# A Study on Factors Affecting Career Advancement in Organization at Klang Valley

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Abstract-- Career advancement is seen as a tool for organisation to match employees' career aspiration to the organisations' goal and objective in order to maintain satisfaction and commitment. The aim of this study is to determine factors influencing career advancement in organization at Klang Valley. Questionnaire examining the relationship between the dependent such as career advancement and independent variable such as relationship between immediate supervisor, colleague, professionalism, career management skills, proactive career management. A total of 160 responses were obtain from employees in Klang Valley. The results revealed that the variables had a significant impact on career advancement.

**Keywords--**Immediate supervisor, colleague, professionalism, career management skills, proactive career management and career advancement.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the current era of a knowledge economy, the performance of human resource managements is closely associated with the organisational success (Masum, Azad, &Beh, 2015). Where volatility and complexity are the norm, the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation relies upon its human capital. Kahirol (2015) stated that economic growth and sustainable development are affected by highly knowledgeable and skilled human capital. While organisation devote significant part of its resources in training and development, Kraimer et al., (2011) found that employees who've been highly trained in the organisation tend to resign if they do not see any chances for career advancement. Lack of such advancement creates morale problems when employees realised that they are stuck in a dead-end position (Shaban, et al., 2017). This would lead to a poor morale manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as abuse of leave policies, underperformance in job positions and a reluctance to embrace changes in the workplace. Career advancement will not only affect the employees meanwhile it can affect the organisation's performance as well.

Tremblay, Dahan and Gianecchini (2014) argued that perspective of career can divided into subjective (intrinsic) career and objective (extrinsic) career. Subjective career refers to the psychology and attitude attributes, such as job satisfaction, career satisfaction and self-awareness. Meanwhile, objective career refers to tangible and visible attributes, such as income, promotion and job level. It is generally understood that employees devote considerable amount of effort and time into building their careers, in return hoping for an increase in income, promotion or job level based upon their effort and outcome. Some employees jump on the opportunity to learn and

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take on new task and new role to grow in view of career advancement (Posholi, 2012). Khaled (2017) claimed that a

growing number of organisation views that career advancement as a feasible option to attract and retain labour.

However, majority of the career advancement programs place a higher emphasis on senior and top key

positions in the organisations. These programmes aim to retain and develop talents at the top level and often neglect

the aspect of career develop on lower level employees. Thus, resulting in a high turnover rate among lower level

employees. The issue of the increased job mobility among millennials employees is not only problematic to the

organisational effectiveness, in terms of the incurred financial and non-financial costs associated with a high

turnover rate; but more importantly, posing a threat to the economic growth of the country in several different ways.

Given the issue of increasing turnover intention among employees, with its detrimental consequences on

organisational effectiveness and the overall economy, human resource practitioners have attempted to address this

issue based on subjective opinions that stem from their own expertise. Although anecdotal information describing

employees' attitudes and their reasons to quit are countless, one such reason is the lack of career advancement in

Malaysia (Kim et al., 2009; Queiri et al., 2015).

The paper extends existing research in several ways. First, the paper extends the existing model of career

advancement to include individual proactive career behaviour. Second, the paper analyses the multi-dimensional

factors that are affecting career advancement. Finally, the paper provides new insights into factors influencing career

advancement among Malaysian employees.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Career Advancement** 

Career is the constant progress, experience and skill acquisition of a person in a specific work field. Career

is defined as the total of the jobs a person undertakes through his or her entire life, it has a meaning beyond and

wider than this definition (Kaya &Ceylan, 2014). While career advancement is defined as promotions to jobs at

higher levels in the management hierarchy or to jobs that have a larger scope of responsibilities (Lyness and

Judiesch, 2008). Knuppel (2015) describes career advancement as a short-lived stage and simply one part of a

greater career development, which ensure that a company has capable employees who are more engaged, and this

leads to higher retention rates and may as well attract and retain top talent.

The world is changing so fast, many people discovered that their professional roles can only remain for

years or even months. Osibanjo, Oyewunmi&Ojo (2014) argued that career advancement is one of the most critical

factors in maintaining employees' passionate. Klupakova (2013) showed that career advancement is one of the bases

for determining the impact of personal factors on career management. To maximise career output, the management

of career is more and more being acknowledged at the personal level (Chin &Rasdi, 2014). Employees' participation

in their own career development decisions, bringing transparency and fairness in the implementation of career

advancement system that can help organisations and employees to establish a win-win situation (Sami, James &

Ahmed, 2015). Although objective measures of career advancement are important, they may not be the only

measures an individual wants to achieve.

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External factors affecting career advancement such as salary, promotion and job level (Tremblay,Dahan&Gianecchini, 2014) meanwhile, intrinsic factors affecting career advancement consists of several invisible outcomes such as career satisfaction, self-awareness and sense of value (Saraih, Ail & Khalid, 2015). Choi (2015) claimed that personal influences on extrinsic factors career advancement is stronger than that of environmental factors, while the influence of environmental factors on intrinsic factors career advancement is greater than personal factors. However, Saraih et al, (2015) argued that self-rating of task performance is the only factor that related to employees' intrinsic career advancement. This creates a situation where employees are influenced by personal, environmental, extrinsic and intrinsic factors in career advancement.

### III. RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPERVISOR AND COLLEAGUES

Supervisor is a representation of the organisation (Dorothea, 2015). Supervisors are involved in the assessment in the employee performance (Ariani, 2015). When there are in a good relationship between the employee and the supervisor, the employees will feel attached to the organization and want to be involved in the organisation. When an organisation hires a new employee, supervisors are task with not only bring new staff on board, is also building a new lasting relationship (Kantabutra&Rungruang, 2013) encouraging organisational commitments. Supervisors would develop close working relationships due to the close working environment in the organisation (Auer, Antoncic&Antoncic, 2011). Managing these relationships is essential to the success of any organisation, as these relationships can lead to greater employee happiness and increase productivity.

Suriyankietkaew and Avery (2014) argued that supervisor often defines the employee's work parameters, provides employee performance evaluations, and increases the professional work ability. Chen, Tsui and Farh (2015) stressed that supervisor relations hold the key to the allocation of the task, the distribution of rewards, and employee training. All the employees want their immediate supervisor who is fair. Immediate supervisors are therefore important person in the workplace, employees would rely on them more than anyone else. On top of that, immediate supervisors are in positions to address employee complaints and help employees locate necessary resources (Yang et al., 2016) in completion of a certain task. Thus, a good relationship between the employees and the supervisor can establish a good relationship between the company and the employees, so that the employees want to be involved in the organisation.

According to previous studies, dissatisfaction with the immediate supervisor is a predictor that attempt employees will resign. A positive relationship between employee and the immediate supervisor was found a necessary condition for effective labour management relations and career advancement. A supervisor is usually considered as an agent of an organisation that is capable and appropriate because the supervisor is the personification of organization for its employees (Dorothea, 2015). Employees tend to interact with their superiors as positive or negative to assess how they rank at their company. Employees are more productive when they feel valued and welcome their contributions and comments made by management. Therefore, building a good relationship between supervisor and employee is the best way for the employee to produce better performance and increases opportunity for career advancement.

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Staff interacts with immediate supervisors based on the position in the hierarchy of authority, while colleague

relations are flat without any formal authority elements (Basford &Offermann, 2012). This study defined the

relationship with colleagues as a kind of relationship that has hidden interests. Building a healthy relationship with

your colleague has an important role in a successful career (Wok & Hashim, 2013). Li and Su (2014) stated that the

relationship between colleagues has a positive influence on employee job performance. Madlock&Booth-Butterfield

(2012) stressed that colleague relations are a significant source in providing support to colleagues and positive

impact on employee satisfaction.

The view is that employee relations with colleague concerns employee greatly in their ability to be

professional and in their emotional well-being. Maden, Ozcelik&Karacay (2016) stated that a good colleague

relationship improves employees collaborate ability, and influences employee satisfied with work. Rothmann and

Welsh (2013) argued that individuals who are appreciated by colleagues connected with them will have

psychological meaningfulness in the workplace. Lin (2011) found that the work group interactions and colleagues'

support are positively related to job satisfaction and career advancement.

IV. PROFESSIONALISM

Mulder (2014) stressed that people are usually allocated to work based on educational achievement, abilities

and other personal characteristics, in the current meritocratic environment. These individuals must have sufficient

competencies and professionalism in order to effectively function in a professional situation. Professionalism

reflects to the aspect in the implementation of work derived upon techniques and programs based on the intellectual

fundamentals (Mustafa, 2013). Professionalism refers to work with a certain quality and requirements based upon

qualifications in educational level. Abdesabour and Rayand (2013) claimed that professionalism is a complete view

of a work or working situation that it encompasses an overall mastery in affairs and it originates from work matters,

a lot of experience and necessary and adequate knowledge acquiring about that problem to meet 'clients' needs.

Xu & Ye (2014) argued that employees are clearly classified according to the job role and the profession. The

role of employees continually to develop from tedious administrative activities to strategic partners who are

expected to contribute to organizational business (Long, Ismail & Amin, 2013). These professionals can stand out in

the ever-changing global market with the necessary professional skills (Ulrich, Brockbank & Ulrich, 2010). Queen's

University (2014) defined the concept of the professionalism of human resources as the process by which

professionals collectively strive to achieve the recognition and status that is accorded to the accepted professions by

simulating or using the clear feature of the established professions. Braille (2006) argued that one of the best ways to

develop a career is to carry out a specialized course or training, which is related to a career, in order to increase the

professionalism of the employees.

V. CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Career management skills will be a range of competences that provide structured ways for individuals or

groups to gather, analyses, synthesize and organize self, educational and occupational information. Moreover, the

skills to make and implement decisions and transitions (Smith, Ferns & Russell, 2014). The world of work is

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complex. No matter what the knowledge of a first career choice, individuals cannot depend on a job for life.

Actually, they cannot even be sure that the area that they have chosen to work in at the start of their career will still

exist when they retire. To enable individuals to function in this changing environment they need to develop skills,

behaviours and attributes which will support them to become effective and confident career managers (Robert,

Tomas & Robert, 2013).

Career management is based on the understanding of career dynamics, as well as the organizational needs are

integrated with employees' needs. It is related to how careers progress the ways when they are promoted, such as by

expanding or enriching their roles to take on greater responsibilities. Career management was explained as planning

and forming the movement of employees within an organization by matching employee preferences, capacity and

potential with organizational resourcing needs both now and in the future. Careers are constructed rather than

chosen. Career management is a process of learning and development which goes on throughout life (Tymon, 2013).

Career management skills are competencies that help individuals to identify their existing skills, develop

career learning goals and take action to promote their career (Neary, Dodd & Hooley, 2015). Career management

skills are defined as a whole range of capabilities that supply structured ways for individuals and organizations to

collect, analyse, synthesize and organize self, education and career information (Dubcova, 2015). The term career

management skills is not only used to describe skills, but also qualification, abilities and attitudes. The concept of

career management skills is an attempt to define a set of learning outcomes that will support individuals to develop

their careers throughout life. In a learning paradigm, the development of career management skills becomes one of

the key objectives of lifelong guidance (Finch, et al., 2013).

VI. PROACTIVE CAREER BEHAVIOUR

In today's career environment, there is a need for employees to have proactive behaviour in their career.

Employees will change their work value and behaviours when they can adapt to the changes of the labour markets

and organisational structures so that they know responsibilities for planning and managing their own careers. As a

result, when employees having proactive career behaviour which lead them to achieve their personal value goals

(Rahim & Siti-Rohaida, 2016). Employees that have a positive personality and a right attitude can achieve the career

success, rather than only having good relationship with supervisor, colleague or adequate skills. According to

Bateman and Crant (1993) stated that the concept of proactive behaviour is described as a person that showed a

stabilising tendency towards taking their own initiative to change their working environment. Proactive career

behaviour leads to employees having a positive perspective towards career success. Employees who proactively

manage their careers are more satisfied with their careers (Volmer &Spurk, 2011) rather than passively accepting

and adapting to change (Ling, et al., 2017).

There are two core component of proactive career behaviour which is individual career management and

networking behaviours. Career management emphasize on the individual's perception of career aspirations and the

goals they set. The model of individual career management is consisting career planning and career strategy

choices. Career planning is mainly focus on identifying individual's strengths, weaknesses, career goals and career

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decisions. Career strategy focus on using strategies to implement career planning (Rahim & Siti-Rohaida, 2016).

While, second core component is the networking behaviours. Networking behaviours can be defined as build

relationship and maintain informal partnership with individuals such as mentally support, career advice, promotion

and information seeking that the networking behaviour will assist individual's career and job performance rather

than relationship with colleague. These two components help employees to manage their career in a systematic

manner (Rahim & Siti-Rohaida, 2016).

VII. METHODOLOGY

The study is quantitative, involving employees working in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The survey distributed via

online with a total of 160 responses collected. Kline (2005) recommended in estimating the minimum samples size

which is power analysis by using G\*Power 3.1 program (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner and Lang, 2009). This program is

designed to analyse the statistical power commonly used in social behavioural. This program provides power

analysis options for a variety of frequently used analysis, for instance, correlation and regression analyses. The

estimate sample size would be 138 respondents with the power at 95 percent, the alpha at 0.05 with the medium

effect size of 0.15. The present study would collect a minimum sample of 138 respondents. To account for missing

data during the data collection process, a 50 percent increase to 207 surveys would be distributed. Appendix 1

summarises a sample of the questionnaire. Respondent responses were captured using 5-point Likert scale ranging

from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). All responses were then keyed into SPSS v.23.

VIII. DATA ANALYSES

Data analysis involved description of the respondents and checking for normality and reliability of data.

Inferential statistics were generated to test the hypothesis. The descriptive statics described the respondents profile.

Multivariate analysis tested the relationship that were hypothesized for this study.

IX. RESULTS

**Demographic profiles of the respondents** 

There were 160 participants and based on frequency distribution, there are 39.4% male respondents and

60.6% female respondents in this sample. Therefore, based on gender, majority of respondents who participated in

this study were females. There were 3.8% in the age range of 20 and below years old, 35% were in the range of 21-

25 years old, 21.9% were in the range of 26-30 years old, 16.9% were in the range of 31-40 years old, 11.9% were in

the range of 41-50 years old, and 10.6% were in the age range of 50 and above years old. Therefore, the majority of

respondents who participated in this study the age range of 23 to 28 years old. Based on years of service, there were

27.5% have less than 1 years working experience, 30.6% have 1-3 years working experience, 18.8% have 3-6 years

working experience, 6.9% have 6-10 years working experience, 5.6% have 10-15 years working experience and

10.6% have more than 15 years experience. In addition, there were 46.9% have never been promoted in current

company, 35% were promoted 1-2 times in the current company, 15.6% were promoted 3-5 times in the current

company, and 2.5% were promoted more than 5 times in the current company.

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# Reliability

For reliability of data which looked at the consistency of the responses, the Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each construct using the SPSS statistical tool. This study used Likert questions and to determine whether the scale is reliable, Cronbach's alpha is the most common measure of internal consistency. As shown in Table 1, the Cronbach alpha values for the dependent variable and the fiveindependent variables was 0.908, 0.859, 0.906, 0.801, 0.837 and 0.934respectively. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) stated that the Cronbach alpha value should be above 0.6. Therefore, the data for this study met the criteria of consistency and reliability of data was not violated.

Table 1: Reliability Cronbach alpha scores

| No. | Variables                              | No. of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----|--|--------------|------------------|
| 1   | Career Advancement                     | 7            | .908             |
| 2   | Relationship with Immediate Supervisor | 8            | .859             |
| 3   | Relationship with Colleague            | 7            | .906             |
| 4   | Professionalism                        | 5            | .801             |
| 5   | Career Management Skills               | 4            | .837             |
| 6   | Proactive Career Behaviour             | 9            | .934             |
|     |  |              |                  |

Table 2: Normality Test

| Variables                              | Mea  | Std.      | Skewnes | Kurtosi |
|--|------|-----------|---------|---------|
|  | n    | Deviation | s       | s       |
| Career Advancement                     | 3.64 | .863      | -1.776  | -0.538  |
| Relationship with Immediate Supervisor | 3.74 | .717      | 0.994   | -0.467  |
| Relationship with Colleague            | 3.74 | .777      | -4.015  | -2.506  |
| Professionalism                        | 3.77 | .671      | -2.5    | 0.761   |
| Career Management Skills               | 3.69 | .753      | -1.833  | 0.17    |
| Proactive Career Behaviour             | 3.78 | .756      | -3.08   | 2.771   |

Using the SPSS tool, the values for skewness and kurtosis were generated. Skewness refers to measure of the data set symmetry (Pallant, 2010) The skewness shown in Table 2 is positive and this means that the right-hand tail

of data distribution will be longer than the left-hand tail. Kurtosis refers to the degree of peakednessof data distribution (Pallant, 2010). In this study, negative kurtosis indicates light tails and flatness of distribution. Correlation Analysis

Table 3 and 4 showed the results of correlation between the dependent variable and independent variables. Employee career advancement shows a very high correlation with relationship with immediate supervisor and career management skills. However, career advancement reveals a very low correlation with relationship with colleagues, professionalism and proactive career behaviour in Pearson Correlation.

Employee career advancement shows a very high correlation with relationship with colleagues, professionalism and proactive career behaviour when using non-parametric correlation which is Kendall's tau b and Spearman's rho.

**Table 3:**Pearson Correlation \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

|             |                     | Career<br>Advancement | Immediate<br>Supervisor | Career<br>Management<br>Skills |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Constant    | Pearson Correlation | 1                     | .779**                  | .712**                         |
| Career      | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                       | .000                    | .000                           |
| Advancement | N                   | 160                   | 160                     | 160                            |
| Immediate   | Pearson Correlation | .779**                | 1                       | .564**                         |
| Supervisor  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                  |                         | .000                           |
|             | N                   | 160                   | 160                     | 160                            |
| Career      | Pearson Correlation | .712**                | .564**                  | 1                              |
| Management  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                  | .000                    |                                |
| Skills      | N                   | 160                   | 160                     | 160                            |

**Table 1:** Kendall's tau b and Spearman's rho Correlations\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

|                    |                      |                         | Career<br>Advancement | Colleague | Professionalism | Proactive<br>Career<br>Behaviour |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
|                    | Career               | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000                 | .400**    | .281**          | .408**                           |
|                    | Advancement          | Sig. (2-tailed)         | •                     | .000      | .000            | .000                             |
|                    |                      | N                       | 160                   | 160       | 160             | 160                              |
|                    | Colleague            | Correlation Coefficient | .400**                | 1.000     | .351**          | .366**                           |
|                    |                      | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000                  |           | .000            | .000                             |
|                    |                      | N                       | 160                   | 160       | 160             | 160                              |
|                    | Professionalism      | Correlation Coefficient | .281**                | .351**    | 1.000           | .392**                           |
| Kendall's<br>tau_b |                      | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000                  | .000      |                 | .000                             |
| tau_0              |                      | N                       | 160                   | 160       | 160             | 160                              |
|                    | Proactive            | Correlation Coefficient | .408**                | .366**    | .392**          | 1.000                            |
|                    | Career<br>Behaviour  | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000                  | .000      | .000            | •                                |
|                    |                      | N                       | 160                   | 160       | 160             | 160                              |
|                    | Career ' Advancement | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000                 | .534**    | .378**          | .531**                           |
| Spearman'<br>s rho |                      | Sig. (2-tailed)         |                       | .000      | .000            | .000                             |
|                    |                      | N                       | 160                   | 160       | 160             | 160                              |

|  |                 | Correlation<br>Coefficient | .534** | 1.000  | .462** | .475** |
|--|-----------------|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|  |                 | Sig. (2-tailed)            | .000   | •      | .000   | .000   |
|  |                 | N                          | 160    | 160    | 160    | 160    |
|  | Professionalism | Correlation<br>Coefficient | .378** | .462** | 1.000  | .505** |
|  |                 | Sig. (2-tailed)            | .000   | .000   |        | .000   |
|  |                 | N                          | 160    | 160    | 160    | 160    |
|  | Proactive       | Correlation<br>Coefficient | .531** | .475** | .505** | 1.000  |
|  | Career          | Sig. (2-tailed)            | .000   | .000   | .000   |        |
|  | Behaviour       | N                          | 160    | 160    | 160    | 160    |

# X. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this research showed that immediate supervisor, colleagues, professionalism, career management skills and proactive career behviourhad a positive and significant relationship with career advancement. The results are consistent with past studies. Suriyankietkaew and Avery (2014) explained that supervisors define the employee's work parameters, provides employee performance evaluations, as well as increases the professional work ability, who are the important role for employee career advancement. Xu & Ye (2014) indicated that there exists a significant positive correlation between the professionalism of teachers and their job performance, which can lead career advancement of employees. As stated by Wesarat, Shsrif& Majid (2014), career management not only fosters individual career advancement but also sustains organizational competitive advantages. Bandar, et al., (2017) argued there is a positive relationship between proactive career behaviour and career advancement which highly proactive individuals will more actively participate in their career and develop their career enable them to achieve greater success.

Several practical implications were identified in this study. The study will benefits to the fresh employees to discover the factors affecting career advancement. Besidethat, it can benefits to the employees by enables employees to reflect on their performance and develop improved and appropriate strategies to develop and advance their career. Lastly, it will benefits the organization by providing a reference for the organization to promote the quality of internal management.

This study also made several theoretical contributions. From the theoretical perspective, this study revealed some new insights such as the significant role of immediate supervisor and colleagues towards career advancement. This study contributed to the existing literature on career advancement by providing a deeper understanding of relationship between the dimensions of career management skills, proactive career behavior and professionalism. The findings of this study further added new knowledge and contributed to the existing knowledge on factors that affecting career advancement.

Several limitations were noted in this study. The limitations of this study paved the way for future recommendations. Firstly, this study was confined to employeesn in Klang Valley. Employees from other sectors and districts may be affected differently and each sector or district may have a distinct culture that may differ from the other sectors or districts. Therefore, it is recommended that the respondents be taken from other sectors or districts in future studies. Secondly, the independent variableswas limited to intention five factors. It is recommended that future studies include additional independent variables such as environment. In addition, moderators and mediators can be included to give a better understanding. In this quantitative study, closed ended questions were used. There was no face to face contact with the respondents and no probing or open ended questions were asked. In future, it is recommended that a qualitative study based on phenomenology approach be carried out. A phenomenology study refers to the lived experience of the respondents. An in-depth study of respondents who were actually engaged in organizational silence will provide richer and more in-depth information relating to organizational silence. The lived experience of respondents through a phenomenological study will set aside biases and preconceived assumptions about human experiences

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