

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CAREER MANAGEMENT AND INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at organizational career management and individual performance among insurance salespeople in Kedah. The objective of the paper is to determine whether there is a relationship between organizational career management and individual performance. Organizational career management comprised measure of career management policies, career development, and career information while individual performance is measured in terms of the output performance. The questionnaire was developed and distributed to the sample. The sample comprised insurance salespeople working at an insurance company in Alor Setar. A total of 169 questionnaires were sent but only 57 were returned, thereby achieving a response rate of 33.7%. The result found that there was a significant relationship between organizational career management and individual performance. Therefore, it could be inferred that organizational career management is strongly associated to individual performance.

Keywords: *Organizational career management, performance.*

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini melihat pengurusan kerjaya organisasi dan prestasi individu di kalangan penjual insuran di Kedah. Objektif artikel ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti sama ada wujud hubungan di antara pengurusan kerjaya organisasi dengan prestasi individu. Pengurusan kerjaya organisasi mengandungi

ukuran tentang dasar pengurusan, pembangunan dan maklumat kerjaya, sementara prestasi individu diukur dari segi output prestasi. Kaji selidik dibentuk dan dihantar kepada sampel. Sampel kajian terdiri dari penjual insuran yang bekerja di sebuah organisasi di Alor Star. Sebanyak 169 soal selidik diedarkan tetapi hanya 57 dikembalikan, iaitu pencapaian kadar maklum balas sebanyak 33.7%. Hasil kajian mendapati wujud hubungan yang signifikan di antara pengurusan kerjaya organisasi dengan prestasi individu. Maka, boleh disimpulkan bahawa pengurusan kerjaya organisasi mempunyai hubungan dengan nyata dengan prestasi individu.

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic business environment where people have become one of the critically important elements to gain competitive advantage, organizations are faced with new challenges in managing its human resources. Instead of focusing only on financial capabilities and product quality, Dreher and Dougherty (2001) suggested that high-performing organizations should engage in competitive search for the most capable employees. These capabilities can only be achieved through the development and implementation of effective human resource practices and strategies.

Career management, one of the important elements in human resource management, has a great impact on organization. According to a report, effective career development system was found to be the fifth most important predictor (out of 80 factors) contributing to company financial success (Steven, 1996). Feldman (1988) has also noted that career management is essential for organizations to retain the most talented employees available. Organizations often decide to adopt career management programs because they believe that those programs can increase employee individual performances (Fish & Wood, 1993) as well as foster positive attitudes and corporate loyalty among workers (Feldman, 1988).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career

Torrington and Hall (1998) suggested that the new concept of career which emphasizes individual development and extension within the job itself is very realistic. Nowadays, organizations are more interested to retain those who can contribute to the success of the organization.

This new concept might be related to one's extension and development in terms of knowledge and skill. A wide range of knowledge and skills, if well managed and effectively used in doing the job, can be powerful tools to enhance individual performance.

Another important element in the new career concept is the idea of joint-responsibility between individuals and organization. Poole and Warner (1998) suggested that employees should manage their own careers rather than expect their organization to do so. In line with this, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright (2000) have brought forward the concept of *protean* which suggests that an individual's career should be driven by the person, not solely dependent on the organization, while at the same time requires increasing self-knowledge and adaptability.

Career Management

Mayo (1991) provided a definition of career management as follows:

The design and implementation of organizational processes that enable the careers to be planned and managed in a way that optimizes both the needs of the organization and the preferences and capabilities of individuals.

Mayo's (1991) definition contains two main points regarding career management. The first is that the idea focuses on the organization's role in planning and managing employees' career. The second stresses on the organizations' need and individuals' preferences and capabilities. Mayo (1991) defined career management as a process done by the organization to manage employees' career for the benefits of both organization and also individuals. Torrington and Hall (1998) on the other hand, stated that career development is something that is experienced by the individual and therefore not necessarily bound by one organization. Therefore, the main responsibility of managing career is with the individual while the organization should only play a supporting role in facilitating the processes.

However, Byars and Rue (2000) suggested that successful career management should include actions from three sources: the employee, the organization, and the employee's immediate manager. Accordingly, employees' responsibility is to prepare their own career plans, as career planning is not something one person can do for another. This is important because it is the employees who are going to put the plan into practice (Byars and Rue, 2000). Gould and Penley (1984) have

recognized the activity of putting planning into practice as career strategies.

Another source of successful career management suggested by Byars and Rue (2000) is the role of the organization. The organization's responsibilities are to ensure a smooth delivery of necessary career-related information and advice concerning possible career paths to carry out their career plans. In other words, an organization's role is to create the environment that facilitates the development of individual career plans. The immediate manager's responsibility, on the other hand, is to show an employee how to go about the process and help the employee evaluate the action taken (Byars & Rue, 2000).

Reviewing the above ideas, it is found that Byars and Rue's (2000) explanation is the most appropriate concept of career management that fits the purpose of this study. It is the idea of joint-responsibility between individuals, organization, and employees' immediate managers. Individuals' responsibility, which covers two main areas: preparing their own career plans and putting the plan into practice are termed as career planning and career strategies respectively. The organization's and the immediate managers' responsibilities, if combined together would generate another dimension which is best named as organizational career management. More specifically, the concept of career management as applied in this study comprises three dimensions namely organizational career management, career planning, and career strategies.

Organizational Career Management (OCM)

The term "organizational career management" in the context of this study is used to cover various activities, programs, and policies employed by the management team or employer to support individual career planning and strategies.

In his study on OCM, Pazy (1987) indicated that OCM activities include the following:

- organizational and human resource planning.
- ensuring free flow of information regarding organizational plans, job openings, career paths and opportunities.
- designing selection, admission, staffing, training and development programs.
- conducting performance evaluations and maintaining assessment centers as developmental process linked to job assignment.
- basing promotion decisions on objective, job-relevant criteria.

- taking into consideration career stages, personal, and family needs.

Feldman (1988) has listed several OCM activities that an organization commonly offers to their employees. They are: (i) career information systems; (ii) human resource planning and forecasting; (iii) career counseling; (iv) career pathing; (v) skills assessment and training; (vi) career development for disadvantaged groups; (vii) career development for “fast-track” employees; and (viii) career development skills workshops for supervisors.

Further, Torrington and Hall (1998) have suggested several ways for the organization to support each stage of individual career planning. Baruch (1999) suggested various OCM practices that are valid for the 2000s.

As proposed by some researchers (Baruch, 1999; Torrington and Hall, 1998), the practices and programs that are related to OCM vary and they seem difficult to analyze. Moreover, Orpen (1994) has grouped these practices and programs into three main components, which are career information, career management policies, and career development.

Where career information is concerned, Byars and Rue (2000) suggested that the organization should be responsible for developing and communicating career options within the organization to employees and ensuring that the information is always current and accurate. To reach this end, Gomez-Mejia, Balkin and Cardy (2004) have suggested that company newsletters, booklets / pamphlets and company websites can be used as tools that can be used to deliver this information. Furthermore, Jackson (1991) has suggested three kinds of information that the organization should provide, i.e., information about training and educational opportunities to communicate the organization’s policy about eligibility for training and provide support to employees who wish to pursue educational courses that run externally or internally; information about the organization which includes information about job vacancies, possible career paths and the number of people needed in a particular job. This kind of information might enable employees to plan for their career and to determine the opportunities that may occur in the organization; information about how the organization sees the future which includes business plans, manpower projections and predicted future skills requirement. Therefore for the purpose of this study, career information is referred

to as management efforts in providing necessary career-related information for employees.

Following career information is career management policies. Career management policies cover various standards and procedures implemented by the management team in managing employees' career (Orpen, 1994). These policies are important as they serve as guidelines to individual employees. Without proper policies, employers are not able to plan for their employees accordingly.

Lastly is career development. Career development covers various activities, programs, and techniques employed by the management team to enhance employees' career development, such as training and career counseling (Orpen, 1994). These career development activities would logically support the career management policies.

Performance

William (1998) has clearly divided the concept of performance into two main perspectives, which are output-oriented performance and behavior-oriented performance. While discussing the performance from the output-oriented perspective, this author has outlined various terms that are widely used in organizations, to indicate performance as output. These terms include results, objectives, goals achievement and performance standard.

According to Nik Kamariah (1995), output-oriented sales performance in an insurance organization can be measured by:

- sales volume: can be in currency and in units for the quarter, semi-annually or annually.
- quotas: quantitative objective expressed in absolute terms assigned to each salesperson.
- number of new accounts opened: the number of new customers contacted and purchased insurance in the period specified.
- annual earnings or income obtained from sales activities such as salary, bonus, commission, and other financial benefits.

The concept of performance that was applied in the present study is based on the concept of 'outcome' performance as suggested by the above-mentioned authors. This concept does not consider the behavioral aspect of performance but only focuses on performance as an outcome or output. The reason why outcome performance was chosen is that many experts in the field of personal selling proved that

it has a positive relation with salespeople' performance (Roman, Ruis & Muneara, 2002). Additionally, in the pay-for-performance incentive system (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin & Cardy, 2004) as insurance organization, end result is the most appropriate and fair indicator to determine performance.

Relationship Between Organizational Career Management (OCM) And Performance

Orpen (1994) has studied the relationship between OCM and career effectiveness on 129 employees in a variety of organizations both in private and public sectors in UK. Most of them were in the supervisory position. He studied career effectiveness in terms of salary growth, promotion received, career performance and career satisfaction. From the factor analysis conducted in his study, he identified three components of organizational career management, which includes career information, career management policies and career development. The results of his study demonstrated that career policies, career development and career information do have a positive correlation with performance. It also provided evidence that career information has a stronger effect on performance, compared to the other two factors.

In terms of gender differences, Pazy's (1987) study have demonstrated the similarity in the mean score between men and women in terms of their perception on the existence of OCM activities in their organization. However, there was a different perception between men and women in terms of the effect of OCM on their career effectiveness. According to Pazy (1987), when women feel the organization takes an interest in managing their careers, their performances were enhanced. In short, his findings indicated that organizational career management played a very important role in women's career development, while organizational career management did not influence men's performance.

On the other hand, training has been identified as an element in OCM (Pazy, 1987; Baruch, 1996). Therefore the literature review is extended to cover this aspect. The study by Roman *et al.*, (2002) provided empirical evidence pertaining to the importance of sales training (training methods and training contents) in increasing performance of salespeople. Through the statistical test conducted by Roman *et al.* (2002), it was found that higher level performance was observed when specific training methods such as on-the-job training for salespeople were implemented. Concerning the training contents, their

performance were significantly different when the content related to company policy and sales techniques, as well as customer knowledge and computer knowledge were taught. Furthermore, Langeland, Johnson and Mawhinney, (1998) suggested that in-service training is an effective way to improve employees' performance.

Many researchers (Pazy, 1987; Orpen, 1994; Langeland *et al.*, 1998; Roman *et al.*, 2002) indicated that OCM were related to performance. Langeland *et al.* (1998) and Wilk and Redmon (1998) revealed that goal setting has great impact on performance improvement. On the other hand, Appelbaum, Arye & Shapiro (2002) indicated that career planning has no direct relationship with performance. Regarding career strategies, none of the literature exhibit that it is directly related to performance. The areas that have been reviewed were career success and salary progression. Nevertheless, Gould and Penley (1984) has suggested several strategies, if implemented well could contribute to higher performance.

These various perspectives of career management and performance have become a foundation in the establishment of the research framework for this study.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The main purpose of this study is to look at the relationship between organizational career management and individual performance. The dependent variable is individual performance while the independent variables are organizational career management (OCM). Organizational career management consists of three dimensions, namely career management policies, career development, and career information. The relationships of the variables are shown in Figure 1.

Organizational Career Management

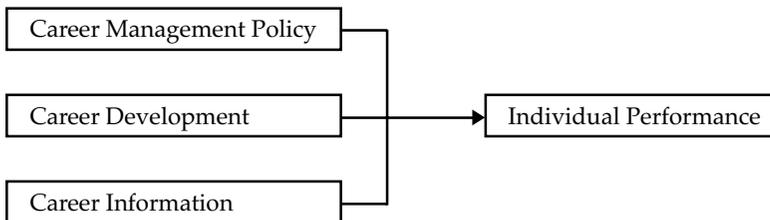


Figure 1
The relationships between variables

Objectives

This study attempts to determine the relationship between organizational career management (OCM) and individual performance, and to examine which OCM dimensions is significantly related to individual performance

METHODOLOGY

Measures

The independent variable (organizational career management) comprised 3 dimensions, namely career management policy, career development and career information. Career management policy measured various standards, procedure, methods and systems employed by management in managing employees' career. Career development measured various activities, programs and techniques used by management to enhance employees' career development while career information are efforts done by management to provide career related information for employees to support individual career planning and strategies. The questions were adapted from various sources. There were 24 items in the measures and it was measured on a 5-point likert scale (1= not at all to 5 = extensively).

The dependent variable (individual performance) is measured in terms of the outcomes or output or sales produced on a specified job function or activity during a specified period of time. The items were adapted from the sales force performance developed by Behrman and Perrault in Roman *et al.* (2002) using a 5-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly disagree).

Population And Sampling

The population comprised salespeople in the branch office of an insurance company in Kedah. A sample of 169 was drawn from the total of 300 salespeople (Sekaran, 2003) in the organization using random sampling. The sample was restricted to salespeople who had worked with the organization for more than a year to ensure that all respondents had some experience in sales. This might enable them to understand the questionnaire and answer it well. The units of analysis in this study were individuals.

Data Collection Method

Through verbal permission from the Training and Education Department of the insurance company, a total of 169 questionnaires were distributed personally to all 32 sales agency (department) of the organization. A total of 57 questionnaires were collected, which made up a return rate of 33.7% but only 55 questionnaires were used for further analysis due to incomplete returns. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 11.

Factor Analysis Results

The Organizational Career Management Items

The results of Principal Component Analysis of Organizational Career Management are presented in Table 1. As shown, the varimax rotation of the 24-items produced three factors that accounted for 72.13% of the total variance. The three factors extracted using varimax rotation were named as Career Information, Career Management Policy, and Career Development respectively. These three factors were found to be similar to the previous research conducted by Orpen (1994).

Table 1
Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix of Organizational Career Management Items

Items and Factor Description	Factor Loading		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
A standard amount of FYP to determine individual progress	0.54		
A clear process of career movement	0.50		
A clear method to organize performance related-pay	0.56		
Joint field work by immediate manager	0.67		
Professional courses	0.68		
Recognition for those who perform well	0.65		
Special awards for top producers	0.67		
Special contest to enhance performance	0.58		
Distribution of brochures/pamphlets/booklets on career issues	0.66		
Information regarding contest/awards and its requirement	0.88		
Information regarding commission for each product	0.84		

(continued)

A systematic procedure to manage agents' career			0.89
A systematic way of managing human resource			0.89
A systematic performance appraisal system			0.88
Agents' personal record/file as an assessment tool			0.67
Proper review of agents' potential			0.62
Retirement preparation programs			0.79
Feedback on daily performance			0.62
Clear information on potential career progress			0.65
Different training programs for different career stages			0.66
Continuous training program			0.72
Succession Planning			0.75
Career counseling by immediate manager			0.82
In house training			0.67
Cumulative % of variance	27.67	53.50	72.13
Cumulative Eigen value			76.04

Validity and Reliability

The reliability results for all the variables are reflected in Table 2 below. Reliability test was carried out using the inter-item internal consistency and these alpha values were found to exceed 0.7. The *Individual Performance* dimension shows the reliability result of 0.90. The overall alphas for Organizational Career Management items were 0.96 while the reliability results of the dimensions ranged between 0.91 and 0.93. The results indicate that the measures for the respective measurements are statistically reliable.

Table 2
Reliability Coefficients of Variables

Factors	Number of Items	Cronbach α
Individual performance	7	0.90
Organizational Career Management	24	0.96
Career Information	11	0.93
Career Policy	8	0.93
Career Development	5	0.91

FINDINGS

This study examined which of the three independent variables is the most important variable in explaining individual performance. It also aimed at examining which dimensions in Organizational Career

Management is the most important factor in explaining individual performance.

Descriptive Analysis Of Demographic Profile

The demographic data of 55 salespeople of the insurance company who participated in the study are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3
Demographic Profile

Demographic Profile		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	33	60.0
	Female	22	40.0
Age Group	Less than 25	6	10.9
	25-30 years	10	18.2
	31-35 years	10	18.2
	36-40 years	15	27.3
	41-45 years	8	14.5
Education Background	SPM	31	56.4
	STPM	8	14.5
	Diploma	8	14.5
	Degree	6	10.9
	Others	1	1.8
Position	Sales agent	36	65.5
	Unit Manager	12	21.8
	District Manager	6	10.9
	Others	1	1.8
Years Of involvement	1-3 years	20	36.4
	4-6 years	13	23.6
	7-9 years	8	14.5
	10-15 years	7	12.7
	More than 15 years	7	12.7
Income	Less than 12000	14	25.5
	12001-30000	13	23.6
	30001-60000	7	12.7
	60001-75000	2	3.6
	75001-100000	3	5.5
	More than 100000	16	29.1

The studies reveal that 33 respondents were male, while 22 were females and majority of them were between 26-40 years of age. Many of the respondents possess SPM qualifications. Majority of the respondents were sales agent, and 36.4% of them had been exposed between 1-3 years in the business. Approximately 30% of respondents received an annual income of more than RM100, 000 while 25.5% received less than RM12, 000.

Relationship Between Dimension of Organizational Career Management and Individual Performance

As indicated in Table 4, all three dimensions of OCM are correlated with individual performance. The highest coefficient correlation value is 0.650 for career development, followed by 0.632 for career management policy, and 0.553 for career information. The results exhibit positive relation between career information, policy and development to individual performance. It also reveals that the overall OCM result of 0.685 influences individual performance positively.

Table 4
Correlation Coefficients Between OCM Dimensions
and Individual Performance

	Performance	OCM	Information	Policy	Development
Performance	.685**	.553**	.632**	.650**	
Information			1	.640**	.795**
Policy				1	.658**
Development					1

** p<0.01

Multiple Regressions of OCM Dimensions and Individual Performance

The result indicates that 49.6% of the variance (R square) in Individual Performance has been significantly explained by the three dimensions of OCM: career information, career management policies and career development. The result shows that career management policy and career development are significantly related to individual performance. The Beta value of .423 for career development and followed by .364 for career management policy indicate that these two dimensions are very important in explaining individual performance. The positive betas weight on the other hand, indicate that career development and

career management policy are essential if the organization wants to increase individual performance.

Although the three dimensions are positively related to individual performance, only career information and career development are highly related to individual performance. It could be concluded that all the dimensions of OCM are positively related to individual performance but only career development and career management policy are significant in enhancing individual performance.

Table 5
Multiple Regression Analysis Of OCM on Individual Performance
Coefficients

Variable Entered	Individual Performance				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.644	.429		1.502	.139
Information	-1.738E-02	.179	-.016	-.097	.923
Policy	.375	.141	.364*	2.665	.010
Development	.440	.180	.423*	2.446	.018

Independent variables: Career Information, Career Management Policy, Career Development

R Square = .496

F = 16.714

R = .704

*p<0.05

DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine relationship between the three dimensions of career management and individual performance, that is organizational career management, career planning and career strategies. Having measured the three dimensions in the present study has allowed us to better understand the relationship between overall career management and individual performance.

The result showed positive relationships between the dimensions of organizational career management and individual performance, which is parallel to Orpen’s (1994) study. Although all factors are related to individual performance, further analysis has found that only career development and career management policy were significant factors in influencing individual performance.

The positive correlation value between career development and individual performance suggests that career development activities and programs are necessary to be employed by the management team if individual performance is to be increased. These activities include training programs, succession planning, and career counseling by immediate managers. Previous researchers (Baruch, 1996; Pazy, 1987) classified training as an essential element in organizational career management. The study by Roman *et al.* (2002) has shown that specific training methods such as on-the-job training, and training contents such as sales techniques and customer knowledge have contributed to higher level sales performance. As In the organization investigated in our study, there were various training programs offered to salespeople. The most important training that is made compulsory for all new agents is the Fast Agent Success Training (FAST). This training is related to sales techniques such as prospecting, approaching, fact-finding, presentation, handling objection and closing interview (Source: Fast Agent Success Training Module, American International Assurance Co. Ltd.). This comprehensive training is very useful in developing individual basic needs and skills of salespeople towards higher level of individual performance. The study conducted by Langeland *et al.* (1998) discovered that employees' opportunity to learn the exact behavior needed in performing the specific job led to higher performance. In the organization studied, there were sessions that focused on 'sales talk' and communication skills, which were normally conducted by immediate manager. These sessions offered opportunities for salespeople to learn from their superiors regarding the powerful 'sales talk' and also learn to use several tools, which are very applicable to perform their job.

Other than that, this study indicated that the existence of career management policy plays a significant role in salespeople's performance. In the organization studied, there was a systematic and proper standard in managing performance and retirement, assessing potential, and handling important information regarding employees' career. These available policies encourage employees to increase their performance. Besides, this study also indicated that the organization's effort in providing feedback plays an important role in determining salespeople's performance. This result is in line with Langeland *et al.* (1998) and Wilk and Redmon (1998) who had, respectively verified that weekly verbal feedback and graphic feedback as a critical element in improving individual performance. In this organization, feedback on salespeople's daily performance was continuously given by their respective unit managers. This feedback included information regarding the comparison between achieved and targeted result,

comparison among unit's sales, and comparison between the previous year and the current up-to-date performance.

In spite of a relatively low level coefficient value, this study also revealed that career information is related to individual performance. In the organization studied, the information given by management to employees could be categorized only as a supporting tool for career development activities. Information provided by the organization included performance standard, career movement (progress), pay system (commission), and all the advancement opportunities occur in the organization.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, the relationship between OCM dimensions and employees performance reveal some implications to managerial practices. In dealing with salespeople, the organization's top management and HR Department should review this career development and career policy of the organization. They should draft policies and procedures that will enhance the salespeople career management in the long run. Even though this study is based on one insurance company in Kedah, the results may be adapted to similar insurance companies and other organizations as OCM may differ in many aspects.

The objectives of this study have been achieved whereby the results have proved that organizational career management is related to individual performance. Among the three dimensions of organizational career management, only career policy and career development were found to be important factors in determining individual performance of salespeople. Therefore, salespeople in the insurance industry who are struggling to increase their individual performance should emphasis on developing specific plans to achieve the goals by considering their own strengths and weaknesses.

All factors in organizational career management were related to individual performance. However, since the result suggested that not all factors in organizational career management have significant contribution towards performance, organization should be very careful when considering career programs. The factors that should be considered most are career development and career management policy as these factors could have more influence on individual performance. In short, this study suggested a considerably high possibility of success

for salespeople if the individual and organizational career management efforts are carried out with care.

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