Effect of Organizational Career Program on Employees' Career Commitment: An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

According to human resource development literature based on Islamic perspective, organizational career program consists of two major dimensions: career management and career development. Recent studies in this field highlight the ability of management to provide appropriate support for individual employee to progress in his/her career path may lead to career commitment. Nevertheless, the role of career program as important determinant is given less attention in the literature. Therefore, this study was undertaken to examine the relationship between organizational career program and employees' career commitment using 200 self-report questionnaires gathered from employees at a selected public university in Malaysia. The outcomes of SmartPLS version 2.0 showed that organizational career program (i.e, career management and career development) was positively and significantly related to career commitment. This result confirms that organizational career program does act as an important determinant of employees' career commitment in the studied organization. Further, discussion, implications and conclusion are elaborated.

Keywords: Career program, career management, career development and career commitment

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Introduction

Career is a multi-dimensional construct that can be interpreted based on language, Islamic civilization and organizational perspectives. Direct definition of *'career'* is a chosen occupation or profession by an individual to obtain salary from performing his/her job, other than to earn a better living and/or make better progress in daily life (Kamus Dewan, 2000; Oxford English Dictionary, 1993). In an Islamic civilization, *'career'* is often viewed as an instrument to manage and develop the progression of individuals' commitment to be a good slave ('abid) and vicegerent of Allah SWT (khalifatullah) in this world and the hereafter. The ability of individual to implement their career based on this objective may help them to obtain the security and well-being in this world and hereafter. Allah SWT said in the Holy Al-Quran: *"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me"* (Adh-Dhariyat 51:56).

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Allah SWT also warned the human about the importance of time and the need to remind each other about good deeds while performing the role of khalifatullah. He said in the Holy Quran, "*By time indeed mankind is in loss, except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience* (Surah Al-Asr 103:1-3)

In addition, Allah SWT also said that, *"And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one that causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know"* (Al-Baqarah 2:30). Further, in the Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah, Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said *"Allah does not look at your figure, nor your attire but He looks at your heart and accomplishments"* (Muslim).

The notion of *'career'* as described in the Islamic doctrines has been adapted and translated by contemporary scholars and practitioners worldwide as a positive value based management practice in designing and administering various kinds of career programs in organizations that lead to great accomplishments. In an organizational context, career program is often viewed as a strategic human capital development and management function where it does not only focus on employees' job, but the whole process, attitude, behavior and the state of affairs that relates to the work and life of employees (Greenhaus et al., 2000; Ismail et al., 2011; Puah & Ananthram, 2006). Under this perspective, an employer usually plans and implements career programs that match employee's interests and capabilities towards organizational opportunities and organisational change that allows for current and future organizational growth. If these career programs are properly designed and implemented it will steadily enhance the progression of employees' careers in order to maintain and support the organizational strategies and goals (Baruch, 2004; Greenhaus et al., 2000; Ismail et al., 2011; Martin, et al., 2001) and at the same time gives employees sense of belonging, satisfaction and accomplishment. In contrast, if it's not being carried out effectively, it might cause the employees to feel demoralised and frustrated which may lead to low productivity. In some cases employees may decide to leave the organisation because of unfair treatment, lack of management support, absent or limitation in career growth and undue promotions (Khan, Farroq and Hussain, 2010; Sadeq, 2006)

Literature Review

In Islam, a leader is responsible for his/her followers. Narrated by 'Abdullah bin 'Umar: Allah's Apostle said, *"Surely! Everyone of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges: The Imam (ruler) of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects; a man is the guardian of his family (household) and is responsible for his subjects; a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them; and the slave of a man is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it. Surely, everyone of you is a guardian and responsible for his charges."* (Sahih Al-bukhari, Volume 9, Book 89, Number 252). According to Kazmi and Ahmed (2006) employees recognise their employer as a leader who they can trust with expectation that their employer will use his/her best ability to guide, protect and treat them fairly and with justice in all matters, especially related to work progression. According to a human resource development perspective, career program has two important characteristics: career management and career development (Conger, 2002; Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002; Nancarrow, 2005; Post, Koch & Roberts, 2007).

Career Management and Career Development

From human resource development perspective, '*career management*' is often defined as a continuous activity whereby management monitors the progression of individual employees to smoothen the adaptation of the organizational changes and allow them to achieve higher career progression and accomplishment in the organizations (Adeloka, B. 2011; Greenhaus, et al., 2000; Ismail et al., 2011; Martin et al., 2001). In addition, '*career development*' is broadly defined as management plan and implementation of staff development programs like training, counselling, succession plan and job rotation as main instruments to continuously inculcate and enhance employees' necessary skills, develop knowledge, improve abilities and attitudes. Exposures in these development programs may help employees to fulfil their current and future career path (Greenhaus, et al., 2000; Herr 2001; Mondy et al., 2002; Chen et al., 2004; Puah and Ananthram., 2006).

In fact, recent studies in the organizational career program highlights that the ability of management to properly manage and develop employees' career progressions based on individual employee needs may have a positive impact on their career commitment (Adeloka, B., 2011; Chen et al., 2004; Puah & Ananthram, 2006).

Career Commitment

Few scholars defined '*career commitment*' as an important outcome of organizational career program where it refers to the ability of individuals to set up career goals, willing to attach, identify and involve in achieving those goals, develop specialized skills and provide continuing power to foster business and professional interactions (Chen et al., 2004; Colarelli & Bishop,1990; Herr, 2001; McDaniels & Gysbers,1992; Mondy et al. 2002).

Within an organizational career model, many scholars think that career management, career development and career commitment are distinct, however it is interrelated concepts. For example, the ability of management to properly manage and develop career program for employees' may lead to progression in the career ladders. As a result, it may lead to higher career commitment in organizations (Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002; Puah & Ananthram, 2006).

Previous Studies on career program

Although the nature of this relationship is interesting, but the role of organizational career program as an important predicting variable has been given less attention in the organizational career research literature (Hirschi, 2009; Wilkens & Nermerich, 2011). Many scholars argue that predicting variables of organizational career program has been given less attention in the previous studies because there are not much features of organizational career program being described. Many studies employed a simple correlation method to analyze the degree of association between respondent characteristics and organizational career program but ignored to quantify the effect size and nature of the relationship between organizational career program features and career commitment (Hirschi, 2009; Puah & Ananthram, 2006). Consequently, most studies did not provide adequate findings to be used as useful guidelines by practitioners in understanding the complexity of organizational career program, as well as formulating and implementing strategic career programs for organizations that operate in a global economy (Theodossiou & Zangelis, 2009; Wilkens & Nermerich, 2011). Thus, it motivates the researchers to fill in the gap of literature by measuring the effect of size and the nature of the relationship between organizational career program (i.e., career management and career development) and career commitment.

The relationship between career program and career outcomes is consistent with the notion of Hall and associates' (1986) working model for organizational career development, which posits that the readiness of organization to provide strong support for career programs might strengthen positive career outcomes. The essence of this theory has gained strong support from the career program research literature. For example, several recent studies using

a direct correlation model to examine career program based on different sample, such as perceptions of 200 nurses in Israeli university and college (Notzer et al., 2004), perceptions of 367 R&D personnel from Hsinchu Science-based Industrial Park in north Taiwan (Chen et al., 2004), perceptions of 505 employees of a leading international Singaporean hotel in Singapore (Puah & Ananthram, 2006), and perceptions of 330 Swiss eighth graders in Switzerland (Hirschi, 2009). Outcomes of those surveys showed that two important findings which are 1) organizational support for career programs had increased when management able to appropriately implement management style to enhance the progression of employees' career ladders. As a result, it could lead to greater career commitment in the organizations (Hirschi, 2009; Notzer et al., 2004), and 2) organizational support for career programs had increased when management is able to appropriately implement development activities in enhancing the progression of employees' career ladders. Consequently, it could lead to higher career commitment in the organizations (Chen et al., 2004; Puah & Ananthram, 2006). Based on the literature, it can be hypothesized that:

H1:   *Career management positively related to career commitment.*
H2:   *Career development positively related to career commitment.*

Methodology

This study utilized a cross-sectional research design, which allowed the researchers to integrate the organizational career literature, the pilot study and the actual survey as a main procedure to gather data for this study. The use of this method may help to decrease the weaknesses of a single research method and increase the ability to gather accurate, less biased and high quality data (Cresswell, 1998; Sekaran, 2000). This study was conducted at a chosen higher learning institution, Malaysia. The name of this organization was kept anonymous in order to avoid intrusiveness.

At the initial stage of this study, the researchers had drafted survey questionnaires based on the organizational career program literature. After that, a pilot study was conducted by discussing the survey questionnaire with two experienced HR managers and two experienced supporting staff in the Human Resource Management Department of the organization. Their views were sought to verify the content and format of the survey questionnaire for the actual study. Before sending the questionnaires to participants, a back translation technique was used to translate the survey questionnaires in Malay and English in

order to increase the validity and reliability of the survey instrument (Cresswell, 1998; Wright, 1996).

The survey questionnaire consists of two sections: first, career management had 3 items and career development also had 3 items that were adapted from the organizational career program literature (Baruch, 2004; Chen et al., 2004; Greenhaus et al., 2000; Herr, 2001; Jepsen & Dickson, 2003; Martin et al., 2001; Puah & Ananthran, 2006). The dimensions used to measure career management are the prediction of future careers, opportunity to do challenging jobs, and to management support. While, the dimensions used to measure career development are career needs and opportunities. Second, career commitment had 6 items that were adapted from career program literature (Chen et al., 2004; Colarelli & Bishop, 1990; Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002). The dimensions used to measure career commitment are effort, pride and value. These items were 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 focused on employee attitudes.

The unit of analysis for this study is employees who have worked in the studied organization. A convenient sampling technique was used to distribute 200 survey questionnaires to employees who ready to participate in this study. Of the number, 92 usable questionnaires were returned to the researchers, yielding a 46 percent response rate. This sampling technique was employed in this study because the HR manager could not give the list of registered employees to the researchers for confidential reasons and this condition did not permit the researchers to randomly choose participants from the population. The survey questions were answered by participants based on their consent and on voluntary basis. The number of this sample exceeds the minimum sample of 30 participants as required by probability sampling technique, indicating that the data may be analyzed using inferential statistics (Sekaran, 2000; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Further, the SmartPLS version 2.0 as recommended by Henseler et al. (2009) was employed to analyze the validity and reliability of instrument and to test the research hypotheses.

Analysis

In terms of sample profile, the majority respondents were males (52.2 percent), aged between 28 to 32 years old (47.8 percent), diploma holders (39.1), employees who have served the organisation from 1 to 5 years (88 percent), and employees who their monthly salary ranging from RM1001 to RM2000 (41.3 percent). The confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to

determine the validity and reliability of the instrument. Table 1 shows the results of convergent and discriminant validity analyses. All constructs have the values of AVE larger than 0.5, indicating that they met the acceptable standard of convergent validity (Barclay et al., 1995; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2009). In addition, all constructs have the values of √ AVE in diagonal which were greater than the squared correlation with other constructs in off diagonal, showing that all constructs met the acceptable standard of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2009; Yang, 2009).

Table 1: The Results of Convergent and Discriminant Validity Analyses

Variable	AVE	Career management	Career development	Career commitment
Career management	0.753455	0.868018		
Career development	0.803775	0.640776	0.896535	
Career commitment	0.727948	0.638194	0.703132	0.853199

Table 2 shows the factor loadings and cross loadings for different constructs. The correlation between items and factors had higher loadings than other items in the different constructs, as well as the loadings of variables were greater than 0.7 in their own constructs in the model are considered adequate (Henseler et al., 2009). In sum, the validity of measurement model met the criteria.

Table 2: The Results of Factor Loadings and Cross Loadings for Different Constructs

Construct/ Item	Career management	Career development	Career commitment
Career management			
CM1	0.911813		
CM2	0.876638		
CM3	0.812692		
Career development			
CD1		0.911813	
CD2		0.876638	
CD3		0.812692	
Career commitment			

CC1	0.856903
CC2	0.799573
CC3	0.866734
CC4	0.926651
CC5	0.843503
CC6	0.820170

Table 3 shows the results of reliability analysis for the instrument. The values of composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha were greater than 0.8, indicating that the instrument used in this study had a high internal consistency (Henseler et al., 2009; Nunally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 3: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

Construct	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
Career management	0.901455	0.835871
Career development	0.924725	0.877953
Career commitment	0.941243	0.926123

Table 4 shows the results of Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics. The means for all variables are from 5.0 to 5.1, showing that career management, career development and career commitment are ranging from high (5) to highest level (7). The correlation coefficients for the relationship between independent variable (i.e., career management and career development) and the dependent variable (i.e., career commitment) were less than .90, indicating the data were not affected by serious collinearity problem. Hence, all the constructs had value 1 that was shown in a diagonal. This shows that these constructs met the requirements of reliability standard (Hair et al., 1998; Nunally and Bernstein, 1994). Thus, these statistical results provide further evidence of validity and reliability for the constructs used in this study.

Table 4: Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation (r)		
			Career management	Career development	Career commitment
1.Career management	5.1703	1.07530	1		
2.Career development	5.1014	1.25672	0.632**	1	
3.Career commitment	5.0145	1.26125	0.619**	0.674**	1

Note: Significant at **p<0.01

Figure 1 shows the outcomes of testing hypotheses 1 and 2. Figure 1 presents the outcomes of testing a direct effects model using SmartPLS. It showed that the inclusion of career management and career development in the analysis had explained 61 percent of the variance in career commitment. Specifically, the result of testing this model displayed that explanation was positively and significantly related to career commitment ($\beta=0.64$; t=9.38; $\beta=0.70$; t=12.59, respectively), therefore H1 and H2 were supported. This result demonstrates that career management and career development do act as important predictors of career commitment in the hypothesized model.

Independent variable   **Dependent variable**

$R^2 = 0.61$
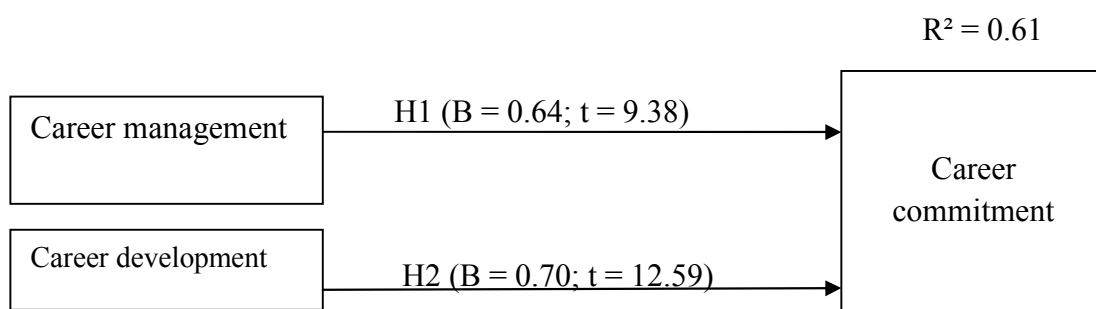
Note: Significant at *t >1.96

Figure 1: The Outcomes of SmartPLS Path Model Show the Relationship between Career Management, Career Development and Career Commitment.

As an extension of the test, a global fit PLS path model was carried out to determine a global fit measure (GoF) based on Wetzels et al.'s (2009) as follows: GoF=SQRT{MEAN (Communality of Endogenous) x MEAN (R^2)}= 0.61, indicating that it exceeds the cut-off value of 0.36 for large effect sizes of R^2. This result confirms that the PLS path model has better explaining power in comparison with the baseline values (GoF small=0.1, GoF medium=0.25, GoF large=0.36). It provides strong support to validate the PLS model globally (Wetzels et al., 2009).

Discussion

The result of this study shows that the features of organizational career program, namely management and development act as important determinants for career commitment in the studied organization. In the context of this study, majority of employees perceive that the levels of career management, career development and career commitment are high. This situation explains that the ability of management to appropriately implement management

and development activities in enhancing the progression of employees' career ladders may lead to greater career commitment in the studied organization.

This study has three major implications: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology, and contribution to practitioners. In term of theoretical contribution, this study reveals that career management and career development have been important determinants for career commitment in the studied organization. This result is consistent with the principle meanings of Al-Quran and Al-Hadith, and it not only support but also extend the previous studies on positive value based career program by the contemporary scholars (Notzer et al. , 2004; Chen et al., 2004; Puah & Ananthram, 2006; Hirschi, 2009),

With respect to the robustness of research methodology, the survey questionnaires used in this study satisfactorily met the standards of validity and reliability analyses; this may lead to the production of valid and reliable research findings. As for practical contribution, the findings of this study can be used as guidelines by management to improve career programs based on Islamic ethical values. In order to achieve this objective, management needs to emphasize on the following aspects: firstly, Islamic work ethics (e.g., obey God, brotherhood, righteous and fairness) should be inculcated in order to guide employees to perform job functions and duties as upholding trusts with respect, peace and harmony.

Secondly, the philosophy on improving one's self for ultimate goals (e.g., this world as a vehicle to achieve ultimate rewards; heaven) should be encouraged to improve the quality of interaction between leaders and followers, stimulate followers to upgrade their competencies in handling challenging and unpredictable jobs, motivate employees to work in teaming spirit, and to increase employee performance. Thirdly, performance-based merit pay should be given a priority to retain and motivate high performers in accomplishing organizational strategic missions, but most importantly it must be carried out fairly and unbiased. Finally, social support and loving culture (e.g., helping, respect, empathy, caring, coaching and mentoring) should be promoted in order to create conducive working environments, decrease employees' distresses and increase their commitment to the organization. If organisations pay more attention to these factors, it may create a strong ground for employees to grow to their best potential while promoting strong work culture especially when employees working with diverse groups and in the era of globalisation.

Conclusion

This study forwarded a conceptual framework based on the workplace career program research literature. The confirmatory factor analysis showed that the instrument of this study has met the acceptable standards of validity and reliability analyses. Further, outcomes of SmartPLS path model analysis confirmed that career management is positively and significantly correlated with career commitment, therefore H1 is supported. Besides that, career development is positively and significantly correlated with career commitment, therefore H2 is supported. This result confirms that the career program acts as important determinants for career commitment in the studied organization. Hence, for future research and practice within human capital development models should include career management and career development as critical elements for career progression.

This study further suggests that the ability of managers to properly implement management and development activities in enhancing the progression of employees' career ladders will strongly induce subsequent positive personal outcomes (e.g., trust, fairness, satisfaction, proactive and performance). Thus, these positive outcomes on the career commitment will lead to increased employees performance and as conclusion will lead to increased organizational performance.

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