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CAREER PLATEAUIING AND EMPLOYEY TURNOVER INTENTIONS: A CIVIL SERVICE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Stagnation of employees in organizations especially in the civil service in developing countries is an existential issue, that is a potential determinant of intent to quit and actual turnover. Hence, the need to specifically determine the relationship between structural career plateauiing (SCP) and turnover intentions of civil servants in South-East Nigeria. Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory was used in anchoring the work. The study adopted a survey research design with a population of 2318 civil servants working in the selected States Secretariats. A sample of 328 was arrived at through the application of Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, whose reliability was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha statistics, with a coefficient of .872. The analysis of data was done using a combination of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The result indicated that SCP was significant in predicting turnover intentions (R-Squared = 0.916679; p-value = 0.0000 < 0.05). The study concluded that turnover intention is a phenomenon that is influenced by SCP, as plateauiing of employees increase, so also does the intention of the employees to quit. Sequel to this, among others, it was recommended that heads of civil service need to ensure that there is equity, fairness and consistency in the promotion of workers, to

avoid a feeling of inequity and injustice, which might make the workers less committed and more inclined to leave.

Keywords: Career Plateauing, Employee Turnover Intentions, Structural Career Plateauing, Content Career Plateauing and Civil Service.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are interested in being successful and employ several resources in an effort to attain that success. Arguably, individuals are the most important resource to any organization; they make the most significant contribution to an organization's success. However, when individuals decide to willingly leave an organization, the overall effectiveness of the organization decreases for several reasons (Choudhary, Ramzan & Riaz, 2013). First, the organization loses the knowledge that the departing worker possesses. Secondly, the organization will expend time, money and resources to recruit and select replacements. Third, the organization will also expend time, money and resources to train those replacements. In the ideal situation, the time, money, and resources to recruit and train new employees are well spent when the replacements' performance exceeds the performance of those who have gone, thus, not all turnover should be avoided. There are some turnover that are beneficial to organizations, such as functional turnover; when low performing employees are fired or when older employees retire, it is a necessary and beneficial process (Atteberry, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2013; Rotondo & Perrewe, 2000). Involuntary turnover, including dismissals, layoffs and retirements, are also a necessary and beneficial process sometimes (Heilmann, Holt & Rilovick, 2008). However, dysfunctional turnover; when productive employees decide to leave an organization, is the type of turnover that organizations should take steps to avoid (Choudhary, Ramzan & Riaz, 2013; Rotondo & Perrewe, 2000). Also, other forms of voluntary turnover such as quitting and resigning need to be avoided by the organizations (Rotondo & Perrewe, 2000). In order to reduce the challenges and risks associated with these voluntary departures, it is important for the business executives of organizations to understand why employees choose to leave. Each employee, undoubtedly, has unique reasons for leaving an organization which could include pay concerns, social support concerns, job stress, and limited advancement opportunities (Price, 2001). Still, if the general trends that guide these individual choices are better understood, leaders might be able to develop programmes to resolve them and encourage workers to stay. All over the world, the quality of civil servants is considered a critical determinant of the quality of services in terms of a nation's achievements, the labour force, output and outcomes of services (Sargent & Hannum, 2003; Lee, 2003). Other researchers such as Sargent and Hannum (2003), Özçelik and Akçay (2020), and Xie, Xinxin and Zhou (2015) have shown that retention of civil servants in regions of high poverty is low, especially in the rural areas of developing countries. The high levels of civil servant's turnover in such regions mean that economies of poor nations, who are the neediest, are often unconsciously paired with civil servants who are least qualified (Sargent & Hannum, 2003), thus lowering the quality of services of the poor. Existing research evidence shows that civil servants turnover intentions are a problem both in developed and developing countries. In the United States of America (USA), researchers such as Harris and Adams (2007) have conducted studies to determine the magnitude of civil servants turnover. The results of such studies show that about 2.6 per cent of civil servants quit every

year to pursue new jobs. Similarly, a study conducted by Education International (2007) in the USA estimated the number of civil servants who left their jobs or profession in 2003, excluding those who had retired. The results showed that the average rate of civil servants leaving was 5.8%. Writing about civil servants attrition in the US, Boivie (2011) pointed out that the productivity of civil servants sharply increases in the first five years of their jobs and then reaches a plateau as they gain more experience. Boivie (2011) therefore advised that public policies should be implemented in which civil servants are encouraged to stay in their jobs and profession for longer periods.

While numerous studies have been conducted on the factors associated with civil servants turnover, little research has considered whether there exists a relationship between career plateauing and turnover intentions of civil servants in the south-east, Nigeria, and whether these two variables are linked to individual's decisions to pursue other professions. At the stage of career plateauing, an employee senses that there is a very low likelihood of hierarchical promotion in the workplace (Duffy, 2000). Özçelik and Akçay (2020) claim that employees normally experience career plateauing due to the unavailability of job growth opportunities. The workers do not sense any chance of job growth opportunities when they stay for long without promotions, lack of engagement in highly visible assignments, or lack of pay increase. Accordingly, Xie, et al., (2015), point that employees can experience two types of career plateauing: job content plateauing and structural or hierarchical plateauing. Job content plateauing is experienced when employees no longer feel that their job responsibilities are challenging. On the other hand, structural (hierarchical) plateauing is experienced when employees sense that there are no opportunities for further vertical movement in the workplace. Several determinants of career plateauing have been identified. For instance, research by Heilmann, et al (2008) showed that the best predictors of career plateauing among Canadian managers were factors such as past success, age, level of education, desire for advancement and personality (locus of control). The researchers reported that individual factors serve as better predictors of career plateauing than familial and organizational factors. Similarly, Mayasari (2010) offer that there are individual and organizational factors that determine career plateauing. From an individual perspective, these factors include lack of individual skill and abilities, lack of intrinsic motivation, the perception of individual, familial factor, locus of control, and work perseverance. From the organization perspective, factors such as the absence of work content dimension, and organizational career orientation, low organization innovative climate, business strategy, and organization characteristics are key determinants (Mayasari, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to further investigate causes for the 50% of unexplained variance by determining if career plateau accounts for variance in projecting turnover. Career plateau is the point in one's career where future advancement is not likely (Heilmann, et al., 2008). The traditional pyramid-shaped organizational structure dictates that except for the very few, and possibly for only the one person at the top of the pyramid, everyone's career will reach a point beyond where further promotion in the organization will not occur (Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002). Couple this with the idea that companies are now operating with fewer levels of management and fewer employees, the opportunities for employees to move up in the organization and enjoy the rewards of promotion are fewer and less frequent. This decrease in advancement opportunities for employees, even those qualified for advancement, results in

reaching the height of one's career far before retirement (Griffeth, Steel, Allen & Bryan, 2005). Studies on career plateauing suggest that 34% to 54% of employees perceive themselves to be career plateaued (Özçelik & Akçay, 2020). In essence, career plateauing is no longer believed to be something that only happens to the unscrupulous staff, instead, it is something that will eventually affect most employees. Now and more in the future, perceptions of being career plateaued might affect the majority of employees and therefore, research on career plateauing and its impact on turnover intentions is warranted and necessary to better understand human behaviours in an organization. Thus, the specific research objective is to determine the relationship between structural career plateauing and turnover intentions of civil servants in South-East Nigeria.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Career Plateauing

Researchers have started identifying and defining a new construct, termed career plateauing, in the organizational behaviour literature (Özçelik & Akçay, 2020; Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002). The definition of career plateauing evolved from focusing solely on upward promotion to focusing on receiving further assignments of increased responsibility. Heilmann, et al., (2008) define career plateauing as the point where the employee's likelihood of additional hierarchical promotion becomes very unlikely. This definition gave a narrow view of career advancement since the only move up the organizational structure was considered career success. The definition of career plateauing presented by Heilmann, et al., (2008) was narrowly focusing on upward movement only. The definition was expanded to include both upward and lateral moves by defining it as the point at which future career mobility, including both upward and lateral moves, is in reasonable doubt because the length of time in the present position has been unduly prolonged. This definition stressed long position tenure when compared with the average comparable peer.

Özçelik and Akçay (2020) expanded the definition of the construct of career plateauing presented by earlier researchers by sub-dividing the construct into two dimensions: structural plateau and job content plateau. Özçelik and Akçay (2020) defined structural plateauing using the same definition as the Heilmann, et al., (2008) definition of career plateau; the point where the employee's likelihood of additional hierarchical advancement becomes very unlikely. She defines job content plateauing as the point when an individual is no longer challenged by his or her work or job responsibilities. After researching the definition of career plateauing, how it was measured began to be studied. The measurement of career plateauing evolved from measuring the length of time employees were in their current jobs (Heilmann, et al., 2008), to measuring employees' reactions to statements concerning their current job conditions and future job prospects (Choudhary, Ramzan & Riaz, 2013; Mayasari, 2010). The best way to determine if a person is career plateaued is to directly ask "do you believe you are career plateaued?" The idea of using a continuous scale instead of a dichotomous scale to measure career plateauing. Instead of looking at career plateauing as being a black or white issue of either "being career plateaued" or "not being career plateaued", career plateauing can be a grey issue where people feel different intensities of being either career plateaued or not career plateaued (Mayasari, 2010).

Studies have been conducted on the impacts of career plateauing. Not all the studies concluded negative outcomes such as low motivation, low job satisfaction, and low organizational commitment resulting from being career plateaued (Özçelik & Akçay, 2020; Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002). These studies suggested that career plateaued workers can be considered solid citizens within their organizations. These employees provide stability and a constant work effort that organizations require for success. There are considerable evidence indicating that plateauing is related to negative job attitudes and behaviours (Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002; Lee, 2003; Xie, et al., 2015). While not all studies have concluded negative outcomes, such as poor job performance and low job satisfaction, resulting from perceptions of being career plateaued (Özçelik & Akçay, 2020; Mayasari, 2010), there is considerable evidence indicating that plateauing is related to negative job attitudes and behaviours. Employees that are structurally plateaued are absent from work more often (Heilmann, et al., 2008), indicated less satisfaction with their supervisors, reported more health problems (Heilmann, et al., 2008), more stress (Duffy, 2000), greater turnover intentions (Boivie, 2011; Burke & Mikkelsen, 2006), and greater burnout (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2006). Studies have also shown employees who believe they are plateaued report lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Boivie, 2011; Mayasari, 2010; Heilmann, et al., 2008) and lower job performance (Choudhary, et al., 2013). Studies conducted on job content plateauing reported similar results (Boivie, 2011; Mayasari, 2010). Perceptions of job content plateauing are believed to be related to lower job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and higher levels of turnover.

Types of Career Plateauing Experienced

Career plateauing refers to the situation in one's career when there is a very low possibility of any additional hierarchical promotion (Ongori & Angolla, 2009). In other words, career plateauing occurs when an individual has attained the highest position that he or she can obtain within an organization and has no prospect of being promoted. Two types of career plateauing are observed: job content plateau and hierarchical (or structural) plateau. Job content plateau takes place as a result of the overall staleness of the job itself. The employees feel not challenged by the work and responsibilities that they carry out on daily basis. On the other hand, a hierarchical (or structural) plateau occurs as a result of employees having little or no chance of further promotion in the organization (Özçelik & Akçay, 2020). Another categorization of career plateauing is provided by Burke and Mikkelsen (2006), who argue that in addition to structural and content plateaus, there is a third category which they refer to as life plateauing. They define life plateauing as a worker's feeling of being trapped or stuck in his or her roles outside of work.

While career plateauing has been linked with both positive and negative organizational outcomes, researchers such as Lee (2003) and Burke and Mikkelsen (2006) have shown that plateauing have more negative outcomes. For example, hierarchical plateauing is associated with employee absenteeism, low levels of satisfaction with supervisors, health problems, high levels of work-related stress and burnout, and high turnover intentions. Hierarchical plateauing has also resulted in low job satisfaction levels, lack of organizational commitment, and poor job performance (Heilmann, et al., 2008; Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002). In a study conducted in Pune city of India by Penkar and Agrawal (2012) to investigate career plateauing in the education sector, it was established that career plateauing among teachers arose when their jobs were tasks which are routines and boring or if desired promotions were not forthcoming. Such

teachers were likely to experience a sense of loss and became sceptical about finding fulfilment in their careers. In Kenya, Kabeti (2011) investigated on career plateauing of secondary school teachers in Imenti South district. The study established that about 87% of the teachers had served in the same job group for up to 10 years. This led to career plateauing of the teachers which had undesirable consequences such as work stress, less job satisfaction, and poor job performance. This study by Kabeti (2011) used promotion as the only indicator of teachers' career plateauing. Therefore, the study only addressed structural plateauing, without focusing on job content plateauing.

Perception of Structural/Content Career Plateauing

Careers involve mobility paths of job ladders, where an individual travels through sequences of job positions within an organization. Because of the rapidly increasing number of downsizings and layoffs that characterizes today's work world, career plateauing or levelling off in a career path has been a topic of interest in the literature on career development for several decades. Over the years, the definition of career plateauing has evolved from a structural perspective to include a content perspective. Two concepts of work-related plateaus have been identified. One concept is known as a structural career plateau, which is an assumption for the traditional model of career paths (Rotondo & Perrewé, 2000), and is defined as a point in one's career at which an individual perceives little chance of further vertical movement within an organization. The second concept is a theoretical extension, known as content career plateau, which occurs when an individual is no longer challenged by their job or job responsibility and has nothing new to learn, causing him to perceive a stagnation in his career (Lentz & Allen, 2009). The nature of a structural plateau differs greatly from that of a content plateau. The previous study reported that the influence of job attitudes upon a structural plateau and content plateau are different (Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002). Regardless of whether an individual perceives a structural career plateau or a content plateau, he or she exhibits frustration with his/her future career and dissatisfaction with his/her current position. However, frustration or dissatisfaction is a subjective perception that is an interactive consequence of personal characteristics and workplace organizational environment.

Employee Turnover Intention

Employee Turnover Intention has been defined as movement across membership boundaries of a social system (Griffeth, Steel, Allen & Bryan, 2005). Heilmann, Holt and Rilovick (2008) included the now used concepts of job satisfaction, job search behaviour, and intent to quit. Their analysis centred on the equilibrium of paying employees at a certain level that keeps the employees interested in working and employees providing a certain level of contribution to the organization. If this equilibrium does not exist and employees feel their contributions outweigh the pay they are receiving, then employees will look to leave the organization to bring the balance between pay and contribution back into balance. A shift in the equilibrium can occur in the opposite direction as well when employees receive greater pay than their contributions; thus, causing them to be satisfied with their jobs and not leave the organization (Bauer, Erodogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006).

Heilmann, et al., (2008) introduced the concepts of perceived desirability of movement and perceived ease of movement as two factors that affect the equilibrium between pay and contributions. Perceived desirability of movement was derived from a combination of satisfaction with current job and the perceived possibility of intra-organizational transfer. A

large shift in the equilibrium between pay and contribution to the point where employees are no longer satisfied causes employees to consider the perceived desirability of leaving the organization. The size of the shift in equilibrium needed to push employees to consider the perceived desirability of leaving the organization is affected by employees' perceptions of how easy it is to move from this organization to another organization. Perceived ease of movement was derived from the number of perceived extra-organizational alternatives.

Employee turnover intent can occur through dismissals, downsizing, and voluntary departure from an organization (Holtom & Burch, 2016). The employee turnover type most concerning to businesses is that of voluntary departure since these employees leave of their own free will and outside of the direct control of organizational leaders (Holtom & Burch, 2016). Hancock, Bosco, McDaniel and Pierce (2013) suggest employee turnover can cost companies monetarily and can affect firm operations, including human and social capital advancement. These scholars suggested the loss associated with turnover likely outweighs any functional effects that a loss of employees could bring, including the elimination of groupthink (Hancock et al., 2013). This information helps further prove that managerial strategies to improve retention should occur.

Employee Turnover Intention and Career Plateauing

Some employee turnover intentions studies in the past included the concept of career plateauing but were termed intra-organizational transfer or opportunity or promotional opportunity (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000; Price, 2001). These studies found significant relationships between career plateauing, as defined by intra-organizational transfer or opportunity or promotional opportunity, and turnover intent. The definitions of intra-organizational transfer or opportunity or promotional opportunity were created utilizing the concept of only including upward promotion. The new, flatter organizational structures of the past 20 years caused upward promotion to not be the only aspect of career plateauing that needs to be considered when determining how turnover is affected by career plateauing. Lateral movement within the organization and increased job responsibility without promotion now need to be considered when determining how turnover is affected by career plateauing (Steel, 2002; Griffeth, et al., 2000).

Research studies such as those conducted by Heilmann, et al., (2008) and Holtom and Burch (2016) took into consideration the definition of career plateauing used in this research effort; the likelihood of not receiving further assignments of increased responsibility. The analysis from these studies did show some initial promise in the construct of career plateauing to explain workplace attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to quit. These studies cited shortcomings in substantiating employees' perceptions of career plateauing, organizational perceptions of employees being career plateaued, and actual career plateau. These studies also cited the need for further investigation on the impacts of career plateauing including replicating the current studies.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory

The Motivation-Hygiene theory suggests that once basic hygiene needs occur for employees, they search for job satisfaction. Scholars considered hygiene needs to include the basics of salary, safe work conditions, and relationships with peers, subordinates, and supervisors (Denton & Maatgi, 2016). Once these basic employment needs occurred, substantial motivation should occur through genuine job satisfaction, or workers becoming more unlikely to

experience dissatisfaction and frustration (Denton & Maatgi, 2016). Ali (2016) reiterates that hygiene factors help prevent dissatisfaction, but motivational factors help keep employees satisfied. Some of the current factors that can contribute to job satisfaction include achievement, personal and professional development, job growth, the feeling of fulfilment in the job performed, personal achievement, and recognition (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Denton & Maatgi, 2016).

Belias and Koustelios (2014) note the global use of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors affecting job satisfaction. Therefore, these researchers noted that managers might use the theory to understand how to improve job satisfaction and weaken factors that might influence job dissatisfaction. Other scholars noted that during times when employees lacked motivation, their intent to leave increased as they began to perform job searches and plan their exit strategy from the current employer (Derby-Davis, 2014). Denton and Maatgi (2016) utilized the theory's concept in their recommendations for creating employee support for the implementation of ISP 9000 standards within small and medium-sized advanced engineering and manufacturing enterprises. They suggested that internal motivation could improve employee results substantially over external pressure (Denton & Maatgi, 2016). Additionally, they noted that management, administrative leadership, and the work environment impact success in any manufacturing facility, which reflects the importance of the strategies managers utilize to enhance job satisfaction, not only for organizational revenues but also for employee retention.

Empirical Insights

Özçelik & Akçay (2020) investigated the relationship between job attitudes discussed in the literature on organizational behaviour and organisational psychology, and career plateau, a concept that has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years in the field of career management. Job satisfaction and turnover intention were used to represent job attitudes. The study was conducted to investigate how career plateau changes with demographic factors and measure the impact of career plateau on job satisfaction and turnover intention. Job satisfaction and turnover intention, which have long been studied in connection with various cause variables in literature, were associated, for the first time in this study, with banking sector employees' level of career plateau in Turkey.

Gaturu (2018) examined career plateauing and its relationship with turnover intentions and pursuit of postgraduate studies among teachers in Nyandarua and Murang'a counties, Kenya. It was based on the Managerial Careers Model by Ference, Stoner and Warren (1977), which sought to provide an understanding of the plateaued employee problem. It employed the correlational research design with a target population of all the 5,022 teachers in all the public schools in Nyandarua and Muranga Counties, except those which were used in the pilot. A questionnaire designed for teachers was used as the main tool for data collection and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was reported according to themes and involved the use of frequencies and percentages. Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient, linear regression, Analysis of Variance and chi-square tests were used at the 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed and concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between turnover intentions in both types of career plateauing.

Skelton (2017) analysed job satisfaction and job embeddedness as predictors of manufacturing employee turnover intentions. In the study, 63 full-time Southeastern U.S. manufacturing

employees completed surveys that included Andrews and Withey's job satisfaction questionnaire, Crossley, Bennett, Jex, and Burnfield's global measurement of job embeddedness, and Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth's intent to stay scale. The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that the model was able to significantly predict employee turnover intention, $F(2, 95) = 71.822, p < .001, R^2 = .705$. Both employee job satisfaction ($t = -.703, p < .001$) and employee job embeddedness ($t = -.501, p < .001$), were statistically significant predictors of turnover intent.

Tzu-Wei, Jyh-Huei, Yu-Ha, Cheng-Ze, Shih-Hao & Jen-Wei (2017) analysed the effect of structural/content career plateaus on job involvement: do institutional/occupational intentions matter in Taiwanese career military officers? Empirical data were collected from 338 career officers who received full-time training at the National Defense University in Taiwan. The results showed that the perception of structural/content career plateaus were both negatively related to job involvement.

Xie, Xinxin & Zhou (2015) examined the mediation of affective commitment on the relationship between hierarchical plateau and turnover intention and how job content plateau moderates the relationship in Turkey. The hypotheses were tested in a sample consisting of 288 Chinese employees from a variety of industries. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analyses showed that hierarchical plateau is positively related to turnover intention, and affective commitment fully mediates the relationship.

Omar, Anuar, Salleh & Yaakop (2014) investigated the relationship between hierarchical plateauing and intention to leave among nurses in public hospitals in Malaysia. Questionnaire was distributed to 700 nurses in 11 public hospitals in Peninsular Malaysia to examine the current perception of employees towards hierarchical plateauing in their career. The results showed that hierarchical plateauing was not significantly related to the intention to leave. The results provide some new insight in the sense that they support the recent notion that the plateauing phenomenon has become unavoidable and that many employees have no choices but to experience it sooner or later in their career and sometimes even earlier than they anticipate.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a survey research design because the opinions of people were sought using a structured questionnaire. The area of the study was the southeast region of Nigeria, consisting of 5 states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo State in alphabetical order. Three of the states with the highest number of civil servants were purposively selected, they are Enugu, Anambra and Imo State respectively. The population of the study consist of 2318 civil servants, working in the States Secretariat. A sample of 328 was arrived at, by applying Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula of 1970. The instrument used (structured questionnaire) was validated using experts in Human Resources Management, both in the field and in academics. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha statistics, which returned a coefficient of .872. A total of 297 copies of the questionnaire were returned, out of the 328 distributed, 278 representing 85% of the total distributed copies were finally used. The emphasis was on low and middle-level employees who still have a presumable long way to go in the civil service in the States. The analysis of data was done using a combination of descriptive statistics (mean) and inferential statistics (simple regression). The hypothesis was tested at a 5% level of significance.

RESULTS

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents' Responses on Structural Career Plateauing and Turnover Intentions

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA (5)	A (4)	UD (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	X
Structural Plateauing							
1	My promotions come regularly in my organization.	30	51	-	93	104	2.32
2	There are enough rooms for growth in my organization.	40	22	29	108	79	2.41
3	The organization I work for do not take my promotion serious.	97	80	10	74	17	3.60
4	I still have a long way to go in my organization in terms of rank.	57	53	15	93	60	2.83
Turnover Intention							
5	I do not feel fulfilled in the civil service.	50	122	7	39	60	3.23
6	If I can get another job elsewhere, I will leave.	60	108	-	93	17	3.36
7	I am still here because I have limited options.	117	67	-	80	14	3.70
8	I am pleased with the growth in my organization, so I do not see myself leaving soon.	78	35	-	75	90	2.77

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 shows how the respondents responded to the questions embedded in the questionnaire. The analysis here is based on the mean of the individual questionnaire items, with a threshold of 3, meaning that any questionnaire item with a mean of 3 and above should be regarded as being true for the respondents as a group, while any questionnaire item that is below 3 is regarded as not being true, and therefore does not hold water for the respondents as a group. Looking at the individual questionnaire items as presented in Table 1, it indicates that questionnaire items 3, 5, 6 and 7 have a mean of 3 and above and therefore are regarded as being true or playing out in the civil service in the area of study, while questionnaire items 1, 2, 4 and 8 are not accepted as playing out because their respective mean are lesser than the benchmark of 3.

Test of Hypothesis

Structural Career Plateauing does not have an effect on Turnover Intentions of civil servants in South-East Nigeria

Table 2:

Regression Analysis on Structural Career Plateauing and Turnover Intentions

Dependent Variable: TURNINT

Method: Least Squares

Date: 04/14/21 Time: 10:01

Sample: 1 278

Included observations: 278

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	1.921334	0.223911	8.580798	0.0000
SCP	0.998024	0.018111	55.10444	0.0000
R-squared	0.916679	Prob(F-statistic)		0.000000
Adjusted R-squared	0.916377	Mean dependent var		13.05755
S.E. of regression	1.607443	S.D. dependent var		5.558705
Sum squared resid	713.1491	Akaike info criterion		3.794335
Log likelihood	-525.4126	Schwarz criterion		3.820433
F-statistic	3036.499	Hannan-Quinn criter.		3.804805

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Keys:

SCP: Structural Career Plateauing

TURNIN: Turnover Intentions

Table 2 shows the result of the regression analysis carried out on Structural Career Plateauing (SCP) and Turnover Intentions in the civil service of the selected States. The result shows that the SCP is significant in predicting turnover intentions with a coefficient of 0.998024. This is supported by a coefficient of determination (R-Squared) of 0.916679 which indicates that a 92% change in turnover intentions as the dependent variable is accounted for by changes in SCP which is the independent variable. This is further buttressed by a probability value (p-value) as represented by prob (F-statistic) in Table 2 of 0.0000 which is less than the 5% level of significance deployed for the study. Therefore, we conclude that SCP has a statistically significant effect on Turnover Intentions of civil servants in South-East Nigeria.

CONCLUSIONS

Career plateauing is an existential phenomenon in the workplace of today, that is flatter and always looking for ways to downsize and cut cost. There are fewer people these days climbing up the ladder of authorities, just as the ladder to be climbed keeps shrinking. Therefore, people seem to always favour organizations where there is a glimmer of hope of promotion and improvement in rank. The study, therefore, concludes that turnover intention is a phenomenon that is influenced by structural career plateauing, as plateauing of employees increase, so also does the intention of the employees to quit. No one wants to stagnate, hence the clinging to places where growth is guaranteed.

Recommendations

Holding onto the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward:

- a) Heads of civil service need to ensure that there is equity, fairness and consistency in the promotion of workers to avoid a feeling of inequity and injustice, which might make the workers less committed and more inclined to leave.
- b) Workers need to be assured that there is always a step above where they currently are, and the steps and things needed to be done to get to the next step should be made clear and open for everyone to compete favorably for the positions available.

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