

EFFECTS OF CAREER GROWTH ON EMPLOYEES PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF NON-ACADEMIC STAFF OF MICHAEL OKPARA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE UMUDIKE ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study focused on the effects of career growth on employees' performance with reference to the Non-academic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike in Abia State, Nigeria. Beyond the broad objective, the study sought specifically to determine the effect of career development on the employees' performance and ascertain the effect of career advancement on the motivation of Non-academic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike. The researcher adopted survey research design, both primary and secondary sources of data was used. The population of the study consist of all the Non-academic Staff of the university which numbered two thousand six hundred and thirty (2630) employees, using Taro Yamane's formula at a normal confidence level of 95% and error tolerance of 5%, the sample size of the study was deduce to be three hundred and forty six (346). Simple random sampling techniques was used to sample the respondent. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was use to analyse the objectives with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The major findings revealed that there is a positive and significant correlation between career development and the performance of the Non-academic Staff of the university, and also career advancement is positively correlated with motivation of the Nonacademic Staff of the University. The researcher concluded that the impact of career growth on the performance and motivation of employees in the university cannot be succinctly stated and recommends that in harmony with the programmes and policies of the university, management should not relent in contributing to the career growth of the Non-academic Staff by providing abundant opportunities for self-development, advancement, structured learning; funding career development programmes, and providing incentives to those who endeavor career development as these are sine qua non in maintaining and sustaining outstanding administrative performance in the institution which is vital in facilitating learning and academic researches carried out in the university.

Keywords: *Career Growth, Career Development, Career Advancement, and Employees' Performance.*

Introduction

Career growth which encompasses career advancement and career development as a phenomenon has been a major concern to scholars, researchers, decision makers and human resources experts. These stakeholders in human capital development strive to manage issues such as recruitment, selection, training and development, promotion, and so on emanating from career development and career advancement towards career growth. Research has shown that career growth opportunities is an important determinant of employee-organisational relationships. Organisations that provide mechanisms for employee career growth create a mutual investment type of relationship with their employees (Tsui, *et al.*, 1997), and an employees' career development occurs through a continuous

acquisition of managerial or professional skills and experience which may bring about rewards and promotion.

Thus, employee's development is a very important part of an organisation's activities and is also related to their business strategies (Belcourt and Wright, 1994). Career development in dealing with individual's development at different career stages not only fulfill an individual's need but also that of the organisation (Torrington and Hall, 1998). An organisation uses many activities, techniques and programmes that map out their employees' career (Greenhaus and Callanan, 1994), which plays an important role in maintaining the balance between an individual's need (job security, development and promotion) and the organization's need (employee's loyalty, trust, commitment). Career management activities and development programmes can give a supportive climate for organisational development. Armstrong (2001) agrees and points out, that today's dynamic environment requires continuous professional and managerial development. He added that career growth is of great importance to both the individual employee and the organisation, noting that there is an interaction between the organisation for which he/she works and the development of the organisation through the employee's career.

Conversely, performance is considered to be related with the concepts of ability, opportunity and motivation (Ivancevich and Matteson, 2008), and employees being the key element of the organisation determines the success or failure of the organisation through their performance. Today's employees are more career conscious than ever and are more demanding from their work in terms of fulfillment, personal growth and satisfaction. Hence, employees are expressing a strong desire to pursue more than just a job. They are looking for employment opportunities that promise an extension of their interests, personality and abilities. They want variety of things from their jobs outside a pay cheque and a few fringe benefits, and their loyalty to the organisation depends upon the degree to which their employer satisfies these wants (Bartlett, 2012).

Just like in the contemporary organisations, the Non-academic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike cherish and espouse career growth and development, and the university management through the Personnel Department in charge of the Non-academic Staff in the University has orchestrated different programmes and policies in the university to encourage career growth and goal attainment of the Non-academic Staff, in order to motivate and enhance their performance towards achievement of the university goals and objectives. The question emanating from this university management initiatives is; has the opportunity for career growth encouraged employees' performance among the Non-academic University? To answer this question, this research; "Effects of career growth on employees performance with reference to Non-academic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike" becomes essential. Thus, beyond the broad objective, the study seeks specifically to;

- determine the effect career development on the employees' performance of Non-academic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike.
- ascertain the effect of career advancement on the motivation of Non-academic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike.

Review of Related Literature

The concept of career growth

Career can be described as a series of positions occupied by an individual throughout his or her lifespan (Robbins and Coulter, 2002). Career is the constant progress, experience and skill acquisition of a person in a specific work field. Even though career, in the general sense, 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. The career of individuals is not only the jobs they have, but their training for fulfilling the expectation, goal, emotion, and desires related to their job role, and, as a result, progressing in that workplace with the knowledge, skill, quality and desire to work (Yalçın,

1994). Career is individuals' usage of the positions related to their job consecutively during their personal life (Kaynak, 1996).

Career is the process that is directly related to personal and organisational goals and creates an accumulation of experiences emerging from the tasks, jobs, positions of the person or from the transitions such as promotions, transfers that the person goes through in these positions (Yilmaz, 2006). According to this, most of the successes and failures related to the job experiences gained over time constitute the career of the person and at the same time provide the development in the career of the person. All experiences gained during this phase of development interact with each other. Career generates the qualities of the person and the relationship outside these qualities. It is a process that indicated the relationship between a person's and the organization and rise and falls of this relationship (Işık, 1993).

Career is understood as the succession of work experiences in an individual's lifetime (Arthur 2008). Career growth is defined as one's perceptions of the chances of development and advancement within an organisation (Jans, 1989) (cited in Daud, 2014). Spector (2003) defined career growth or the so-called "career ladder" as an improvement in the positions of employees who put in an effort to gain necessary skills and upgrade their performance. Weng *et al.*, (2010) construct proposed four main construct of Organisational Career growth, viz., career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed and remuneration growth. Wherein, Career goal progress is a typical example of higher order need satisfaction (Weng *et al.*, 2010). Achieving professional ability development in an organisation is also an example of an advanced level of need satisfaction (Weng *et al.*, 2010). Promotion speed is the pace at which the employee has climbed the ladder as opposed to stagnating in the same function for long time Dries et al. (2008). In addition to promotion speed, remuneration growth also provides a measure of how employees are evaluated by employers (Weng *et al.* 2010).

Weng and Hu (2009) recently proposed that employee career growth could be captured by four factors: career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth. This multi-dimensional conceptualisation implies that career growth is both a function of the employees' own efforts in making progress toward their personal career goals and acquiring new skills and the organization's efforts in rewarding such efforts, through promotions and salary increases. This multi-dimensional view of career growth can also be construed as fulfillment of promises on the part of the employer implied by the psychological contract, which in turn has been found to be positively related to employees' organisational commitment (Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow, 2006). Weng's (2010) multidimensional conceptualisation of career growth model suggests that career growth consists of four factors: meeting career goals, developing one's professional abilities, and receiving promotions, and compensation commensurate with those abilities. In essence, this view of career growth is an individual-level, organisation specific, concept. That is, he argues that career growth is a measure of the degree to which an individual perceives that their current organisation creates an environment in which the employee is able to meet his/her career-related needs and reinforces those accomplishments through promotions and compensation (Weng *et al.*, 2010).

The concept of career development

Career development is the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future (Armstrong, 2009). Career development is defined as "an ongoing, formalized effort by an organisation that focuses on developing and enriching the organisation's human resources in light of both the employees' and the organisation's needs" (Byars and Rue, 2004). McDougall and Vaughn (1996) argue that "career development involves aligning individual subjective and more objective career aspects of an organisation to find a match between individual and organisational needs, personal characteristics

and career roles.” This author views career development as a mutual role, based on the needs and circumstances of both individuals and organisations.

Development involves preparing employees for higher responsibilities in future. Development according to Ezeuwa (2009) can be seen as the use of human resources to quantitatively change man’s physical and biological environments to his benefits or ever seen as involving the introduction of new ideas into the social structure and causing alterations on the patterns of the organization and social structure. To develop staff, (Daniels, 2003) simply refers to make them grow with the organization so that they can be fitted for available higher positions within their capacity. Development deals with improving human relations and interpersonal skill (Iwuoha, 2009).

Career development covers an employee’s working life. It starts with staff orientation, on-job training, experience, short courses, professional courses, post graduate degrees or diplomas. According to the National Strategy for the Development of the social service workforce in Scotland (2005), employee development is the foundation on which the confidence and competence of individual staff is built, (Robbins, 2010). Employees are major assets of any organisation, they play an active role towards organisational success that cannot be underestimated. Equipping these unique assets through effective training becomes imperative in order to maximize the job performance. Career development is often used to close the gap between current performances and expected future performance. Many employees in different organisations have trained but they have remained stagnant with little evidence of career advancement.

Organisational career growth

Much of the research by vocational psychologists and organisational scholars on the effects of career growth focuses on objective and subjective measures of one's career success (Ng, *et al.*, 2005) over one's work life or career stage, and across organisations, in contrast to viewing career growth experiences from the perspective of one's experiences within their current organisation. Weng (2010) expanded on this notion of development and advancement by proposing that employee organisational career growth could be captured by four factors: career goal progress, or the degree to which one's present job is relevant to and provides opportunities for one to realize their career goals; professional ability development, or the extent to which one's present job enables them to acquire new skills and knowledge; promotion speed, an employee's perceptions of the rate and probability of being promoted; and remuneration growth, or employee perceptions of the speed, amount, and likelihood of increases in compensation. This multi-dimensional conceptualization implies that organisational career growth is both a function of the employees' own efforts in making progress toward their personal career goals and acquiring professional skills within the organisation and the organisation's efforts in rewarding such efforts, through promotions and salary increases. This multi-dimensional view of organisational career growth met expectations hypothesis and the psychological contract (Rousseau, 2004).

Training and career development

Career Development and Training are two related processes that increase the capacity of your employees to contribute to your organisation’s mission. Organisation challenges are to continually find ways to invest in the development of its employees while balancing the requirements of current work. Training is planned, organised experiences that assist in the gaining or expansion of key competencies (Hammer, 2000). These experiences are intended to build needed competencies in order to achieve mission success and performance objectives. They also help prepare individuals to take on new or expanded roles, supporting better succession planning. Career Development is the process by which employees strategically explore, plan, and create their future at work by designing a personal learning plan to achieve their potential and fulfill the organisation’s mission

requirements. Career Development is also a means to sustain a vital and effective workforce through strategic succession planning. Career Development involves continual learning, seeking opportunities, taking risks, and finding ways to contribute to the organisation in a productive and motivated manner. Hammer (2000) asserts that an individual will be motivated to do something if they have the mental ability and skills to accomplish it. He writes that when employees are trained, they get the knowledge of how to deconstruct tasks and challenges and thereby feel less intimidated by their jobs/tasks. Herzberg (1998) agrees to Hammer's assertion. He adds that training makes the employee earn confidence to do a job thereby improving their attitude hence motivation.

Career advancement

Career advancement normally entails a clearly marked path of progression through the ranks of an organisation. It is based on merit without regard for race, gender, age or ethnicity. Deserving cases become eligible for advancement. When employees get to know that each one of them has an equal chance of succeeding, it becomes easy for them to put in their best. Smit *et al.*, (2007) agree and note that the prospect of career advancement might in itself motivate employees to work hard. Mullins, (2007) also confirm that employees aspire to progress steadily in organizations for which they work. Under common belief, career advancement would involve the existence of alternative career paths based on the individual employee's and organisational needs. As Saari and Judge, (2004) point out lack of advancement, for any reason may damage a manager's chance to ascending the ranks within an organisation.

Career advancement is significant to this study and employees involved as it presents them with the opportunity for long term success, higher pay, job security and job satisfaction. A commitment to career advancement will enable steps toward achieving a better motivated workforce and a high performing organisation. It also presents employees with opportunities to further their education and undergo training, thus strengthening employees' skill sets to receive consideration for a promotion and advance their career.

Relationship between training and career advancement

To develop skills required for the different roles an employee takes on as he/she progresses through the ranks takes time: the progress is facilitated by training and the development of managerial and professional skills. Mullins (2007), points out that training provides more opportunities for career progression because it may boost competence levels of individuals and the organisation. Training is therefore seen as vital for career advancement for employees in general and managers in particular. There is no contest about the beneficial relationship between training and career advancement. Career advancement is very important, especially to employees who have been working in the same industry, perhaps even for the same company, for some time. If they were unable to finish their education, this could be the key to further success and progression in their career. They might want to take their education further.

If companies intend to maintain high levels of productivity, they must ensure their employees are properly trained for their tasks. When their employees have the drive and initiative to expand their knowledge, it is a good sign that they will be able to benefit the company further. They might be interested in taking some advancement courses provided by the company. Many businesses will offer to pay for advancement courses so that their employees will perform at a higher standard (Six Sigma Online, 2014). Anything that benefits the company should be looked into. Employees who are interested in advancing their career within a company are always willing to participate in additional training courses.

Training existing employees is a great way for employers to maintain a high job satisfaction rate among the employees and a high production rate from their extensive qualifications. According to Ariely (2009) when employees are satisfied with their job and are aware of the room for

advancement, they will try hard to prove themselves so they can take advantage of that opportunity. They will also be less likely to leave the position they have for another company that pays better, has better incentives or lets them work in a manner or schedule they appreciate. When an employee has trained hard or gone back to college for a higher degree, they feel more pride and satisfaction in the work they do. Managers and supervisors see this confidence. It benefits the company to have knowledgeable and trained experts working in each department.

Career Development and training are two related processes that increase the capacity of employees to contribute to the organisation. Training is significant to this study as it can be used to aid in career development which may lead to motivation, the relationship this study intends to prove. inferiority among racial minorities, or social class identity as Mullins, (2007) describe it, may limit career choices or even advancement in as much as promotional interviews are concerned and affect workforce motivation.

Motivation

Studying motivation, as noted by Armstrong, (2009) is an integral part of human resource management. They point out that motivation focuses on reasons that explain the way people behave. As Price, (2009) points out, all managers should address themselves to issues of employee motivation. He concludes that the life span of organisations depends very much on their ability to achieve personal and organisational goals. Saari and Judge, (2004) confirm the issue of needs or motives. These scholars contend that our behaviour as human beings is “goal-seeking”. Armstrong, (2009) agrees that indeed motivation is goal directed behaviour. Robbins *et al.*, (2009) also concur and argue that motives direct the way employees behave at the work place. This point is also highlighted by Price, (2009) who confirms that motivation energizes, directs and sustains behaviour. Motivation is a great contributor to the extent of employee commitment. They also argue that motivation cannot be in isolation it must go hand in hand with, among other things, learning and ability.

According to Robbins, *et al.*, (2010) future leaders ought to be selected on the basis of their ability to stimulate organisational motivation. It is, therefore, very important, for organisations to take the issue of motivation seriously in administration of reward systems because job satisfaction or lack of it affects productivity and the achievement of organisational goals. Saari and Judge, (2004) note that, the force that is behind motivation drives employees to act and put in willingly their best performance towards the achievement of expected results. Managers therefore need to understand the needs and aspirations of their employees. Reward systems can motivate or demotivate employees. They argue that managers must know what motivates employees so as to bring about improvement in job performance and goes further to argue that where employees goals are not met (and organizational goals are not in conformity with personal goals of employees), employees may not identify themselves with organisation goals. As a consequence, organisational goals may be put in jeopardy. Employees to perform cannot be overemphasized. Saari and Judge, (2004) point out that rewards are vital for staff acquisition and retention. Promotion is necessary for job satisfaction and that it stands for increased incentives in recognition of the employee’s performance and contribution. Career advancement and reward systems are sources of motivation at the work place.

Theoretical Consideration

The study is based on the following underpinning theories; Trait and Factor Theory, Tiedeman and O’hara Ego Identity Theory, and Acquired Needs Theory.

1) Trait and Factor Theory

Parsons (1909) the “father of guidance” proposed the Trait and Factor Theory to explain the process of vocational choice. Parson’ theory is predicated on the assumption that individuals differ as well

as occupations, thus bringing into limelight the old adage of individual differences. The theory sets out to match people and occupations in respect of their abilities, interests, intelligence, attitude and aptitude. The theory also asserts that the individuals needs and values can only be fully realized when they are matched with those jobs which are relevant to such needs and values. To explain his views further, Parsons proposed the following as basic steps through which an individual goes in his attempt to choose a career:

- (i) A clear understanding of himself, his abilities, aptitudes, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations and their causes.
- (ii) A good knowledge of the requirement and prospects in different jobs; and
- (iii) A sound reasoning of the relationship between the above two groups of factors and selection of a good match. This theory therefore states that if an individual's personality is carefully observed, better prediction can be made about his career behaviour.

2) Tiedeman and O'hara Ego Identity Theory

David and Robert (1963) examined the process of career development as a part of a continuing process of differentiating ego identity. They contend that variables such as a person's early childhood experiences within his family, the psychological crises encountered at various developmental stages, the equilibrium between vocational goals, the individual needs and those of the society and the personality characteristics of an individual all have great impact on career development.

Tiedeman and O'hara emphasized that there is an intervention relationship between career and personality in organisation, the former exerting significant influence on the later. In their view, career development is a process of modeling a career identity through differentiation and personality integration as one come across a work related problem. It is their conception that differentiation relates to the uniqueness which exists in the individuality and how he expresses his individuality. They conceive integration on the other hand as the ways in which the individual adjusts himself to accommodate others around him in order to become an integral part and an acceptable member of the society. In their opinion, the decision the individual makes in relations to his work, daily activities, form the basis and framework of his career development.

3) Acquired Needs Theory

McClelland, a well-known psychologist at the Harvard University, studied employee's behaviour. He used the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) to measure employee motivation in satisfying various needs and found out that employees craved the need for achievement, the need for power and the need for affiliation (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). The Acquired Needs Theory focusses on the diversity of people and is rooted in culture. It assumes that needs are acquired or learned on the basis of our life experiences. When a need is strong, it will motivate the person to engage in behaviour that satisfies that need. Achievement is represented by the drive to excel, accomplish challenging tasks to achieve a standard of excellence. Achievement motivation depends on childhood, personal and occupational experience and even the type of organization. According to this theory some people have a compelling drive to succeed. They strive for personal achievement rather than for the rewards of success. They have a strong desire to do something better or more efficiently than it has been done before. Individuals high on achievement needs often make good entrepreneurs running their own business (Johns, 1996).

Research Methodology

Research Design

The researcher adopted survey research design, survey research design has its tools as questionnaire, oral interview and observation. Thus, these research instruments was adopted for the purpose of this research.

Method of Data collection

The researcher made uses of both primary data and secondary sources of data, the primary data were obtained through well structure questionnaire of close ended type which was administered to the Non Academic Staff of the university. The questionnaire was structured into three (3) sections, A, B, and C. Section A captures the socio-economic characteristics of the respondent, while section B and C captured the specific objectives of the study. Interviews, based on pre-determined questions was used to elicit information that was not contained in the questionnaire. Secondary data were sourced through textbooks, journals, magazines, and other relevant internet materials.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study consist of all the Non-academic Staff of the university which numbered two thousand six hundred and thirty (2630) employees. Based on this number, a normal confidence level of 95% and error tolerance of 5% was used to deduce the actual sample size of the study. Therefore, the sample size was calculated using Taro Yamane’s formula which is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N (e)^2}$$

- Where: n = Sample size
- N = Population size
- e = level of significance 5% (0.05)
- 1 = Statistical constant

The computed sample size form two thousand six hundred and thirty (2630) employees that was the population of the Non-academic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike was three hundred and forty six (346) and these number was sampled from different department and unit of the university using simple random sampling techniques. The researcher adopted simple random sampling techniques because it affords all the Non-academic Staff of the university an equal opportunity to serve as the sample size.

Method of Data Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was use to analyse the two objectives raised by the researcher with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Out of three hundred and forty six (346) questionnaire sampled, three hundred questionnaire was well filled and returned, which form the basis for the data analysis.

Result and Discursion

Table 1, Showing Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis result on the effect of career development on the employees’ performance of Nonacademic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	t- value
Performance of Non-academic Staff	0.984	0.987**
N	300	
P – Value	0.000	

Source: field survey 2016

** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The correlation analysis result in Table 1, indicated that at $P > 0.01$ level of significance, career development have a strong positive effects on the performance of Nonacademic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike with correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.984$). Signifying that there is a positive and significant correlation between career development and the performance of Non-academic Staff of the university. Thus, the result revealed that as the career of the Non-academic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike continue to develop, it enhances and boost their performance which invariably improve the administrative performance of the university.

The result is in harmony with the findings of Thite (2001), Kapel and Shepherd (2004), and Kaye (2005), they opined that a well-designed career development system enables organisations to tap their wealth of in house talent for staffing and promotion by matching the skills, experience, and aspirations of individuals to the needs of the organisations. In addition, it enables them to make informed decisions around compensation and succession planning to attract, retain and motivate the employees, resulting in a more engaged and productive workforce. In the same vein Lee and Bruvold (2003), opined that investments in human resource development present the image of high commitment strategy that influences employee commitment and motivation. Also, Wang *et.al*, (2014), stated that employees who perceive their organisation to be interested in their career growth respond positively on behalf of their organization. In like manner Ko (2012) underlined that career development includes growing professional knowledge and independence to improve creativity, job performance, and innovation.

Table 2, Showing Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis result on the effect of career advancement on the motivation of the Nonacademic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	t- value
Motivation of the Non-academic Staff	0.923	0.926**
N	300	
P – Value	0.000	

Source: field survey 2016

** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The correlation analysis result in Table 2, indicated that at $P > 0.01$ level of significance, career advancement have a strong positive effects on the motivation of Nonacademic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike with correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.923$). Therefore, career advancement is positively correlated with motivation of the Nonacademic Staff of the University. Thus, as the employees undergo promotion in the university they are been motivated to work with spirited effort and enthusiastically accomplish organisational goals and objectives.

The findings is in agreement with the work of Smit *et al.*, (2007), they posited that the prospect of career advancement might in itself motivate employees to work hard. Mullins, (2007) also confirm that employees aspire to progress steadily in organizations for which they work. In like manner Ariely (2009) opined that when employees are satisfied with their job and are aware of the room for advancement, they will try hard to prove themselves so they can take advantage of that opportunity. Also, Saari and Judge, (2004) point out that promotion is necessary for job satisfaction and that it stands for increased incentives in recognition of the employee's performance and contribution. Career advancement and reward systems are sources of motivation at the work place.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The impact of career growth on the performance and motivation of employees cannot be succinctly stated as the present research involving the Non-academic Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike has demonstrated. Thus in harmony with the programmes and policies of the university, management should not relent in contributing to career growth of the Non-academic Staff by providing abundant opportunities for self-development, advancement, structured learning; funding career development programmes; providing incentives to those who endeavour career development like promotion upon completion, just as the findings revealed a positive correlation between career advancement and motivation as these are sine qua non in maintaining and sustaining outstanding administrative performance in the institution which is very vital in facilitating the learning and academic researches carried out in the university. The university management should also expose the Non-academic Staff to opportunities for specialty courses of instruction in their various administrative capacity as they are essential in the improvement of the employees' performance which in turn will transform into remarkable organisational performance.

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