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Article

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CAREER ADMINISTRATION AS A DETERMINANT OF PROACTIVE BEHAVIOR

Azman Ismail¹, Wan Aishah Wan Mohd Nowalid², Azmawaty Mohamad Nor³

ABSTRACT

Career guidance and counselling and its numerous services are meant to address issues bordering on career development, social changes and challenges. One of the modern challenges and threats to effective functioning, productivity and efficient service delivery in organizations is rapid changes in the 21st century, which needs to be addressed headlong. By addressing the duo problem of organizational development and the human aspect of organization, career administration considers as expedient, having proactive individuals who assist in moving the organization forward. Proactive personality professionals achieve several desirable individual and organizational outcomes: objective career success, career satisfaction, job performance and organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, affective commitment, taking charge and voice behavior which often are the central concern of every organization. This study examines the relationship between the career administration and proactive behavior. Self-report questionnaires are utilized to collect data from employees working at an oil and gas firm in West Malaysia. The results of SPSS program presented two essential outcomes: first, job autonomy was significantly correlated with proactive behaviour. Second, transformational leadership was significantly correlated with proactive behavior. This result demonstrates that career administration does act as an important determinant of proactive behavior in the studied organization. Additionally, discussion, implications and conclusion are elaborated.

Keywords: career administration, proactive behavior, career satisfaction.

JEL: M, M1, M12

1. INTRODUCTION

Career program is one of the several tools that are used to develop and enhance employees' career well-being in organizations (Ismail, Daud & Madrah, 2011; Neary, Dodd & Hooley, 2015; Zhou, Li, & Gao, 2016). Human resource managers are often saddled with the responsibility of planning and designing career programs in their organizations by stakeholders. In managing career programs, Human Resource Managers often work together with other line managers. They do this in planning incremental and wide career programs so as to create a balance between individuals' career needs and the organizations' needs, and subsequently match employees' interests and capabilities with their organizational's current and future innovations and changes (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007; Antoniu, 2010). If these career plans are appropriately administered, they will help organizations to maintain top talented people, enhance engagement and productivity, strengthen the succession plan with talented people, enhance knowledge transfer and retention, fill internal skill and role gaps, and create positive employer reputation (Insala, 2016).

Consequently, it could also lead to maintaining and achieving the organizational strategies and goals (Ismail et al., 2011; Martin et al., 2001). All these are aside of the different outcomes that Yang and Chau (2016) have discovered to be positive outcomes of such exercise in their recent study.

A review of the present literature relating to human resource development discussed that competent administration determines career success. It consists of two relevant dimensions:

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job autonomy and transformational leadership (Ngima & Kyongo, 2013; Cheung & Wong, 2011; Wan Aishah, Azman & Raja Rizal Iskandar, 2015). Job autonomy is nurtured in high commitment management practice which offers a degree of freedom with discretion given by an employer to the employee. The privilege of job autonomy amongst others enables an employee to determine work methods and procedures, plan work schedules based on priority, and help to decrease red-tapes in decision making process on the basis of different job levels and classifications (Breugh & Becker, 1987; Husaini, 2008). This practice will strongly enhance employees' sense of responsibility in decision making thereby leading to the achievement of career goals (Morgeson, Delaney-Klinger & Hemingway, 2005; Parker, Axtell & Turner, 2001).

In the case of transformational leadership, it is developed based on social relation where leaders implement transformational process through individualized considerations (e.g., understanding employees' different characters and abilities) (Chiaburu, Diaz, & Vos, 2013). Aside of this, coming further from transformational leadership are values such as intellectual stimulations (e.g., encouraging employees to gain new knowledge and skills), inspirational motivations (e.g., leaders influencing employees), and idealized influence (e.g., leaders demonstrating their leadership abilities and credibility) in performing daily tasks (Khan, Ghouri, & Awang, 2013). Thus, it is affirmed that job autonomy motivates employees towards achieving their career objectives in organizations (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Ismail et al., 2010; Rasid, 2007).

Interestingly, several extant studies about successful organizations highlight that administrators' ability to manage employee careers appropriately may have a significant impact on employee outcome, especially proactive behavior (Searle, 2011; Brandt, 2012). From an organizational behavior perspective, proactive behavior is often used to define the behavior of individuals having high motivation (Vroom, 1964), good planning know-how, high awareness and sensitivity to environmental changes, innovative ideas and ability to handle emotions thereby enhancing performance and

making the achievement of career goals to be possible or realizable (Crant, 2000; Fay & Freese, 2001).

Within a career administration model, many researchers interpret that job or work-related autonomy is defined as freedom to practice profession in accordance to training. However, transformational leadership and proactive behavior may have different meanings, but are highly interrelated concepts (Stone-Johnson, 2017). For example, the willingness of administrators to appropriately conduct job autonomy and transformational process in handling daily job may strongly enhance employees' proactive behavior in organizations. Inter alia, it is discovered that the use of factors such as structural autonomy, which encourages breaking the barrier of departmental hierarchy, helps to dismantle impediments or problems that might be encountered by organizations. This is exemplified and discernible in situations where strategic norms or traditions in organizations assist individuals and group decision-making authority necessary in investigating entrepreneurial possibilities. It in addition, helps to champion innovations and new venture concepts (Ndubuisi, Capel, & Ndubuisi, 2015). Although the nature of this relationship is interesting, the role of career administration as an important determinant has been ignored in organization career models (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001; Ndubuisi et al., 2015).

Many researchers argue that career administration has been ignored in previous studies because of several factors: first, many previous studies have much emphasized on the internal properties of career administration construct such as definitions, typologies, purposes and the importance of career programs in various organizations (Brandt, 2012; Ismail, et al., 2013; Searle, 2011). Second, many previous studies have extensively employed a simple association analysis method to describe employee attitudes toward the types of career planning and management, assessing the strength of association between career administration and general career outcomes such as protean career, promotion, satisfaction and well-being in organizations. However, effect size and nature of the correlation

between career administration and proactive behavior based on organizational behavioral sciences has been ignored in workplace career model (Brandt, 2012; Ismail, et al., 2013; Puah & Ananthram, 2006). As a result, these findings have only provided general recommendations that may not be adequate for use as important guidelines by practitioners in understanding the complexity of career administration concept, and setting up innovative structural changes (Ndubuisi et al., 2015) to upgrade the effectiveness of career administration in dynamic organizations (Kong, 2013; Wan Aishah et al, 2015). Thus, it is this situation that stimulates these researchers to venture into further exploring the relationship.

This study was conducted with two major objectives in mind:

- To measure the relationship between job autonomy and proactive behavior; and
- To measure the relationship between transformational leadership and proactive behavior.

The structure of this paper consists of five sections: literature review, methodology, findings, discussion/implications and conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Relationship between Career Administration and Proactive Behavior

The predicting role of career administration is consistent with the notion of Hall and Associates' (1986) organizational career development working model, which posits that well-designed and managed career programs are effective treatment styles that may enhance employees' career advancement. This theory shows that the notion of effective treatment can be translated as job autonomy and transformational leadership. The notion of this theory has been supported by career administration research literature (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001). For instance, many of the previous studies were conducted using a direct effects model to assess career programs in several organizational settings such as the perceptions of 410 direct reports, and the report on 113 supervisors from three

departments within a large public organization (state government agency) in the United States (Searle, 2011). Other than this, the perceptions of 131 employees in the Netherlands (Brandt, 2012), 76 workers at various manufacturing and retailing companies in South Africa (Minnaar, 2014), and 179 workers at research and consulting firms in the Netherlands (De Jong et al., 2015) all had been used variously at one time or the other.

The outcomes of these surveys reported two important findings: first, the ability of administrators to appropriately implement job autonomy in executing daily work has enhanced employees' proactive behavior in the organizations (Brandt, 2012; De Jong et al., 2015; Searle, 2011). Second, the ability of administrators to appropriately implement transformational process in executing daily work has enhanced employees' proactive behavior in the organizations (Brandt, 2012; Minnaar, 2014; Searle, 2011, Stone-Johnson, 2017). Thus, it was hypothesized that:

H1: Job autonomy positively correlates with proactive behavior

H2: Transformational leadership positively correlates with proactive behavior

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study is conducted on an oil and gas company located in Klang Valley in West Malaysia. For confidential and professional ethical reason, the name of organization is kept anonymous. This organization has many employees possessing various working experiences, professional knowledge and skills that qualify them to handle high technology and hazardous materials that are used often by the oil and gas industry. In a bid to maintain competent employees, it was exigent and compelling for the leaders of the organization to introduce job autonomy. It is believed that by introducing job autonomy, employees will be at liberty to use their discretion in meeting customers' needs and expectations while the use of transformational leadership style (e.g., relationship based training to develop

employees' full potentials, motivating employees to use new knowledge and techniques in doing job, and orienting employee attitudes to support the organizational goals) will encourage a better input and productivity. Although career administration has been widely implemented in the organization, its effectiveness has not been empirically investigated. Therefore, a need to study this relationship is imperative.

This study uses a cross-sectional research design, allowing the researchers to integrate the career administration literature and the actual survey carried out. As suggested by prominent scholars, the use of data collection procedure may help the researchers to acquire precise data, less bias data and high quality set of data (Creswell, 1998; Creswell, 2012; Sekaran, 2000). During the initial stage of this study, a survey questionnaire was drafted based on the career administration literature. In furtherance to this, a back translation technique was employed to translate the survey questionnaires into Malay and English versions in order to increase the validity and reliability of the results (Brislin, 1970; Creswell, 1998; Wright, 1996).

3.2 Measures

The survey questionnaire has four sections:

- Job Autonomy
This section has 11 items adapted from career program relating to job autonomy (Saragih, 2011; Mack, 2012). The dimensions used to measure job autonomy are work method, work scheduling and decision making.
- Transformational Leadership
This section has 11 items adapted from career program relating to transformational leadership (Callow et al, 2009; Rank, 2006). The dimensions used to measure transformational leadership are charisma, individual consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation.
- Proactive Behavior
This section has 5 items adapted from career program relating to proactive behavior (Searle, 2011; Gevorkian, 2011). The dimensions used to

measure proactive behavior are career management behavior, proactive personality and networking.

➤ Career Satisfaction

This section has 8 items adapted from career program relating to career satisfaction (Sutton, 2006; Mohd Rasdi, Garavan & Ismail, 2011). The dimensions used to measure career satisfaction are extrinsic and intrinsic career successes. These items are measured using a 7-item scale ranging from "strongly disagree/dissatisfied" (1) to "strongly agree/satisfied" (7). Demographic variables were used as controlling variables because this study focuses on employee attitudes.

3.3. Sample

A purposive sampling technique was employed to distribute 200 survey questionnaires to employees who work in all departments within the studied organization. This sampling technique was chosen because the head of the organization had not provided the list of registered employees to the researchers for confidential reasons. As a result, this situation did not allow the researchers to select participants randomly from the population. From the distributed questionnaires, 132 (66 percent) usable questionnaires were successfully collected back by the researchers. The survey questionnaires were answered by participants based on their consent and willingness to participate. The sample of this study exceeds the minimum sample of 30 participants as required by probability sampling technique, showing that it may be analysed using inferential statistics (Sekaran, 2000; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis technique as proposed by Hair et al. (2010) is being employed to assess the validity and reliability of the instrument and also for testing the research hypotheses. Initially, exploratory factor analysis was used to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement scales employed. Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics were then conducted

to analyse the constructs. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the magnitude and direction of the relationship between many independent variables and one dependent variable (Foster, Stine & Waterman, 1998). The results of this regression analysis are shown by path coefficients (i.e., standardised betas (β) and p values ($p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$; $p < 0.001$) (Wong, Hui & Law, 1995). Further, the value of R^2 is applied as an indicator of the model's overall predictive strength (i.e., 0.26 (substantial effect), 0.13 (moderate effect) and 0.02 (weak effect) (Cohen, 1988).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Profiles of Respondents

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents are male (56.8 percent), aged 25 to 34 (64.4 percent), degree holders (47.7 percent), employees who have served from 15 to 24 years (52.3 percent) and employees who have had monthly salaries starting from RM5000 and above (50.0 percent).

Table 1: Participant Characteristics (N=132)

Participant Characteristics	Sub-Profile	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56.8
	Female	43.2
Age	Below 25 years	2.3
	25 - 34 years	64.4
	35 - 44 years	22.7
	45 - 54 years	9.8
	55 years and above	0.8
Education	LCE/SRP	1.5
	MCE/SPM	8.3
	HSC/STPM	34.1
	Diploma	0.8
	Degree	47.7
	Others	7.6
Length of Service	Below 5 years	33.4
	5 - 14 years	52.3
	15 - 24 years	11.3
	25 years and above	3.0
Monthly Salary	Valid < RM 1000	1.5
	RM 1000-RM2499	10.6
	RM 2500-RM3999	37.1
	RM 4000-RM4999	0.8
	RM5000 and above	50.0

Note:

SPM/MCE : Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia/Malaysia Certificate of Education

STPM/HSC : Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia/Higher School Certificate

RM : Malaysian Ringgit

4.2. Measurement Model

Table 2 displays the results of validity and reliability analyses for the instrument. The questionnaires have 35 items relating to four variables: job autonomy (11 items), transformational leadership (11 items), proactive behavior (5 items) and career satisfaction (8 items). The factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation was done for four variables with 35 items. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test (KMO) which is a measure of sampling adequacy was conducted for each variable with the results indicating acceptability. Specifically,

these statistical results showed that (1) all the research variables exceeded the acceptable standard of Kaiser-Meyer Olkin's value of 0.6, (2) all the research variables are significant in Bartlett's test of sphericity, (3) the research variables have eigenvalues larger than 1, (4) the items for each research variable exceed factor loadings of 0.40 (Hair et al., 2010), and (5) all the research variables exceed the acceptable standard of reliability analysis of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). These statistical results confirm that the instrument has met the acceptable standard of validity and reliability analyses.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Measure	Item	Factor Loadings	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
Job Autonomy	11	0.541 to 0.782	0.883	695.239; p=0.000	5.547	50.430	0.897
Transformational Leadership	11	0.567 to 0.881	0.920	1173.201; p=0.000	7.136	64.873	0.945
Proactive Behavior	5	0.600 to 0.811	0.826	297.502; p=0.000	3.353	55.876	0.833

4.3 Construct Analysis

Table 3 shows the results of descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. The mean values for the variables are between 5.53 and 5.81, signifying the levels of job autonomy, transformational leadership and proactive behavior ranging from high (4) to highest level (7).

The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., job autonomy and transformational leadership) and the dependent variable (i.e., proactive behavior) are less than 0.90, indicating that the data are not affected by serious collinearity problem (Hair et al., 2010). These statistical results further confirm that the constructs have satisfactorily met the criteria of validity and reliability analyses.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation (r)		
			1	2	3
Job Autonomy	5.8104	.54749	1		
Transformational Leadership	5.5337	.78069	.580**	1	
Proactive Behavior	5.7248	.56935	.496**	.483**	1

Note: Correlation Value is significant at **p<0.01 Reliability estimation are shown in a diagonal

4.3.1. Outcomes of Testing Hypotheses 1 and 2

Table 4 shows that the inclusion of job autonomy in the analysis accounts for the 33 percent in the variance of proactive behavior, showing that it provides a substantial effect for the overall model (Cohen, 1988). The hypothesis testing displays two major findings: first, job autonomy positively and significantly

correlated with proactive behavior ($\beta=0.332$; $p<0.001$), thus supporting hypothesis H1. Second, transformational leadership positively and significantly correlated with proactive behavior ($\beta=0.306$; $p<0.001$), thus supporting hypothesis H2. These results demonstrate that job autonomy and transformational leadership are important antecedents of proactive behavior in the studied organization.

Table 4. The Outcomes of Linear Regression Analysis Showing the Relationship between Career Administration and Proactive Behavior

Variables	Dependent Variable (Proactive Behavior)	
	Step 1	Step 2
<u>Controlling Variable</u>		
Gender	.067	.149
Age	-.043	.031
Education	-.038	-.071
Position	-.024	-.047
Length of Service	.086	.026
Monthly Income	.110	.029
Marital Status	-.061	.003
<u>Independent Variable</u>		
Job Autonomy		.332***
Transformational Leadership		.306***
R Square	0.26	0.325
Adjust R Square	-0.029	0.276
R Square change	0.026	0.299
F	0.473	6.538***
F Δ R Square	0.473	27.070***

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Beta = Standardized Beta

As an extension of the hypothesis testing, the value of variance inflation factor for the relationships: 1) between job autonomy and proactive behavior is 1.087 and 2) between transformational leadership and proactive behavior is 1.043. These values are less than 10.0, indicating that they are not affected by a serious collinearity problem (Hair et al., 2010).

4. 4. Discussion and Implications

The outcome of this study reveals that career administration does act as an important determinant of proactive behavior. In the context of this study, managers have designed and administered career programs for employees who work at different job levels and categories based on the broad policies

and procedures that were established sequel to their stakeholder's needs. Majority of the respondents are of the view that the levels of job autonomy, transformational leadership and proactive behavior are high in the organization. These results show that the capability of administrators to appropriately implement job autonomy and transformational leadership in executing daily job may lead to greater employees' proactive behavior in the organization.

This study provides three major implications: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology, and contribution to practitioners. With respect to theoretical contribution, the outcomes of testing the research model have enhanced our understanding that career administration is an important determinant of proactive behavior in the studied organization. This finding of the study is consistent with the notion of Hall and Associates' (1986) organizational career development working model, which reveals that the ability of administrators to appropriately implement job autonomy and transformational leadership style in executing daily job may enhance employees' proactive behavior. This result is also consistent with studies by Searle (2011), Brandt (2012), Minnaar (2014) and De Jong et al. (2015). In terms of the robustness of research methodology, the survey questionnaire data have met the criteria of validity and reliability analyses, thus providing assurance of accurate and reliable research findings.

With reference to practical contributions, this study provides important recommendations that may help practitioners to improve career administration in dynamic organizations. This objective may be achieved if senior administrators pay more attention onto the following areas: firstly, relationship-based training should be properly designed to upgrade the ability of administrators in implementing coaching and mentoring methods to meet various employees' needs and expectations. Secondly, the type, level and/or amount of reward given should be reviewed to take on board the higher contribution of higher performing employees. This effort may enhance high performing employees'

satisfaction, intention to stay and job motivation in organizations.

Thirdly, positive social support should be promoted in order to enhance cooperation and collaboration between management and followers, as well as between co-workers in performing their day to day job operations. This initiative may increase job motivation and service quality, as well as decrease work conflict and distress problems in organizations. Finally, recruitment and selection policies should be oriented to hire employees who have salient competencies such as recognized academic qualifications in management, professional human resource development certificates, good personalities and good working experience in management to fulfil important positions in organizations. This competent employee is an important asset because their expertise can be utilized to facilitate and guide junior staff in decreasing malpractices and enhancing innovations to achieve organizational objectives. If these suggestions are heavily considered, they may strongly encourage employees to support workplace career strategy and goals.

The conclusion should be cautious with several methodological and conceptual limitations. Firstly, the data was only taken once in the duration of this study and this method may not capture detailed intra-individual changes, restricting to only making comparison within the sample. Secondly, this study only examines the relationship between latent variables and does not specify the relationship between specific indicators for the independent variable and dependent variable. Thirdly, the study only focuses on particular dimensions of career administration ignoring other important dimensions (such as planning, training and personality). Fourthly, other career outcomes such as promotion and satisfaction that have been found to be significant for organizations and employees are not discussed in this study. Finally, the sample used in this study was taken using a purposive sampling technique on a single company. These limitations may decrease the ability of generalizing the results of this study to other organizational backgrounds.

This study provides some important suggestions in order to strengthen future research. Firstly, various respondent variables such as gender, age and marital status should further be explored. If these variables are included in the analysis, they may provide meaningful perspectives in understanding the impact these variables may have upon the workplace career success. Secondly, a longitudinal study is another option that may be explored since it has more capability describing the patterns of change, direction and, magnitude of causal relationships between variables of interest. Thirdly, this study could provide useful findings if it is conducted in several organizations and the results compared to produce expressive findings.

Fourthly, other theoretical constructs of career administration such as career planning, protean career and career ladder may be considered as they have been widely acknowledged as providing an important link between career administration and career advancement. Next, other dimensions of proactive behaviour like personality and networking need to be measured because they have commonly been known as essential outcomes of career administration. Finally, objective career outcome constructs such as promotion and reward could also be studied because they are found to be important outcomes of career administration. These provide many areas for future research relating to career administration and proactive behavior.

5. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the ability of management to appropriately implement job autonomy and transformational leadership in executing day to day job operations may lead to higher employees' proactive behavior in the studied organizations. Therefore, present research and practice within the human capital development and management need to incorporate job autonomy and transformational leadership as key factors into the domain of career administration. The study further suggests that the capability of administrators to appropriately implement job autonomy and transformational leadership in the design

and administration of career programs will strongly induce subsequent positive employee outcomes (e.g., career satisfaction, promotion opportunity and organizational citizenship behavior). Thus, these positive outcomes may lead to maintaining and enhancing organizational performance in facing global competition.

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