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Mediating Role of Content Career Plateau on the Relationship between Structural Career Plateau and Organization Commitment

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Abstract:

Employees' career plateau and organization commitment are most important concepts in organization behavior field. These have significant effects on the employees' performance with the positive way or negative way. However, relations between these concepts have not been studied exactly. In this context, some researchers argued interesting relations including causal relationship between structural career plateau and content career plateau and spillover relationship between content career plateau and organization commitment. Thus, this study is to identify these two relations in one structural model. As a result, it is identified that content career plateau has partially mediating role between structural career plateau and organization commitment.

Keywords: *Structural equation modeling, structural career plateau, content career plateau, organization commitment*

1. Introduction

Employees' career plateau and engagement (especially, organizational commitment and job involvement) have been considered as important factor that have significant effects on employees' performance. Thus, the researchers of HRM (human resource management) and organizational behavior have conducted so many studies and investigations for a long time. After early studies some of those researchers moved their interests to the relationship between two concepts, career plateau and engagement. By conducting many empirical studies, the one sense has been commonly agreed that career plateau has negative effect on the employee's engagement (Xie, Lu, & Zhou, 2015; Godshalk & Fender, 2014; Lapalme, Tremblay, & Simard 2009; Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002; Chay, Aryee, & Chew, 1995).

Almost studies have concentrated on the relationship of similar target concepts for examples, the relationship between structural career plateau and organization commitment and the relationship between content career plateau and job involvement. However, some researchers studied about other available relationships and they suggested few evidences. These are the relationship between structural career plateau and content career plateau, and the relationship between content career plateau and organization commitment.

In this context, this study tries to identify those two relationships with one aggregated model which called as structural equation model.

2. Concepts and Sub-Dimensions of Career Plateau and Engagement

Early concept of career plateau is about the possibility and time for achieving promotion of position (FERENCE, Stoner, & Warren, 1977), but some researchers pointed out that this approach cannot cover all kinds of career plateau happened in the workplace. So, Bardwick (1986) suggested new definition considering career plateau as the concept composed of two sub-dimensions (Actually, he also suggested the concept "life plateauing", but we do not comment the concept because it is out of our theme). One sub-dimension, structural career plateau, is about the situation that an employee is caught in his/her current position and has only little possibility for achieving promotion. Another sub-dimension is content career plateau, which is the concept about an employee feeling no more challenge or responsibility for their job and task or feeling bored against the job and task. These two sub-dimensions of career plateau are very important to HRM because many studies have shown various evidences proving negative effects of career plateau on the performance and attitudes of employees.

Same as career plateau having two sub-dimensions, employee's engagement also can be divided into two sub-dimensions. One is organizational commitment which is about engagement to employee's organization, for examples engagement to their leader, colleagues, and equity of organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). This organizational

commitment, just like job satisfaction, is the concept which is one of the lengthily studied in HRM and organization behavior field. Another one is job involvement. This concept is about employee's definite belief and engagement to their job (Kanungo, 1982).

3. Three Problems in Research on the Relationship between Career Plateau and Engagement

The first problem is that the most studies about relationship between career plateau and engagement partially used only few concepts of all four sub concepts. For example, although there are four concepts including structural career plateau, content career plateau, organizational commitment, and job involvement, researchers only analyzed the relationship between content career plateau and job involvement, or only focused on the relationships among two sub-dimensions and organizational commitment. This narrow focusing can disturb understanding about total relations of employee's career plateau and engagement.

The second problem is similar vein of the first problem. Almost studies have concentrated on similar target relationship. This basic relation existing between career plateau and engagement is 'target similarity relation' based on the target similarity effect theory. The core point of this theory is that people put their target separately and try to keep the target consistently when they establish attitudes or values and take their behavior (Lavelle, Brockner, Konovsky, Price, Henley, Taneja, & Vinekar, 2009). For example, if one employee received negative treatment by his/her leader, then negative responsive behavior is toward to that leader not to other. So, employee is likely to keep consistent against the targets of attitudes and behavior. One research (Bishop, Scott, & Burroughs, 2000) investigated whether employees following redundant group can separately treat their target of attitudes and behavior. When the employees perceived one organization's support, then they showed more positive commitment and behavior against the organization, but there was no change in attitudes and behaviors against another organization. This results means that attitudes and behaviors against its target are independent to other attitudes and behaviors of other target. In addition, one study about the effects of perceived organization support and leader-member exchange on the organizational commitment (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996) found that organization commitment is only affected by perceived organization support and not by leader-member exchange. Based on this theory and its evidences, it can be considered that there are target similarity relations which existing on the relationships between structural career plateau-organizational commitment and content career plateau-job involvement. This target similarity effect is established as a theory in behavioral psychology field so that we can postulate this relation is basic in the model of plateau-engagement. However, there is another relationship which called as 'spillover relation'. Although people keep target consistently, sometimes people express their mood or attitude to other target. For instance, when one employee was scolded by his/her leader, they have negative attitude to their leader and start to negatively treat the leader. However, sometimes the employee can express the bad feeling to their colleagues not only leader. This is called as 'spillover effect' which means an effect derived from one target is overflowed so that the effect spread to other targets. This effect has been studied at various areas such as company brand management, marketing, organization behavior, and so on. For example, one research (Ahluwalia, Unnava, & Burnkrant, 2001) showed that the poor reputation of one product can affect the other product in same company, which means the bad image and reputation spread from one product to other. The other study (Williams & Alliger, 1994) investigating whether the mood of employee in their workplace can be moved into the mood in their home and the mood of their family. This spillover effect is very meaning because one target can be treated in bad way by not a reason the target has, but a reason only little related to the target.

Third problem is that almost studies have not focused on the causal relation between two sub-dimensions. However, one study (Bae, Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2014) pointed out the possibility of this relation and the study showed that there is significant relationship between structural career plateau and content career plateau. In addition, they offered explanation of this as follow. When an employee suffers from structural career plateau for a long time, then the stress can spillover to their job contents. Moreover, if employee works hard for achieving promotion, they can more immediately lose interest about their task when they are fallen into structural career plateau. Thus, the causal relation between two sub-dimensions of career plateau is needed to be considered

Based on above three problems, we can postulate that there is mediating role of content career plateau between structural career plateau and organization commitment.

Hypothesis. Content career plateau has a mediating role between structural career plateau and organization commitment.

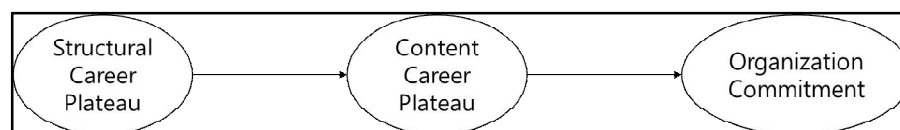


Figure 1: Research Hypothesis

4. Sample and Measurement

The sample for the analysis was collected from the employees of Korean companies by offline survey and e-mail survey. The amount of respondents is 238. Two sub-dimensions of career plateau are measured by the items of

Milliman(1992), organizational commitment is measured by OCQ (Organizational commitment questionnaire) item of Mowday, Steers, & Porter (1979).

5. Result

To identify the relations between three variables, we use structural equation model analysis and AMOS software. As a result of the analysis, the model fit indices are shown as appropriate. CMIC/DF is 2.456, RMR is .061, GFI is .907, CFI is .937, and RMSEA is .083. All the indices are good.

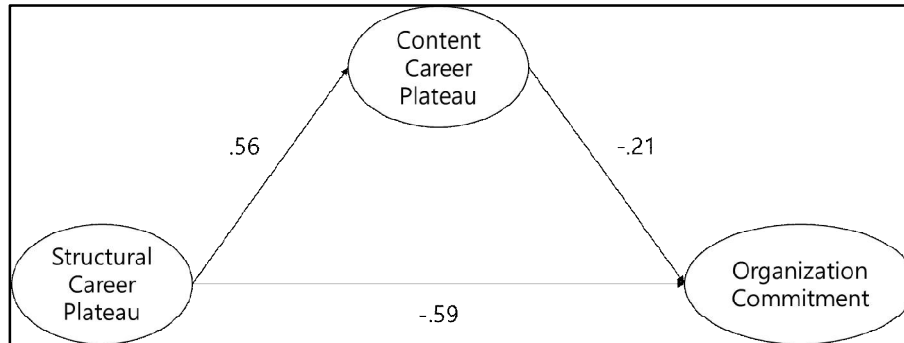


Figure 2: Result of Analysis

As a result, all the three relations are shown as significant. Coefficient of the relationship of structural career plateau and content career plateau is .56, the relationship between structural career plateau and organization commitment is -.59, and the relationship between content career plateau and organization commitment is -.21.

In addition, indirect effect through content career plateau is also significant via Sobel's test which examines whether indirect effect is significant or not. Consequently, it is identified that content career plateau has a partially mediating role between the relationship of structural career plateau and organization commitment. Thus, hypothesis is partially supported.

6. Conclusion

This research is to identify the two argument about relationships between structural career plateau and content career plateau, content career plateau and organization commitment. We put these two relation into one structural model and analyzed this model by structural equation modeling method. The result of analysis shown that content career plateau has a partially mediating role between structural career plateau and organization commitment.

These results have some implications. First, the researchers who study about employees' career plateau should consider the positive effects of structural career plateau on content career plateau. Second, the researchers focusing on the relationship between career plateau and engagement have to consider spillover effect.

Moreover, this research also has several limitations. First, longitudinal analysis is necessary for exactly identifying the causal relationship between variables, but this setting of this research was not. Second, since all data was attained by self-report method, so there is possibility of common method bias. Thus, next research should complement these limitation.

7. References

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