

Employees' Career Growth and Development: Outlook and Challenges of a First-Class Accounting Unit

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Abstract— This study focused on identifying the outlook and challenges on career growth and development of all seventeen employees of the accounting office of a local government unit and is anchored on Systems Theory Framework of Career Development. Descriptive qualitative research design was employed and utilized total enumeration purposive sampling. Respondents were interviewed and data was gathered, transcribed, and thematically analyzed. Findings revealed that employees shared positive and negative outlook on career growth and development citing promotion, annual salary appraisal, and skills enhancement. Furthermore, challenges included demographic factors like age, educational background, market competition, lack of vision and personal purpose, slow promotion process, and management support. Therefore, the outlook and challenges of the employees focused on the career planning intervention, especially in ensuring that employees are given enough exposure and awareness on professional development and training to acquire skillset and qualifications to advance their careers and provide robust development of core policies to ensure everyone is treated fairly and just with regards to career advancement. Self-awareness, self-development, inclusive work environment and management support will help employees in their careers and professions.

Keywords— Career Growth, Employees, Local Government, Professional Development

I. INTRODUCTION

Every official and employee of the government is an important asset or resource to be valued, developed, and utilized in the delivery of basic services to the public. Hence, the development and retention of a highly competent and professional workforce in the public service shall be the main concern of every department or agency. This is what Section 1, Rule VIII of the Omnibus Rules Implementing Book V of Executive Order No. 292 and Other Pertinent Civil Service Law and Rules provides. Sharif (2002) noted that every organization's main objective is to improve its performance, but it can never be possible without the efficient performance of employees. Thus, spring truly to the achievements and narratives of the Municipality of Surallah as a first-class municipality in the province of South Cotabato.

The annual ranking of the Philippine cities and municipalities developed by the National Competitive Council through the Regional Competitiveness

Committees (RCCs) with the assistance of the United States Agency for International Development ranked the Municipality of Surallah in 19th Place in the year 2021 (CMCI-DTI, 2021). In this regard, we connect and attribute a key element to the success story to the LGU Employees. However, one of the hanging questions in mind given the stride and image that the Municipality of Surallah, are its employees carried forth as well?

The Philippine bureaucracy, like bureaucracies in other developing countries, is often criticized for being rigid, slow, and inefficient (Mangahas & Tiu Songco, 2011). We are not even new to the global predicament from government employees complaining about low salaries, slow promotion, and being stuck doing daily repetitive tasks. With these current issues in government setting, it is then a must to help understand where the problems are coming from and scope out possible solutions to these problems to prevent threats to government breakdown.

Based on the extensive literature review conducted by the researcher in more than 20+ studies, a lot of scholarly articles have been made about career development and professional growth. Most of these studies were conducted in the private sector and focused on the delivery of a better performance management system. There was no research that focused on the career growth and professional development of the employees of the Local Government Unit of Surallah. This research will fill in the void in the said research area and serve as a reliable reference in understanding the environment and crafting efficient and effective intervention in human resources management and employee development in the local government sector.

This study generally aims to determine the outlook and challenges on career growth and development of the employees of local government accounting unit of the Municipality of Surallah.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the outlook of the employees on career growth and development?
2. What are the challenges of the employees on career growth and development?

This study is anchored on Systems Theory Framework of Career Development by Wendy Patton and Mary McMahon (2006) which illustrates the content and process of career development where content influences are comprised of intrapersonal variables and contextual variables. Intrapersonal variables include personality, abilities, skills, gender, age, and other variables influencing the individual intrinsically. Contextual variables include social influences and environment influences, such as family, friends, geographic location, environment.

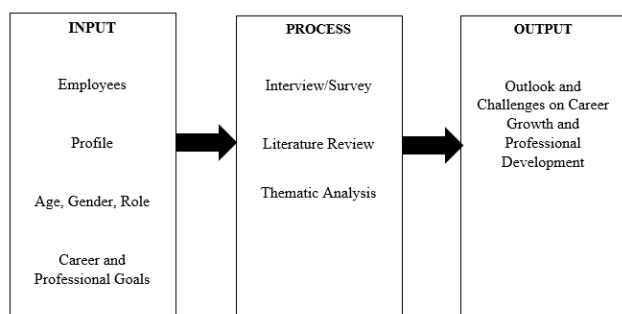


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study aimed to determine the outlook and challenges on career development of the employees of the accounting unit. Using Total Enumeration Purposive Sampling, the

researcher limits the study seventeen (17) employees of the accounting office of the Local Government Unit of Surallah, South Cotabato. Each of the respondent were interviewed during the month of October 2022. The data were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings are limited only to the range of questions asked by the researcher and answers provided by the employees of the accounting unit of the local government unit.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The conception of career growth Career can be described as a series of positions enthralled by an individual throughout his or her lifetime (Robbins and Coulter, 2002). Career is the constant progress, experience, and skill accession of a person in a specific work field. Indeed, though career, in the general sense, is defined as the aggregate of the jobs a person undertakes through his or her entire life, it has a meaning beyond and wider than this description. The career of individualities isn't only the jobs they have, but their training for fulfilling the anticipation, thing, emotion, and solicitations related to their job part, and, as a result, progressing in that plant with the knowledge, skill, quality and desire to work (Yalçın, 1994). Career is individualities' operation of the positions related to their job successively during their particular life (Kaynak, 1996).

Development involves preparing workers for advanced liabilities in future. Development according to Ezeuwa (2009) can be seen as the use of mortal coffers to quantitatively change man's physical and natural surroundings to his benefits or ever seen as involving the preface of new ideas into the social structure and causing differences on the patterns of the association and social structure. To develop staff,(Daniels, 2003) simply refers to make them grow with the association so that they can be fitted for available advanced positions within their capacity. Development deals with perfecting mortal relations and interpersonal skill (Iwuoha, 2009). Career development covers an hand's working life. It starts with staff exposure, on- job training, experience, short courses, professional courses, post graduate degrees or warrants.

The National Strategy for the Development of the social service pool in Scotland (2005) states that hand development is the foundation on which the confidence and capability of individual staff is erected, (Robbins, 2010). Workers are major means of any association; they play an active part towards organizational success that cannot be undervalued. Equipping these unique means through effective training becomes imperative to maximize the job performance. In utmost cases Career development

is used to enfold between current performances and anticipated unborn affair. numerous workers in different associations have trained but they've remained stagnant with little substantiation of career advancement.

Philippines Setting on Career and Professional Development

In the Philippine Setting, the Civil Service Law categorize the positions in the civil service into career and non-career service positions. Career positions are characterized by entrance based on merit and fitness to be determined as far as practicable by competitive examinations or based on highly technical qualifications, opportunity for advancement to higher career positions and as well as the security of tenure. According to the Civil Service Commission (CSC) (2017), the Philippine bureaucracy is composed of more than two million employees as of 2016 distributed among various public service offices. Following the events in 2016, as it is a policy of the State to promote and upgrade the practice of professions in the country, Republic Act No.10912 was introduced. This act focused on strengthening the continuing professional development programs in the public and private sectors.

Following this, Section 10 of the Philippine Regulations Commission (PRC) Resolution No. 2019-1146 has set Continuing Professional Development as a mandatory requirement in the renewal of the PICs of all registered and licensed professionals under the regulation of the Commission. The development and maintenance of a high level of employee performance is indeed a primary concern of the Government, granted by the fact that laws are established and created to safeguard this fact. It shall be the policy of the government that a continuing program of employee education, administrative, profession, and executive improvement be established under the leadership of the Civil Service Commission for all government personnel at all levels. (Section 25, RA 2260, Civil Service Act of 1959).

Barriers to Career Growth and Professional Development

Young (2006) stated that people go through life with their own career plans and to have a career is to engage in a series of job tasks essential for professional growth in one's occupational life. A career refers to the sequence of activities and jobs engaged in by an individual during his work life. Career growth that focuses to one's career progress within or across organizations is a crucial topic in the vocational psychology literature for eras. Researchers have made substantial progress in understanding why some people are more successful than others throughout the span of their careers (e.g., Ng et al., 2005; Seibert et al., 2001).

Weng and Hu (2009) recently proposed that employee career growth is encompassed by four factors: Career Goal progress, Professional Ability Development, Promotion Speed and Remuneration Growth. This multi-dimensional conceptualization suggests that career growth is both a function of the employees' own efforts in realizing progress toward their personal career goals and obtaining new skills and organization's efforts in rewarding such hard work, through promotions and salary increases. This view of career growth can also be construed as the 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' organizational commitment (Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow, 2006). This view of career growth is an individual-level and organization-specific concept. He argues that career growth is a measure of the degree to which an individual perceives that their current organization creates an environment in which the employee can meet ones' career-related needs and strengthens those accomplishments through promotions and compensation (Weng et al., 2010).

On the other hand, Professional development (PD) is a term used to describe a variety of learning or training opportunities that can help people improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. Professional Development is intended to provide an active learning environment that grants participants to master specialized learning objectives. It can include trainings, workshops, online or distance learning courses, information sessions, and technical assistance. (CDC, 2017)

In many cases, government employees are not given the opportunities to professionally developed beyond their assigned job duties training (pre-service training) (Getha-Taylor, et al., 2015). Sometimes this is due to lack of finance to devote to professional development or the leaders in the government agencies do not see professional development as a priority. The majority of the time, finances are devoted to services, salaries, overhead, and benefits rather than employee development (Getha-Taylor et al., 2015). However, one method of retaining employees is to invest in their development beyond their normal work duties. Some outcomes of investment in professional development are an increase in employee morale, employee growth, and employee loyalty which results into employee longevity with the organization. (Castellanos & Martin, 2011; Kim & Ployhart, 2014)

Professional development is categorized under the classification of training and development. Organization invests in professional development to increase the skills of their employees so that the organization can provide services with innovation and effectiveness. Organizations

position themselves with a competitive advantage in their sector when they are improving the skillsets of employees through technological advancement and learning mechanisms based on their roles in the organization (Mpofu & Hlatywayo, 2015). Professional development is hampered by financial difficulties and organizing conflicts. These are in line with the findings of TALIS 2018 wherein OECD teachers rated professional development conflicts with my work schedule and professional development is too expensive among the strongest barriers to professional development. Previous studies noted several personal and organizational barriers to professional development. Institutional barriers typically consist of finances, while personal motivations and the perceived benefits of professional development are some intrinsic factors. Some institutions have cultures that either promote or hinder professional development. Teachers' lack of commitment, interest, and confidence are also important reasons for non-participation. (Chin et al, 2022)

III. Research Methodology

This research utilized a descriptive - qualitative research design to determine the Local Government Unit of Surallah's accounting department Employees' outlook and challenges on career development and professional growth. Data have been collected via semi-structured one-on-one interviews, all conducted in English from selected employees from the Municipal Accounting Office of the Local Government Unit (LGU) Surallah. A total of 17 employees from the Pre-Audit Department and Accounting Department of the Municipal Accounting office of the Local Government Unit of Surallah were selected as the respondents of the study. The roster of accounting department employees available from the Human Resources office of the municipality of Surallah became the basis for identifying the participants of the research. This study was conducted in the local government unit of Surallah, South Cotabato. Surallah is a first-class municipality in the province of South Cotabato geographically known as the center of commerce in southern South Cotabato. At present, the municipality is composed of 17 barangays inhabited by diverse ethnic groups such as Ilonggo, Karay'a, T'boli, and Blaans. Total Enumeration Purposive Sampling in selecting the employees who will participate in the research. To meet the adequacy criterion, all employees of the accounting office of the local government unit of Surallah.

After the approval of the proposed study, the researcher sent a communication letter to the head of the accounting office asking permission and requesting the respondents to arrange time during the process of data gathering. A similar letter sent to the employees informing them about their participation in the study. The researcher

conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews to the employees. The data from interviews accompanied by participants' observation during the process were recorded, raw data were reviewed thoroughly for presentation, analyses and data interpretation. The researcher developed fifteen (15) semi-structured questions which the researcher utilized in one-on-one interviews. The interview questions focused on identifying how employees view career development and professional growth. In addition, the semi-structured interview seeks to determine what are the perceived challenges in realizing career development and professional growth.

The non-numerical data was used in this study to assess and described the responses to the perceived actuality of the phenomenon. The employees' outlook and challenges on career growth and development were presented in theme to point out the issue through participants' observation, and semi-structured in-depth interview. The researcher had worked in government sector for more than 10 years where she observed that there are a wide array of factors, employees' outlook and challenges on career growth and professional development. She has valuable experiences in participating different professional programs and activities as an accounting officer of the local government unit and has undertaken several positive impacting initiatives of the good office. Thus, the researcher brackets her bias in gathering data.

In analyzing the data, this study used thematic analysis in which the data were transcribed, reviewed, and classified into category and codes to generate initial codes. pattern and themes were determined and defined for reporting and discussing the results.

Findings of the Study

Outlook of the Accounting Unit Employees on Career Growth and Professional Development

(1) Growth or promotion in the organization in the next 5 to 10 years

Employees are still positive because of the rapid growth of the municipality in terms of economy and population, they view this growth as tantamount to opportunities to grow their career in the next 5 to 10 years. Other employees enumerated that eventually, the management will see their performance and contribution to the organization and that it only takes the right time for them to advance their career. Promotion empowers employees to produce better results and meet their goals throughout the year. Through development opportunities within your workplace, you can expect to attract prospective

employees, and keep your current employee population motivated, productive and confident.

This finding is parallel to Souza, Gita (2002) finding that promotions motivate employees. Thus, it is a calling to provide avenues for employees to grow their careers and enhance their skills professionally.

(2) *Annual Salary Appraisal*

Another positive outlook employees cited about their career is the annual salary appraisal. Employees are positive that with the service that they do, they see annual salary appraisal being a part of their professional growth.

(3) *Professional Skills Enhancement*

As employees continue to adapt to post pandemic work culture, many have expressed their desire to learn more skills. Employees are eager to do better at work and they believed that honing their skills is a key. This finding supports Farid, Taher (2021) study that skill enhancement affects work performance. In the field of human resources, skills management is defined as the sum of actions, approaches, and tools allowing a company to acquire, stimulate and regulate the skills it needs, today and tomorrow, individually and collectively, taking into account its vocation, objectives, strategies, structure, technical resources and culture (Boulaire, M. 2014).

(4) *No Clear Career Path/Career Goals*

Employees cited this specifically because career path is not a discussion. Several employees shared that career growth is a rare discussion in the workplace environment. In addition to this, several reasons why employee doesn't have a career goal is because they are only focused on their tasks, caused by the workload they must attend to.

(5) *Minimal Salary Increase Considering Inflation*

Over the years, employees have noted that they have not been given substantial amount of increase in pay especially those that are working contract type. Considering inflation, they shared that increase should be reconsidered as it's getting hard to cope up economically with the rise in the price of commodities and expenses. Due to this, they are not seeing any significant positive changes of career growth and professional development.

Challenges of the Accounting Unit Employees on Career Growth and Professional Development

(1) *Age as the biggest barrier*

Due to the demand of the work and tasks, employees see age as the biggest challenge. Most employees felt that because of their age, they are having a hard time to come up with the qualifications needed to further their career. One major example is the literacy to digital technology and systems especially to those that are related to accounting systems and processes. While these employees have mastered the theory, coping up with the fast-evolving technology seems to be a bit of a challenge for these employees. Employees feel that due to their age, the tasks that involves technologies are usually given to the younger ones, or they ask to give it to the younger employees. This finding is supported by Dordoni (2015) when the main findings of selected empirical studies indicated that: a) there is the need to focus HR management policies on older workers; b) age stereotypes toward older workers are multidimensional and there is the simultaneous existence of both positive and negative stereotypical beliefs; c) managers' age stereotypes can affect several organizational outcomes

(2) *Lack of Personal Vision and Purpose*

One of the challenges gathered during the study is that employees are just focused on doing what they are bound to do. A professional vision is kind of like an employees' career navigation system, anchoring to employees' values, whilst enabling to stay true to the dream of what career could look like, if there were no limitations. It's an expression of a career ambition and independence, that also reflects your family priorities. The study revealed that most employees didn't worry too much about this if they are delivering what they are expected to do, they are already fine with it.

(3) *Management Support*

Employees expressed that there is a little amount of attention paid to hone their skills and competencies and hardly feel the support of the management. While there are several trainings and seminars conducted, those are all focused on compliance and regulatory matters in relation to the job that they do. Employees also feel that management can do better in supporting employee development initiatives. This finding is

supported by Raza, Moueed, Ali (2015) when they stated Management support for HRD is positively correlated with employee perceived organizational support and relationship between Management support for HRD and perceived organizational support was moderated by managerial coaching behavior and organizational support not mediates the effect of Management support for HRD on Employee job satisfaction.

IV. CONCLUSION

It was found out that accounting employees shared both positive and negative outlooks on career growth and professional development. Positive outlook includes growth or promotion in the organization in the next 5 to 10 years, annual salary appraisal, and enhancement of skills with respect to their current roles and other roles within the department. The following observations were found following the conduct of the study as far as the challenges on career growth and professional development are concerned: Individual challenges include age and qualifications, market competition, personal vision or purpose and management support. Also, most of the employees do not know what they want, and the potentials they possess, and their contributions to the organization. Organizational challenges cited are minimal knowledge transfer and mentoring and lack of career path set by the organization. Employees felt that grooming them to be ready to take up leadership roles cans still be better.

This study has a significant impact on the management, particularly in terms of career growth and development for the employees, which have multiple benefits not only for themselves but also for the entire accounting office and human resource officers of the local government unit. It entails understanding what the perceived outlook and challenges are, thereby providing basis for intervention programs to help these employees achieve their career goals and help in positive employee turnout. Furthermore, this study served as a foundation for providing an in-depth understanding of what employees feel and perceive, and thus offers a view of the accounting unit work environment and demographics which are all important in implementing effective management programs and interventions focused on overall government employee satisfaction and wellness.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is highly recommended to annually conduct an individual development plan and career discussion with employees and require other supervisors/managers in the

department to do the same. This is to help identify strengths, weaknesses, interests, and values by maintaining open, effective communication and ongoing encouragement. Create programs and activities to provide skill development, such as job rotation, cross-training, mentoring, internships, coaching, and career strategy groups. While promotion processes are streamlined and established, conduct of programs are recommended to provide higher level of awareness to employees and enlighten them the requirements and qualifications needed to further their career. Employees are recommended to focus on self-development and acquire sense of self-awareness especially in terms of their career goals. Employees to focus on identifying a new skill. Provide management support to employee development initiatives conducted by the employees, the accounting office head or the human resources management office. Encourage communication between stakeholders at all levels, from the employees to the high-ranking officials to better channel ideas and provide access to employees in expressing areas for improvement in their career development.

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