

The Relationship between Career Growth and Job Engagement among Young Employees: The Mediating Role of Normative Commitment and the Moderating Role of Organizational Justice

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Abstract

With the sharp changes in external environment, sustainable competitive advantage is importance resource that the enterprises need to get in the fierce market game. The 90's are becoming the backbone of enterprises, and under the background of human resources, driving the development of the enterprise innovation ability by cultivating highly professional knowledge staff is the important measure of enterprise to obtain sustainable competitive advantage. This study will explore the relationship between employees' career growth and work engagement, in order to provide effective advice for enterprise to cultivate staffs with high job engagement. Based on social exchange theory, empirical results indicate that career growth has significant positive impact on employees' job engagement through a mediating role of normative commitment. Meanwhile, the two assumptions about the moderating role of organizational justice are not supported, which are including that organizational justice plays a moderating role between career growth and job engagement, and organizational justice adjusts the mediating role of normative commitment between career growth and job engagement. Empirical results indicate that organizational justice plays a moderating role between normative commitment and job engagement. The research results show that enterprises can satisfy employees' career growth needs, such as economic, power, ability, social and emotional needs, thus achieving the goal of improving employee's organization normative commitment level, and eventually achieving the goal of employees work commitment.

Keywords

Career Growth, Job Engagement, Normative Commitment, Organizational Justice

1. Introduction

According to the Engagement Survey that released by STEELCASE in 2016, a high de-

gree of professionalism and high satisfaction of employees accounted for only 10% among Chinese respondents, with 3 percentage points lower than the global average. Compared with the results of the survey published by Gallup in November 2013, the rate of the global employee engagement didn't change, but the rate of Chinese workers increased from the world's worst 6% to 10%. To some degree in this report, the Chinese employee engagement is growing steadily, but still lower than the world average. At present, a large number of studies have shown that, if we want to achieve higher efficiency of enterprises and organizations and encourage employees to take the initiative to show their conscious effort to meet organizational goals, the key is employee engagement [1]. Now, in the research on engagement, exploration about employee engagement factors focus on the individual level, the working level and organizational level, and there are more researches focused on a single point of view and less explorations about interaction study on the impact of factors. Especially with the new generation of 80, 90 becoming the main force in the workplace, to explore what factors can affect engagement is more meaningful. Based on the perspective of in-depth research on the career development theory put forward by the Super, BaiYanli and other scholars proposed that organizations can make something different in helping employees get career growth in the specific strategies about improving employee engagement levels. Some scholars have explored that career growth has significant positive impact on employee engagement. However, there is still some research that needs to be further studied in the following aspects: First, the results of the research show that employees' career growth with normative commitment, normative commitment and organizational justice has positive correlation with employee engagement, and organization commitment plays the intermediary role in the process while career growth influences employee engagement [2] [3] [4] [5]. However, whether normative commitment exists in the process while career growth influences employee engagement? Second, whether organization justice performing its value in the process of the career growth influences employees' normative commitment? Overall, this study will further explore the relationship between employees' career growth and work engagement, how employee career growth affects employees work engagement, and whether the normative commitment plays a role of intermediary. In addition, whether the sense of organization fairness affects the relationship between employee career growth and work engagement, through this study, we hope to provide effective suggestions for developing employees with high work engagement.

2. Theoretical Foundation and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Career Growth and Job Engagement

About job engagement, Kahn (1990) suggested that employees have the ability to coordinate their work and themselves well, put their own physical strength, cognitive, emotion into work and translate them into action, creating job performance in the work process, which is called the job engagement [6]. Some academics have proved that job satisfaction are positively associated with the company's competitiveness; and Is negatively related to the employee turnover rate, etc. [7] [8].

Subsequently, Liu Xiaoping, and Deng Jingsong (2009) clarified the concept of job

engagement once again, which is defined as comprising the cognitive emotion and employees' behavior, which are in line with the concept of two aspects [9]. Based on the angle of close connection that employees perform in work, the scholars Saks (2006), divided the job engagement into two dimensions: work and organization [10]. Regarding the engagement, this study selects the dimension of job engagement as a research variable, mainly based on two aspects: First, with respect to the tissue engagement, employees' career growth has greater correlation with work; Second, according to existing research, job engagement has a direct impact with task completion, and it's more valuable to study job engagement for the practical operation of the enterprise. Scholar Muntunga discussed factors that affect employee engagement including compensation, training, career growth, and so on, but not have in-depth discussion [11].

Based on individual professional value and speed perspective, in 1997, Graen and Chun and other scholars, put forward the view that career growth was a dynamic variable, mainly referring to the speed that employees flow along for more valuable work series [12]. Later, with tissue boundary theory as guidance, Weng Qingxiong and other scholars divided the career growth into two aspects: within the organization and between organizations, and made operational definition for the distribution of dimensions by theoretical reasoning and empirical research and determination [13]. The results show that the major performance of the career growth within the organization is members' career development in the current organization system, which can be measured and assessed with speed sensor from four dimensions: the development of professional ability, salary increases, progression of career goals and the promotion of jobs. According to social exchange theory, when the resources that provided by the organization for its members match up with the needs (providing career growth) which include the rights, economic and social emotion of improving professional competence, job promotion and salary increases, individual members will get a sense of obligation in his heart, and make a positive feedback and rewards for the organization. In a word, adjusting the engagement level of individual members is one of the common methods to facilitate their reward to organization in work practice. That is, the different engagement degrees, which were performed by the internal self-regulating and based on the external behaviors towards the organization and work, is often been thought as one of feedback that the organization provides resources for the staff. In addition, based on the integration of many research achievements, Zhou Xia and Yu Jinming, etc. made questionnaire survey on seven cities with 21 companies nearly 400 employees on the mainland, preliminary exploring the relationship between career growth, organizational commitment and employee engagement. The empirical results show that organizational commitment plays an intermediary role in the process of career growth influence employee engagement. Therefore, we make the following assumptions:

H1: Career growth has a significant positive impact on job engagement.

2.2. The Mediating Role of Normative Commitment

Allen and other scholars proposed organizational commitment including three forms: emotion, specifications, continuance [14]. According to social exchange theory, when the resources that provided by the organization for its members match up with the

needs (providing career growth) which include the rights, economic and social emotion of improving professional competence, job promotion and salary increases, employees will take positive emotion and behavior in exchange for creating value for the company. Yuan Qinghong (2014) and others thought that while the organization provide the staff with a better career development, it will promote the staff to have positive emotion towards the organization and internalize it into codes of conduct or feel more willing to accept the organization's relevant norms [15]. That is, career growth can make the staff generate positive emotion towards the organization and internalize it into related codes of conduct, which called the enhanced normative commitments.

The individual members' internal mental and external behavior can be affected by the growth concept of career growth in the organization. As in the current organization and the work undertaken, the individual members of the organization can attain satisfaction and achievement during the process of work competence, career advancement, career achievements and the value of work and so on, then the individual members of the respective organizations and the work will have a high level of commitment and exhibit more positive emotions [16]. The positive emotions of employees in the organization will internalize into codes of conduct and be more willing to accept the relevant norms in the organization, which in turn will continue to remain in the organization with continued loyalty and return the organization with the commitments of complying with the organizational norms. In addition, according to the social exchange theory, when employees receive a high level of career growth which provided by the organization, it will make them more consciously abide the organizational norms and continue to stay in the organization and make due contributions return to the organization, that is increasing their own engagement. In addition, studies have demonstrated that organizational commitment have a positive correlation with the career growth and employee engagement, meanwhile the organizational commitment plays a significant intermediary role in the process of career growth affects the employee engagement. Therefore, we make the following assumptions:

H2: Career growth has significant positive impact on normative commitment.

H3: Normative commitment plays an intermediary role between the career growth and job engagement.

2.3. The Regulation of Organizational Justice

For organizational equity research, we are concerned the degree of awareness of fair in the relationship that the organization hire employees. The concept of "organizational justice" is progressively developed by the fair distribution. The concept of "Fair distribution" was first proposed by Adams, and later through the improvement and development by MoagBies and other scholars, the connotation of "organizational justice" has become increasingly rich and clear [17]. As a basic awareness of the continued evaluation that the organizational members make on their organizations, organizational justice directly affects the process that the individual members make trust and commitment on the organization. As the awareness of fair degree in the relationship that the organization hire employees, organizational justice can have a continued penetration in the psychological level for individual members in the long-term and relatively

stable organizational scenarios or work situation. Thus the individual members can make adaptively adjustment to the external behaviors and the internal mental activities according to the awareness of the fair degree in the organization. Therefore, except can predict a number of variables, organizational justice plays a regulatory role in the relationship of the other variables including individual attitudes, behavior and consequence variables. Academics have discussed relationship between organizational justice and job satisfaction and turnover intention [18]. Thus, many domestic and foreign scholars proposed that it can exploratory try to use the organizational justice as the moderator to study the relationship between salary increase and staff satisfaction in job and organizational commitment, and the possibility of playing the adjusting role on the process of career growth affects organizational commitment. The research of scholars Bechtoldt (2007) shows that organizational justice can affect employee's production behavior [19]; Scholars Devonish (2010) shows that organizational justice will affect employee job performance, etc. [20].

When the employees are aware of a high level of justice, the support of career growth provided by the organization will be more easy to recognized and identified by the members of the organization and it will be more effective to internalize the recognition and identification into relevant codes of conduct, that is normative commitment. Therefore, we make the following assumptions:

H4: Organizational justice plays a regulatory role between the career growth and normative commitment.

H5: Organizational justice will adjust normative commitment when it plays an intermediary role between the career growth and job engagement.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Sample Selection

During the two-month period from December 2015 to January 2016, I completed the work of distributing and collecting questionnaires of the formal investigation stage, and successfully got the data with the target number. Among them, the total number of the questionnaires distributed was more than 350, and the actual number of the collected questionnaires was 272, so we can see that the questionnaire recovery was 77.71%. After disregarding the whole unqualified questionnaires, there were 249 questionnaires left and the effective response rate was high as 71.14%, which can meet the basic requirement of recovered questionnaires investigation. The objects of questionnaires distributed was defined on entry level employees and managers in all kinds of enterprises and the range of the questionnaires distributed was including the major cities of Guangzhou, Wuhan, Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Xi'an, which was in line with the requirements of randomness and universality. According to the data such as GDP, city's comprehensive strength and competitiveness of those six big cities are relatively the leading level in China and the number of new generation employees is huge.

3.2. Measuring Tools

About the measurement of the career growth, this study used the scale which was worked up by Weng Qingxiong, Xi Youmin and other scholars. The measurement was

made up of four aspects: the progress speed of career goal, the speed of promotion, the speed of vocational ability development and the remuneration growth rate, in which there were 15 problem items including the problem “the current job provides me with better opportunity for development”. About the measurement scale of job engagement, this study used a Chinese scale that revised by the scholars Leng Mei, who has referred to the employee engagement scale that made by May and other scholars. Three questions were involved in this measurement scale includes the item “For me, I am too engaged into work to forget the time”.

Normative commitment scale was referred to the normative commitment scale that designed for Chinese workers by Ling Wenquan, considering the research results from Allen and other scholars and including 5 questions about obligations for the organization.

The measurement scale of organizational justice used the four-dimensional scale that developed by Chinese scholars Liu Ya (2003) and was used to measure the organizational justice respectively from distributive justice, leadership explanation, procedural justice and interactional justice, including 22 items such as “I think the distribution system of the organization can be well implemented”. As for data measurement and statistical analysis method, in the primary stages of questionnaire sorting, data coding and screening, this study used the Microsoft excel software, then at the second screening and specific data analysis phase, mainly using the spss17.0.

4. Empirical Analysis

4.1. Correlation Analysis

Mean standard deviation and correlation coefficient of the variables in this study are shown in **Table 1**. **Table 1** shows that career growth and job engagement have a significant positive correlation, and the correlation coefficient was 0.645, $p < 0.01$. H1 was initially validated. In addition, there was a significant positive correlation coefficient of

Table 1. Variable descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Career growth	1								
2. Normative commitment	0.332**	1							
3. Job engagement	0.645**	0.310**	1						
4. Organization justice	0.675**	0.302**	0.369**	1					
5. Sex	0.087	0.022	0.042	0.035	1				
6. Age	0.097	0.021	-0.044	0.202**	-0.090	1			
7. Nature of the work	0.018	-0.111	0.086	0.019	-0.055	-0.064	1		
8. Job category	-0.183**	-0.048	-0.136*	-0.038	-0.209**	0.384**	-0.080	1	
9. Work experience	-0.028	0.003	-0.113	0.107	-0.087	0.570**	-0.029	0.325**	1
Average value	2.4037	2.5785	2.1377	2.6496	1.5992	1.5951	2.9069	1.2915	1.4291
Standard deviation	0.54500	0.52363	0.58353	0.60706	0.49106	0.83499	1.38936	0.55952	0.71713

0.332 between career growth and normative commitment, $p < 0.01$. There was a correlation coefficient of 0.310 between normative commitment and job engagement, $p < 0.01$. The result lay the foundation for the follow-up intermediary test.

4.2. Hypothetical Test

4.2.1. Mediating Role of Inspection

The below use SPSS 17.0 and three-step method of mediation test, combined with the test steps which proposed by Chinese scholars Wen Zhonglin to analyze the relationship between career growth, normative commitment and job engagement and verify the hypothesis that whether normative commitment plays the role of mediation between career growth and job engagement.

According to **Table 2**, first, career growth has a significant positive effect on job engagement, and the regression coefficient was 0.659, $p < 0.001$. So the regression model building was established in line with the first condition. The hypothesis H1 was supported; secondly, career growth has a significant positive effect on normative commitment (the coefficient is 0.317, $p < 0.001$), the regression model building was established in line with the second condition. The assuming H2 was supported.

After the normative commitment variables was added into the third step, the regression models were established, and normative commitment coefficients were significantly ($p < 0.05$). The factor of career growth towards job engagement was 0.619, which was less than the original coefficient of 0.659 and $p < 0.001$, thus, normative commitment partially mediated in the relationship of career growth and job engagement relationship. The hypothesis H3 was supported.

4.2.2. Inspection of the Regulated Intermediary Role

According to the method proposed by the scholars, Edwards and Lambert (2007), the model was adjusted to test the role of intermediary. During the inspection, the intermediary role will change significantly (indirect effects) when it need to verify that the manipulated variable was higher and lower. Combined with the research model and the

Table 2. Inspection of mediating role of normative commitment.

Variable	Job engagement		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Sex	-0.016	0.017	-0.015
Age	-0.088	0.058	-0.083
Nature of the work	0.069	0.115	0.083
Job category	0.039	-0.094	0.038
Work experience	-0.056	-0.111	-0.060
Career growth	0.659***		0.619***
Normative commitment		0.317***	0.118*
ΔR^2	0.421	0.110	0.431
F	30.840	6.069	27.648

method proposed by Edwards and Lambert (2007), this study was in line with the inspection method of the intermediary role that single level was regulated, and it is divided into two stages. The first stage used career growth (X), organizational justice (W), the interaction term (XW) of career growth (after centering) and organizational justice (centralized after) as independent variables, and used normative commitment (M) as the dependent variable inspection; The second stage uses career growth (X), organizational justice (W), the interaction term (XW) of career growth (after centering) and (after centering) organizational justice, normative commitment (M), the interaction term (MW) of normative commitment (after centering) and sense of fairness (after centering) organized as independent variables, and uses job engagement as the dependent variable for testing. Next, we used the method of Bootstrap methods for test: whether there were significant differences in the indirect effects (intermediation) in the case that the organizational justice (moderator) was higher or lower, and verify the existence of the effect of the regulated intermediary role. This study used Mplus7 for inspection of the intermediary role of the regulated single level. The results of the test are shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Inspection of regulated intermediary role.

		First stage: normative commitment			Second stage: job engagement		
		Coefficient	Standard deviation	Significance	Coefficient	Standard deviation	Significance
	Career growth	0.225*	0.092	0.015	0.719***	0.076	0.000
	Organization justice	0.135	0.078	0.083	−0.086	0.070	0.218
	Career growth × Organization justice	−0.063	0.116	0.587	−0.150	0.082	0.067
	Normative commitment				0.148*	0.069	0.033
	Normative commitment × Organization justice				0.228*	0.101	0.025
Effect	Moderator	Effect size coefficient	Standard deviation	Significance	95% confidence interval		
					Lower limit	Upper limit	
Indirect effect	High organizational justice	0.156	0.157	0.322	−0.112	0.393	
	Low organizational justice	0.294	0.157	0.060	0.037	0.535	
	Difference	−0.138	0.254	0.587	−0.507	0.313	
Direct effect	High organizational justice	1.247	0.101	0.000	1.080	1.416	
	Low organizational justice	−0.084	0.096	0.380	−0.256	0.052	
	Difference	1.331	0.185	0.000	1.043	1.649	
Total effect	High organizational justice	0.820	0.198	0.000	0.478	1.115	
	Low organizational justice	0.789	0.080	0.000	0.661	0.921	
	Difference	0.031	0.211	0.883	−0.343	0.336	

The **Table 3** shows that the organization justice didn't perform the effect of regulation between career growth and normative commitment (The coefficient was -0.063 , $p = 0.578$). In the second stage of organizational justice towards the relationship of "career growth, normative commitment, job engagement", the interaction terms of normative commitment and organizational justice was 0.228 , $p < 0.05$. Namely organizational justice has a positive effect of regulation between the relationship of normative commitment and job engagement. Secondly, while using the method of Bootstrap for test, when the organizational justice was at a higher level, the direct effect of the 95% confidence interval was $[1.080, 1.416]$, and when the organizational justice was at a low level f , the indirect effects of the 95% confidence interval was $[-0.256, 0.052]$. The coefficient of the effect size of the difference was 1.331 , $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.001$), that is, there was significant differences in the direct effect. The indirect effects and total effect of the differences were not significant. That is, organizational justice will regulate the relationship between normative commitment and job engagement, without adjusting the mediating effect that normative commitment did between the career growth and job engagement. The hypotheses H4, H5 were not pass inspection.

5. Discussion

5.1. Analysis Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to test: Under the specific scene in China, the mechanism of career growth acting to job engagement, in which normative commitment is as an intermediary between the two variables, in order to study the role of intermediary normative commitment; organizational justice is as a moderator between career growth and normative commitment, to study the regulation of organization justice. The empirical result shows that the career growth has significant positive impact on job engagement, and also has significant positive impact on normative commitment; moreover, in the relationship between career growth and job engagement, the normative commitment plays an intermediary role. At the same time, in regulation of organizational justice test, "Organizational justice plays a regulatory role in the relationship between in career growth and normative commitment", "Organizational justice will adjust normative commitment, which plays an intermediary role between the career growth and job engagement", these two hypotheses did not pass the test; the results showed that organizational justice will regulate the relationship between normative commitment and dedicated work degrees. Probable cause is that career growth is relatively close to the development of individual employees; therefore, it is easy to increase the normative commitment of employees; however, organizational fair has more significance when employees evaluate if pay is equal to gain, which means, after employees generate normative commitment, they will have stronger passion to immerse in work feeling organizational fair. The degree of organization justice that employees perceive, has little impact on employees when they perceive career growth and increase normative commitment; when the perception of organizational fair increase, it will strengthen the positive impact on normative commitment to the engagement in work.

When a higher degree of fairness is perceived by employees, the supports of career growth that organization provide for employee are more likely to be recognized and

identified by members of the organization; furthermore it will be more effective to cause this kind of recognition and identification internalized into the relevant codes of conduct, namely normative commitment.

If the enterprise managers want to improve and maintain high levels of employee engagement to work, it should be started from the aspects of employee career growth, by satisfying their economic, power's, abilities, and social emotion's needs, so as to improve employees for the purposes of organizational normative commitment level, and ultimately the employee dedication target. In view of the above testing and analysis, the author will make the following recommendations for business managers in human resource management practices, especially for the new generation of employees: First, based on the starting point of talent acquisition, clutching the recruitment of the whole process, pooling resources to focus on jobs for candidates of their own career planning and expected career goals to be provided by the Organization, the degree of matching environment for the growth of meticulous study. If your organization's professional staff in line with the expected conditions, then the employee will have higher probabilities to generate normative commitment after the entry, that is more willing to stay long in the organization of work, and showed high engagement. Second, proactive focus on employee career planning and individual goals, by giving employees challenging tasks, self-display talent platform, a variety of vocational training for employees, to advances staff by completing challenging tasks at the same time obtain career goals, professional ability development and professional competence training and promotion, to achieve its recognition of the task and organizational goals, and finally to make sure staff these commitments are reflected in the organization the expected behavior, namely job engagement. Third, build an open, fair, equitable resource allocation mechanism within the organization, ensuring that such fair to be felt and identified by the members of organization.

5.2. Study Limitation

First, the way to get the data too limited, basic from employee self-report questionnaire, which is highly likely occurs homologous error, future research can be paired or other research methods.

Second, the survey sample size is still not large enough, and subject to the test were mostly recruited shortly knowledge workers, whose organizational identity and engagement were in the process of change and develop, it is difficult to reflect the whole picture of employee career growth and engagement of work.

Third, this study selected only emotional commitment as intermediary variables. If it is able to tap more intermediary factors including normative commitments in the future, it will help to comprehensively reveal the full the internal mechanism of the process of career growth influences employee engagement, which facilitates enterprises to design a career development mechanism to improve employee engagement from the perspective of career growth.

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