations. Also, because organizations differ in human composition and operating environment, each organization should investigate the peculiarities of their employees, so as to evolve peculiar growth initiatives for their workers' career growth needs. Relatedly, given that crises that may portend maladjustment may arise along employees' career growth trajectories, provision should be made for organizational psychologist or guidance counselor in the personnel department to intervene in employees' socio-personal and career-related challenges to prevent negative workplace behaviors, preserve desirable behaviors, and remove employees' workplace maladjustment by means of psychotherapy and other means.

Moreover, career development researchers acknowledge employees' career advancement through capital development, but one area of opportunity that has been poorly exploited or completely ignored is the use of employee-induced intra-organizational skill development opportunities. Veiga (2015) had recommended allowing employees the use of job crafting, internal mobility, etc., to mitigate their search for alternative jobs outside their organization. Building upon this, human resource departments should encourage employees' mobility from one department to cognate departments of their interest to acquire valued skills to advance their career growth. Within the academia, for instance, an academic in guidance and counseling department could apply to teach certain course(s) in a cognate department like psychology or engage in full-time counseling activities in the department of students' affairs for an academic session or two (could also be for self-interactive research purpose) without losing anything.

Future research

Career growth researchers show proclivity towards collecting their data from target respondents within few days or weeks. Considering the influence that passage of time could

impact on career growth, longitudinal studies, especially using the cross-sectional approach would reveal discourses, themes, and patterns of individuals' career growth than could be revealed by non-longitudinal, one-shot studies. Similarly, it needs be emphasized that developmental theorists (e. g. Super, 1963; 1990) have demonstrated that vocational choice is not a one-shot (or single event) decision but systematically longitudinal. Relatedly, career growth literature obviously tilt disproportionately towards quantitative than qualitative. There is need, therefore, for future studies on career growth to employ a multi-dimensional approach such as the mixed-methods where both quantitative and qualitative approaches can be combined in a single study. Qualitative studies, for instance, are believed to enhance generation of new theories to explain prevailing phenomena.

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