

Career Development and Challenges of Employees in the Petroleum Industry of Ghana: The Case Study of ENI

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Abstract

This study examined training and development on the career development of employees of Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI) and proposed counter-check measures to offset the deficits found. Guided by specific research objectives, the employees' career development was evaluated by determining efficacy and the role of training programs on career development, the relationship between career growth and training opportunities, and measures that existed to improve career development. The study used a mixed research approach. Purposive and Random sampling was used to sample 82 respondents from ENI. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to gather primary data from both human resource respondents and employees respectively while secondary data was obtained directly from ENI for the data collection process. The data generally revealed that career development within ENI was quite effective but had small loopholes that needed to be addressed. Factors that made the career development initiative lacking included bias in selecting employees for training and unfavorable training policies.

Keywords

Career Development, Petroleum Sector, Training, Employees, Management, Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI)

1. Introduction

Organizational career development can be challenging and unpredictable to

both the employer and the employee taking into consideration the employees' expectations and organizational willingness (Chetana & Mohapatra, 2017). Employees face the problem of not being considered and/or put on training programs while employers face the challenge of providing such training and avenues which are usually costly and cumbersome (Bernard et al., 2014). Organizations constantly strive hard to improve efficiency and productivity which in turn increases operation performance and the addition of training activities increases the cost of spending (Difeng, 2013). This has become a big challenge for managers as the issue of career development is always brought up in any organizational setting.

Assessments and several reports in Ghana suggest that the number of Ghanaian trained oilfield workers and the skills required for each are very limited hence we see a lot of expatriates from various countries trooping into work in our fields. A law was passed by the petroleum commission of Ghana to extensively forecast the career progression of employees from the hiring stage to the succession stage and all training activities he/she will go through to acquire the needed skill sets to fill roles in the country (Fragomen, 2018). However, this is not seen in practice as there are limitations in the implementation of the law being a human institution. Ghanaians are not well versed particularly in the technicalities and financial know-how of the industry. The petroleum industry requires huge amounts of capital and has therefore not been able to employ the Ghanaian unemployed youth. There is also little knowledge about petroleum-related activities by the industry to provide avenues for the youth to actively participate in the sector. The challenge facing the industry will only be changed if policymakers and the government pursue it vigorously. Until this is done thoroughly, not much can be expected from the sector as a source of employment to the masses (Sarpong, 2015).

ENI is a global energy company with its presence in 68 countries. In Ghana, they operate mainly in the Exploration & Production, Refining & Marketing, and Chemical sectors of our oil and gas and invest in local development initiatives. ENI is people-centered and therefore places huge importance on training their employees and improving their expertise significantly. The company has a development system that helps determine and build the career path of each employee either technical knowledge or soft skills. However, being a human institution, setbacks and impediments are bound to happen. The study was conducted to examine challenges faced by employees in their career development path and the effectiveness of the training programs.

2. Literature Review

Weinert (2001) defined ones' career as a pattern comprising of work experiences made up of all phases or stages of the individual's life span clearing reflecting the transition from one stage/phase to the other. The transition composes a story that the individual builds about him/herself during their lifetime as opposed to a progression of jobs (Savikas et al., 2009). One of the key points to emphasize is

that bulk parts of the responsibility are heavily dependent on the individual to determine the career progression or path his career takes, and this requires having sustained employability (Herr et al., 2004). Career development is the aftermath of actions taken on career plans as observed by both the organization and individual from their perspectives (Belyh, 2019). For one's career development to be noteworthy and rewarding, it is required to critically focus on the individual wellbeing be it personal and or economic, his or her social flexibility and economic productivity, and finally the social justice of the individual. To achieve this, the individual is required to amass valuable skills which are suitable to the needs of the organization, dependably manage their career and be able to withstand the change in careers. This is mostly achieved through several training and seminars. According to the Career Development Institute (2017) Career Development refers to the unique lifelong growth of a person's career through proper management of their work and the smooth progression ensuring efficient participation in the workspace. There are several empirical pieces of literature in existence about the career progression of employees and the impacts of training on them. In India, Patrick & Kumar (2011) conducted a study on the link between occupational performance in Indian information technology organizations and career management. The objective was to determine the relationship between career planning, employee growth, and performance while exploring the link between the individual and the organization's career planning process. In the study, he sampled 100 employees from the top 5 IT firms in India with the use of questionnaires and interview guides. The results at the end of the study revealed that career guidance, leadership roles, building networks, developing new skills, undertaking special assignments, and receiving positive feedback from the supervisor are important steps in advancing the career path and effective performance of an employee. Samuel (2016) from Tanzania also investigated challenges faced by Tanzanian medical stores employees during career development and the link between training opportunities and career development. The target population was the medical stores' department with a sample of 55 employees. The mixed approach was adopted. Using questionnaires and interview guides, qualitative data were obtained and analyzed using SPSS. The study helped in designing policies to guide the medical stores' management in improving their human resource management strategy. It gave an insight on the free and fair competition for employees and lastly gave a unified opinion from joint consensus and self-development. In Ghana, a similar study by Abrokwa (2010) has been conducted where he looked at motivating factors especially in-service training using Tema Development Corporation (TDC) as his case study. The motive behind the study was to explore both the constraints and motivations an employee faces during in-service training. The study explored the motivating role played by in-service training and identified some of the constraints that employees face or are likely to face when participating in in-service training. Primary (interviews) and secondary data were used. The results showed the importance of training as a motivation factor for workers as their skills,

knowledge bank, confidence, and performances are all improved and boosted (**Figure 1**).

From empirical literature, there is an interdependent relationship between behavior change, learning, and outcomes of training programs. However, several of these empirical pieces of the literature failed to effectively cover the impacts of training on the career development of the employees but rather focused mostly on the deliverables of the organization. Also, career development in Ghana in the petroleum industry is one of the most sought-after activities by the petroleum regulators in the country but there is no present research study that delves into this area. This current study explored the petroleum industry using ENI as the case study to link the criteria and conditions for the effectiveness of the training program in career development.

3. Research Method

The population targeted for this study is the Ghanaian workforce employees working on the OCTP ENI project made up of managers, supervisors, engineers, and technicians. The study employed a sample size of eighty-two (82) respondents, all drawn from a target population of one hundred respondents (100). Purposeful and random heads/leads, engineers, and technicians in ENI were chosen because of their detailed knowledge of training and development relating directly to them hence giving every other element in the pool an equal selection chance. For data collection, a close-ended questionnaire was used, and Telephone interviews were also conducted. The online questionnaire was designed and administered via online platforms using Google forms. Employees were notified before data collection on the purpose of the study and their consents sought. The study was ethically approved by the Ghana Communications University College Ethical board and the details of the questionnaire were earmarked for educational purposes.

Both secondary data obtained from reports and appraisals from ENI and primary data from structured interviews and questionnaires were used. The quantitative analysis presented the data in the form of percentages, charts, and frequencies while the qualitative analysis grouped the data into patterns, themes, and sub-themes as per the study objectives.

4. Findings and Discussions

From **Figure 2**, out of the total respondents, 57.3% were familiar with the training and development concept while 26.8% had no knowledge of it and 15.9% were not sure if they had the right idea of the concept. The results suggest that ENI offers the platform to introduce employees to the concepts of training and development since more than half of respondents selected yes. **Heathfield, (2020)**, believes that the human resource of a company is its competitive advantage which determines success or failure, and educating employees on the concepts surrounding training and development is an important step in career progression.

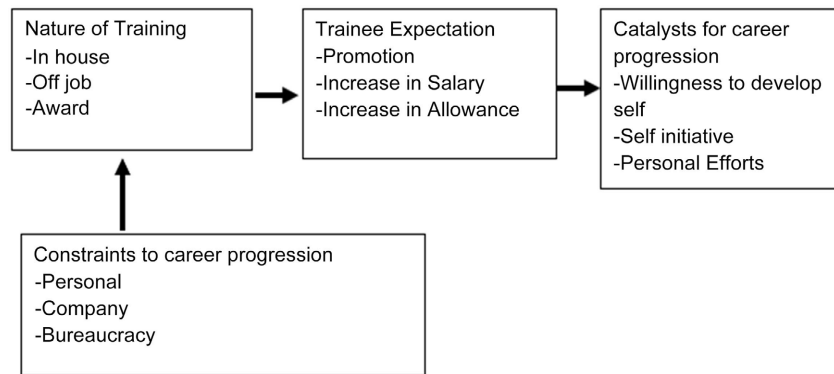


Figure 1. Conceptual framework. Source: Authors, (2021).

8. Are you aware of the training and development concept?
82 responses

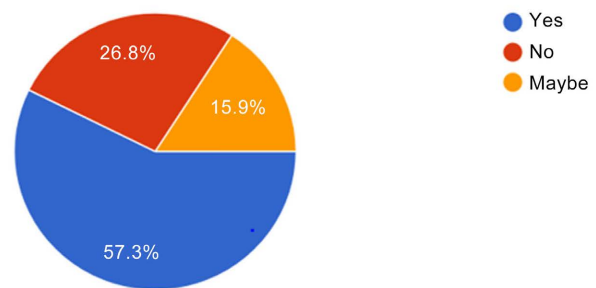


Figure 2. Knowledge in training and development concept. Source: Authors, (2021).

When asked if ENI offers training opportunities to its employees, 63.4% answered yes while 36.6% answered no. over 50% acknowledged the presence of training opportunities in the company. This means that training was at the core of management priorities in ENI and Robinson (2019) states that continuous training is the key to high employee retention and increased employee performance rate which is indicated in Figure 3.

From Figure 4, ENI career development is done through in-house training, online classroom, and on-the-job training as the majority making up 51.2% selected all the above to the types of training offered. 30.5 selected in-house training only, 35.4% selected on-the-job training, and 29.3% selected online classroom. A training type should apply to all employees across the company, have proven capabilities and success records, and most importantly serve the organizational goals and training ideologies (Silver, 2015).

From Figure 5, 42.7% of the respondents said there were promotional opportunities available after training, 30.5% were not so sure if there were any available and 26.8% said there were no opportunities available. One key motivation made by employees psychologically is the promotion that follows training hence they tend to partake seriously in the programs offered and ENI is an excellent place to achieve this since the opportunities are made available to them. Organizations usually give a framework stating the rewards and incentives to be bene-

fitted from training programs which are a means to motivate employees to engage, learn, satisfy, and execute tasks and responsibilities (Robinson, 2019).

From Figure 6, 41.5% were neutral on the chances of being promoted after training, 22% said the chances were high, 7.3 said the chances were very high, 13.4 said the chances were very low and finally, 15.9% said it was low. The data suggests that once employees can meet the criteria of promotion, they were promoted. Unconscious bias in employee management by managers however affects decisions involving the promotion of employees in most organizations and preferred employees get rewarded while the rest are discouraged and strung along (Nixon, 2019).

11. Does ENI offer training opportunities to its staff?

82 responses

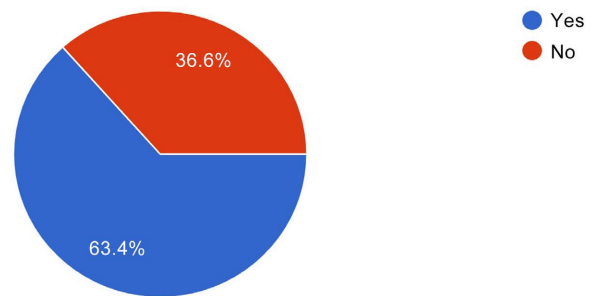


Figure 3. Training opportunities. Source: Authors, (2021).

12. If your answer in the above is yes, please state the kind of training offered;

82 responses

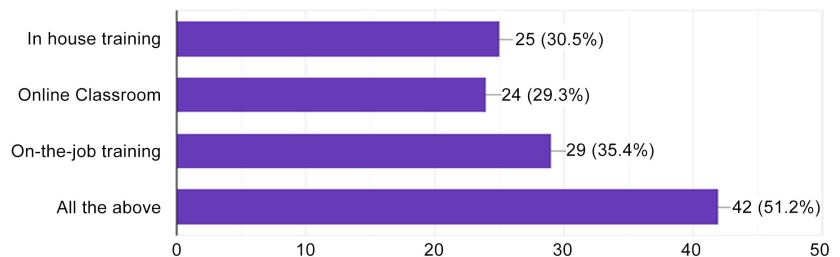


Figure 4. Types of training offered. Source: Authors, (2021).

14. Are there promotional opportunities available to employee at ENI after training?

82 responses

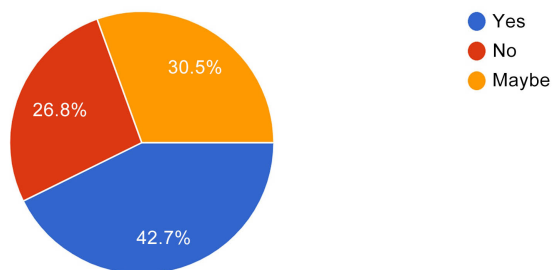


Figure 5. Promotional opportunities after training. Source: Author, (2021).

15. What are the chances of being promoted after training?

82 responses

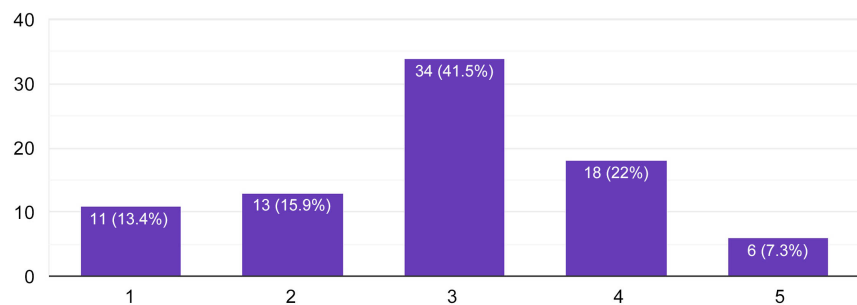


Figure 6. Chances of being promoted. Source: Authors, (2021).

From **Figure 7**, the criteria as expected from the employees were put into six groups, and respondents were required to select the most applicable. A high response of 74.4% was recorded for experience in the job, 59.8% selected high-performance level, 58.5% selected both recommendations and role opening within the company, 54.9% selected skillset matching job requirement, and 53.7% selected personal motivation and willingness. The respondent data suggested that **Robinson (2019)** was right when he stated that the more an employee is skilled, the higher his/her chance of being promoted.

According to the results from **Figure 8**, 61% believe that the training programs offered by ENI align with the organizational objectives in career development, 19.5% were indifferent while another 19.5% did not believe that they aligned with the career development objectives in the organization. Training is key in rectifying poor performances to meet organizational objectives, and this is like **Heathfield's (2020)** argument that the increase in skills set and competence of the employee makes the company gain a competitive advantage over others in the industry.

From **Figure 9**, 67.1% of the respondents believe that employee empowerment is the major contribution of training and development to their career, 65.9% believe it increases the chances of promotion, 64.6% say it serves as a form of motivation, 54.9% say it increases their engagement in the workplace. Job motivation is every employer's duty as it affects job promotion in an organization and the data shows that the training programs in ENI empower their employees. Motivation and employee empowerment are necessary for a successful company as employees feel appreciated and satisfied and they, therefore, put in their best performances to execute tasks (**Mohanan et al., 2012**).

Based on **Figure 10**, 65.9% chose yes for if there are any visible positive outcomes after training in the employees' career and 34.1% chose no. These outcomes were however measured using trend analysis of secondary data obtained from the company which is shown in **Table 1**.

From **Figure 11**, out of the 82 respondents, 65.9% said ENI welcomed ideas from employees on how to improve training programs and policies while 34.1% said it was not allowed. **Klongerbo (2019)** in his research established that allow-

ing employees to pitch in on policies that directly affect their growth is ideal. It allows basic problems to be addressed and satisfaction is achieved at the end of the day by all parties involved.

Figure 12 demonstrate the thoughts on what measures improvement in terms of career development, 59.8% of respondents said developing alternative career development career paths, 54.9% respondents said having relevant qualification to an existing job, 58.5% said placing staff in areas of specialty, 42.7% improve human resources management relations, 51.2% said recognizing self-development, initiatives and matching organizational goals for promotional, 52.4% designing policies to guide management and 15.9% said free and fair competition for promotion.

Table 1. Secondary data showing the positive outcomes from training programs in ENI.

Year	Target population trained through training needs assessment. %	Training Hours % increase	Productivity rate % increase
2017	93	16.5	6
2018	90	5.2	9
2019	85	19	5

Source: Authors, (2021).

17. What are the criteria used for promotion? Select all that apply
82 responses

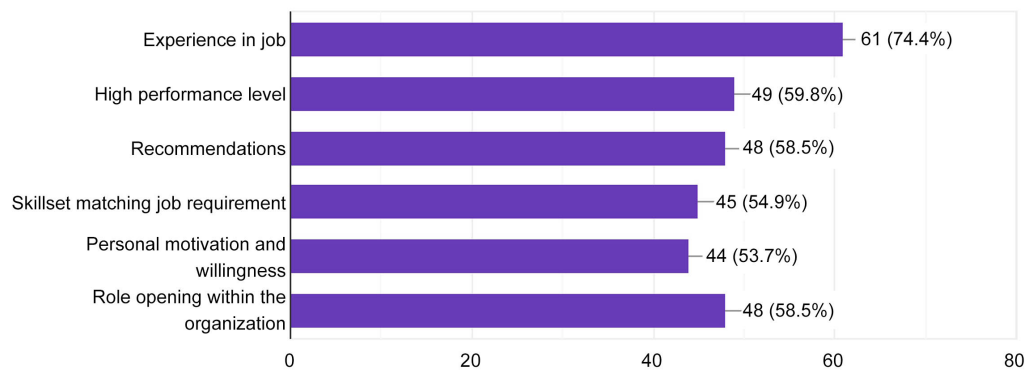


Figure 7. Criteria for promotion. Source: Author, (2021).

20. Are training's aligned with the organizational; objectives in career development programs?
82 responses

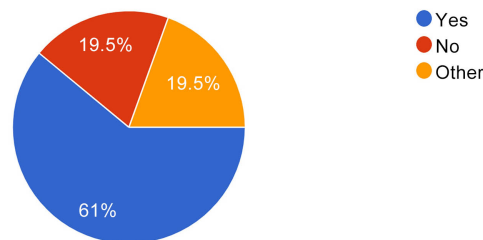


Figure 8. If training is aligned with the organizational objectives. Source: Author, (2021).

21. How does training and development contribute to the employees' career?

82 responses



Figure 9. Training and development contribution to the respondent's career. Source: Authors, (2021).

23. Are there visible positive outcomes after training's in the employees' career?

82 responses

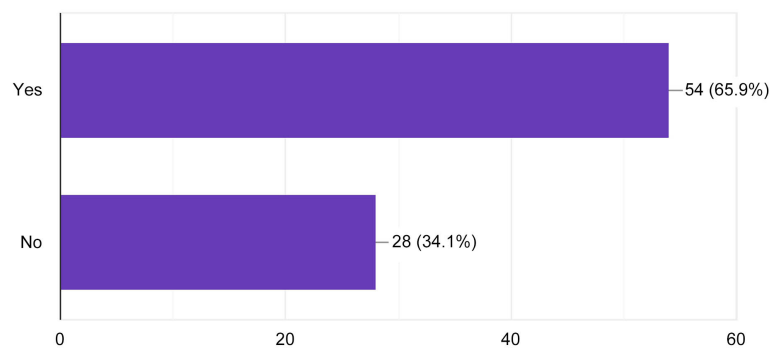


Figure 10. Positive outcome after training. Source: Authors, (2021).

24. Does ENI welcome ideas to improve already existing career training and development programs?

82 responses

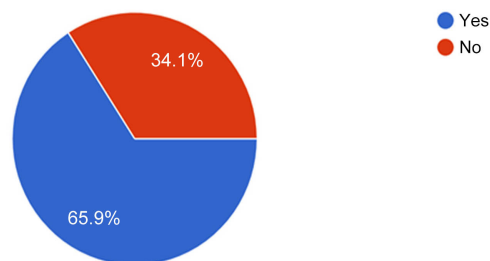


Figure 11. Welcoming ideas for improvement. Source: Author, (2021).

Interview with the Human Resource Respondent (HRR)

Where R: Researcher and HRR: human resource respondents.

R: Are employees aware of the training and development concept?

HRR: "Training is prioritized in the organization to make employees competitive hence educating the employees on its concepts is the first important step".

R: Is training and development part of your organization's policy?

27. Please select the most applicable measure to be taken to improve individual career development from the list below. Select all that apply

82 responses

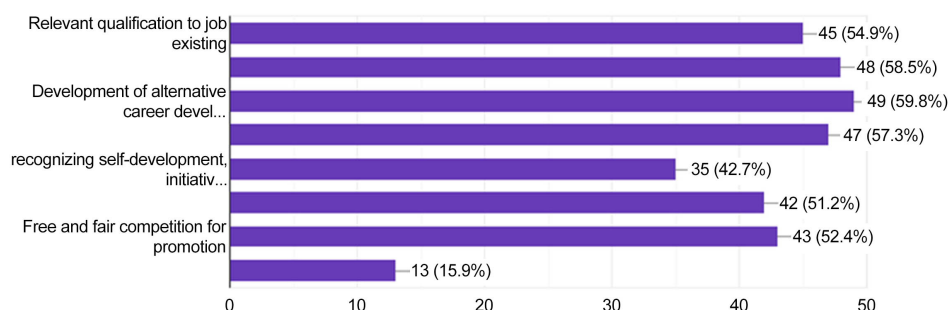


Figure 12. Measures to take to improve career development. Source: Authors, (2021).

HRR: “Training is continuous and inevitable so long as globalization keeps increasing rapidly.”

R: Does ENI provide room for growth after training their staff?

HRR: “Employees are given maximum and needed support in all forms to immediately apply skills gained from training and it was up to them to utilize this opportunity.”

R: Are there promotional opportunities available to an employee at ENI after training?

HRR: “Employees were motivated to take to engage in training programs because it serves as a stepping stone to expand their roles and responsibilities as the nature of their job changes.”

R: What are the chances of being promoted after training?

HRR: “Promotions are not necessarily automatic but upon assessments of the employee on the job, if the manager is satisfied with the employee’s ability, then promotion is considered.”

R: What criteria are used by Management to select employees for training?

HRR: “This is done through performing a training needs assessment with their line managers.”

R: What are the criteria used for promotion?

HRR: “Employees must show medium to high employability skills to expand in role coverage.”

R: To what extent do the training and development programs meet individual career development?

HRR: “In most cases yes, it is high because it serves as an introduction for expansion of roles and responsibilities.”

R: Are training aligned with the organizational, objectives in career development programs?

HRR: “For better process delivery, ENI continuously adopts new technology which requires employees to be trained in its application”.

R: Are there visible positive outcomes after training in the employees’ careers?

HRR: “We have a high retention rate as well as increasing employee produc-

tivity post introduction of training programs.”

R: What measures exist for training and development?

HRR: “Designing policies to guide management was the measure they used.”

R: What is the major challenge faced by management in implementing training and development?

HRR: “The availability of employees due to the heavy work schedule in ENI.”

The interview above correlated with studies from various authors and researchers. Mohanan, et al. (2012) iterated that growth after training lies with the employee through their level of commitment, motivation, and drive. ENI has made conscious efforts to select suited candidates for different training types as fairly as they can through policy developments, training needs assessment, and critical observation. Wulnye et al. (2018) view training and development as an unnecessary and costly venture however contrary to this, the interviewee disagreed as to the cost for training it is not much for the future benefits it brings the organization. Organizations with poor performances tend to correct this through restructuring of their policies to include training and make it a priority Abdul et al. (2011), therefore the initiative of ENI to actively pursue the training of employees is one geared towards the company’s future success. Opportunities are readily available to be utilized however, employees may be cramped with too much workload that it is impossible to juggle both activities (Gyansah & Guantai, 2018). This is one of the major challenges that ENI faces currently.

It was noted in the data findings that employees had the basic knowledge of concepts surrounding training and development in ENI although their understanding may slightly differ from each other. Even though the training was a part of the organizational policy, a slight number of employees did not benefit from this which was due to personal factors and or bias from management. Nonetheless, most employees that were granted training opportunities with the right results had the opportunity to grow and enjoy training benefits usually determined by observing and measuring output performances after the training. The nature of the employee’s job role expands as new roles and responsibilities are added post-training. ENI’s contribution towards training and development programs was to perform a reasonable training needs assessment to find the better suited and beneficial training for specific employees. However, employees noted that the shortfall of this initiative was the fact that the assessment of training needs was sometimes poorly done and mostly biased hence they did not yield the intended results which led to poor career planning. At the rate the world is rapidly globalizing and developing, training is key, and this made ENI include the training policy in its organizational goals. Outcomes from this policy from trend analysis showed an increase in productivity and retention of employees over the years. The major management challenge for implementing this policy was the availability of employees to attend these training which was due heavily to the workload and work schedules of the employees leaving them with no free time for other activities.

5. Conclusion

The study found out that aside from managerial factors, individual factors also contributed to the career growth of an employee. The study concluded that even though ENI makes conscious efforts to help employees progress up the career ladder, there are a few shortfalls that reduced the successful outcomes. The objectives of the study were achieved.

At the end of the study, four recommendations were made to help improve career development in ENI.

ENI conducts Training Needs Assessment with line managers of the employee before they are considered for training programs and career development. However, some bias exists within the process so there is the need to modify the whole process to reduce and eliminate the bias present to be able to capture the right training needs to fulfill organizational requirements.

More career counseling should be incorporated into the company's activities. This will help the employees identify their individual goals and align them with the ENI goals to help them fit into training and development plans. This step will not only enhance commitment but will also increase productivity.

A mutually beneficial relationship should be created between the employee and management where they can freely share career aspirations without any holdback. Management is usually unaware of the employee's career aspirations so creating this transparent system will bridge that gap and promote career development.

Even though management has designed policies to guide them in improving their human resource, there are still a few complaints of its inefficiency hence, ENI must modify the policies and tailor them in such a way that it is beneficial to all employees.

The success of the study will help decision-makers to draw up informed decisions and serve as a source of reference to pinpoint variables and parameters for future research in managerial and career progression practices.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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