

## **Relationship Between Career Path Progression and Administrative Staff Job Satisfaction in Chartered Public Universities in Kenya**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study examines the relationship between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction in chartered public universities in Kenya. Correlational survey research design. The target population comprised 2,355 administrative staff in chartered public universities in Kenya. Purposive sampling technique was used to select ten (10) fully-fledged chartered public universities. Proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 370 administrative staff. Data was collected using two questionnaires, namely; University Administrative Staff Questionnaires (UASQ). The questionnaires were pilot tested to ascertain its content, construct and face validity before use. Reliability was estimated using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for internal consistency. Reliability coefficient of 0.838 was yielded. Data was analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the profile of respondents and study variables. Multiple regression was used to test hypothesis at a significance level of alpha ( $\alpha$ ) equal to 0.05. The findings indicate a positive and significant relationship between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction. Further, the findings indicate that, among the three dimensions of career path progression, boundaryless career path progression was the most preferred path among administrative staff. It is recommended that chartered public universities in Kenya embrace boundaryless career path progression, integrate it with human resource functions to understand the better the relationship between career path progression and job satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** Career Path Progression, Administrative Staff Job Satisfaction.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

A career path progression is a roadmap with build position profiles, identifies core competencies and expected behaviour and accountability (Cao & Thomas, 2013). Most employees possess career path anchor defined by self-concept, talents, abilities and values. In an attempt to cater employees' different career anchors, organizations provide employees with defined career path progression making it easy to visualize each position or role and advancement career opportunities that correspond to their individual inclinations (Geffen & Robert, 2016)06). Organizations use existing competency grades or job bands to define vertical and horizontal hierarchies, and they also compile organizational knowledge base to create a general framework. Campbell, Cohen, Allen, and Cormidas (2010) suggested in their study the key component that quantify and the expertise associated with different career position, role, and stage; this might include the recommended or required education, skill, technical training and performance. Hall and Las Heras (2010) argue that, the new emerging path is multi-directional and dynamic. The current linear career path being practiced by organizations is static

and rigid. The nature of career paths has been altered significantly by technology and economy to a boundaryless career. Organizations need to build a roadmap that allow individual to practice or build competencies in diverse functional areas that would lead to job satisfaction.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

Career path progression is a road map with structured profile and a policy that guide for effective implementation in chartered public universities in Kenya. The information that guide the progression are unclear especially with the administrative staff varied educational background. This has led to stagnation career growth and career progression and underutilization of already acquired skills, knowledge and abilities. Leave administrative staff holding low esteem and negative attitudes towards their jobs. Challenge the goal to attract and retain talents, hence impact on their pay, nature of work and relationship with both supervisor and co-worker. Empirical studies have been done on the concepts but few have examined and explore the relationship between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction.in chartered public universities in Kenya. This study therefore sort to addressed the gap

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

To examine relationship between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction in chartered public universities in Kenya.

### **STUDY HYPOTHESIS:**

There is no statistically significant relationship between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction in chartered public universities in Kenya

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Organizational career path progression provides employees opportunity to map out their own career progress and aspirations. There are three road maps, that is a linear career path, multiple career path and boundaryless career path (Cao & Thomas, 2013).The linear career path path depict a journey of mountain climbing (Hall, 1996), whereby employees' climb up as far as they can. Some find themselves on a plateau, and some consider themselves failures. Some occupations offer simpler and flatter ladder for example teaching (Hall & Moss, 1998). This path is set for the climbers, to some extent employees' find it dissatisfying, since the path is competitive with fewer chances of success for each employee. (Boyatzis, 2008). Oshagbemi (2000) argued that, the present generation witness the blurring of boundaries in many facets of life, and the implication for career is that it should be a multidirectional. Probst (2003) support that, in a wider context, employees need to orient themselves with skill portfolio and new technologies that transcend organizations, which provide a variety of possible directions of career development and salience bounded by multiple and co-existing boundaries defined as boundaryless career path progression.

The concept was popularized by Arthur and Rousseau (1996). They argue that, the path offer opportunities that go beyond single employer. Employees with skill portfolio can move a cross boundaries of different employers and at the same time, employee are safe from external threats and can also market themselves outside the present employer. Sullivan and Athur (2006) point out that, boundaryless career path sustain employee from external threats, and break the traditional linear path. Athur and Tams (2010) argue that, boundaryless career offer job security and upward advancement. McDonald, Brown and Bradley (2006) argued that, it is the employees' initiative, interest and value to pursue work-related goal to realize set objective and happiness.

According to Mayo (2013), institutions need to manage career that will enable employees to assume multiple roles while advancing up the hierarchy. He suggested that, career curve in boundaryless career has become so steep; thus removing the difference generation gap value when determining their job satisfaction. Bola (2011) argued that, new dynamic shift in career decisions and planning requires a mindset geared towards boundaryless career oriented, driven by change in the person and in the environment to realize job satisfaction.

Inkson (2002) acknowledged the concept of boundaryless career usefulness to particular characteristics of careers. Suggested the idea of multi-directional career path as a more appropriate construct that account for a full scale of landscape, build on a five-stage profile. First, creating a career roadmap, second, building position profile, third, identifying core competencies, fourth, incorporating training and development, and fifth, establishing accountability. However, some employees' may choose to climb with a variety of option that are

acceptable. Other may navigate through their work role creating a path that enact their preferences. Heslin (2005) argued that whichever direction an employee wishes to pursue and feel capable in reaching personal development is appropriate. Also indicate some of the ways to an employee can navigate which includes, consultative role, networking, self-employment, secondments, job rotation, training, mentoring and professional partnership (Wilkinson, 2007).

Public chartered universities in Kenya, therefore, need to embrace flexible career path progression, empowering administrators to act on their values and interest as they progress; though institutions find it difficult to provide other equivalent career path other than the hierarchical or linear. This challenge is further complicated by the fact that, institutional culture seems to attribute low esteem in multi-directional career or boundaryless career path progression. On the other hand, they can provide resources were necessary, to allow administrators to enact their capabilities and take charge of their career path, grow, achieve, and contribute to the larger institutional goal. However, Many administrators engage themselves with many activities not necessary relevant with their career path but owing to a desired on boundaryless career path because of job dissatisfaction and job insecurity (Chepkwei, 2013).

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The study adopted correlational research design. The study was conducted in chartered public universities in Kenya. The target population comprised 2,355 administrative staff in chartered public universities in Kenya. Purposive sampling technique was used to select ten (10) fully-fledged chartered public universities. Proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 370 administrative staff. Data was collected using two questionnaires, namely; University Administrative Staff Questionnaires (UASQ). The instruments were validated the supervisors and research experts in the department of Business Administration Egerton University to ascertain whether items measures what it was supposed to measure. Reliability of instruments was estimated using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for internal consistency. Reliability coefficient of 0.838 was yielded.

#### **RESULTS:**

The study examine the relationship between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction, Pearson product moment correlation was performed for each type of career path progression and further interrelationship among the variables were done. Pearson product moment correlation measure linear association between two variables can take a range of values from +1 to -1. A value greater than 0 indicates a positive association, that is, as the value of one variable increases so does the value of the other variable. A value less than zero indicate negative association (Pallant, 2005). Table 1 and 2 present results of the analysis.

**Table 1: Correlation between Linear, Multidirectional, Boundaryless Career Path and Administrative staff Job Satisfaction**

		<b>Administrative Staff Job Satisfaction</b>
Linear Career Path Progression	Pearson Correlation	.143**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
	N	341
Multidirectional Career Path Progression	Pearson Correlation	.349**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	341
Boundaryless Career Path Progression	Pearson Correlation	.449**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	341

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As shown in table 1 the correlation results between linear, multidirectional, boundaryless path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction is positive and significant. There was a positive and significant correlation between linear career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction ( $r = .143$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that an increase in linear career path progression is associated with an increase in administrative staff job satisfaction. The results also showed a positive and significant correlation between multi-directional career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction ( $r = .349$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that an increase in

multi-directional career path progression is associated with an increase in administrative staff job satisfaction. Finally, there was a positive and significant correlation between boundaryless career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction ( $r = .449, p < 0.05$ ). This implies that an increase in boundaryless career path progression is associated with an increase in administrative staff job satisfaction.

Among the three types of career path progression, the results show that boundaryless career path progression had higher value ( $r = .449$ ). Imply that, administrative staff derives job satisfaction more from a boundaryless career path progression. These results are in agreement with Barono and Eshed (2016) in their study of gap between actual and preferred career path. Found positive and significant correlation between boundaryless career path progression and employees' job satisfaction. Also, found that employees with linear career path showed significantly higher burnout levels compared with employees who preferred boundaryless career path. The results also concur with Geffen and Robert (2016) study on impact of career path, the study found a positive and significant correlation between multi-directional career path and job satisfaction. The study concludes that, employees' career ambitions are multi-directional; affect the choices they make in their current positions. However, there was need to examine the group variable relative significance of career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction. Table 2 present results of the analysis.

**Table 2: Correlations between Career Path Progression and Administrative Staff Job Satisfaction**

		<b>Administrative staff Job Satisfaction</b>
Career Path Progression	Pearson Correlation	.382**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	341

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results in table 2 show a positive and significant correlations between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction ( $r = .382, p < 0.05$ ). This implies that an increase in overall career path progression is associated with an increase in administrative staff job satisfaction.

The results indicate a positive and significant relationship between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction. It was therefore necessary to carry out regression analysis to observe the predictability power of career path progression on administrative staff job satisfaction.

Multiple regression determined whether the independent variable (career path progression) predict the dependent variable (administrative staff job satisfaction). The predictability power for each type of career path progression and as a group variable was performed. Pallant (2005) states that, in standard multiple regression analysis all the independent (predictor) variables are entered into the equation simultaneously. Table 3 present results of analysis.

**Table 3: Regression for Boundaryless, Linear, Multidirectional Career Path Progression and Administrative Staff Job Satisfaction**

<b>Model Summary</b>				
<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>
1	.468 <sup>a</sup>	.219	.212	.3699

<b>Model</b>		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
1	Regression	12.951	3	4.317	31.551	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	46.110	337	.137		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>59.061</b>	<b>340</b>			

<b>Model</b>		<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</b>	
		<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>			<b>Lower Bound</b>	<b>Upper Bound</b>
1	(Constant)	3.028	.120		25.337	.000	2.793	3.263
	Linear Career Path Progression	.004	.019	.010	.186	.853	-.034	.041

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Multidirectional Career Path Progression	.080	.032	.152	2.531	.012	.018	.142
Boundaryless Career Path Progression	.198	.031	.367	6.479	.000	.138	.258
<b>a. Predictors:</b> (Constant), Boundaryless Career Path Progression, Linear Career Path Progression, Multidirectional Career Path Progression							
<b>b. Dependent Variable:</b> Administrative Staff Job Satisfaction							

Results in table 3 show three models. The first model indicate the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of .219 depicts that 21.9% of the variance in administrative staff job satisfaction (dependent variable) was explained by variations in career path progression (independent variable). The second model show the F statistics ( $F_{3,337}=31,551, p < 0.05$ ) which means, the model was significant. The third model show the contribution of each type of career path progression. The standardized coefficients for boundaryless career path progression ( $\beta = .367, t = 6.479, p < 0.05$ ) shows that, a unit increase in boundaryless career path progression would increase administrative staff job satisfaction by 36.7%. The standardized coefficients for multi-directional career path progression ( $\beta = .152, t = 2.531, p < 0.05$ ) shows that, a unit increase in multi-directional career path progression would increase administrative staff job satisfaction by 15.2%. Finally the standardized coefficients for linear career path progression ( $\beta = .010, t = .186, p > 0.05$ ) show an increase in linear career path progression would have weak relation with administrative staff job satisfaction. This implies that the more employees shun away from linear career path progression the less their job satisfaction and the more they adapt to boundaryless career path progression predict job satisfaction.

The results indicate that out of the three types of career path progression, boundaryless career path progression had higher prediction ( $\beta=.367$ ), suggesting boundaryless career path progression make the strongest unique contribution to administrative staff job satisfaction, when the variance explained by all other variables in the model are controlled for. This implies that, administrative staff draws more validation on boundaryless career path progression. The results concur with Gubler, Arnold and Coombs (2015) study on new look on boundaryless career orientation found that, boundaryless career path has become one of the most prominent and influential contemporary career path concept. Boundaryless career path is characterized with marketability, sustainability from external threats, breaking traditional hierarchy and reduces uncertainty. It also concurs with what was observed in respondents self-report that they proactively seek their own career path and own destiny that would allow them to move beyond one institution/employer. Hekmatiter and Ebrahimzadeh (2015) argued that, boundaryless career path has been widely acknowledged as a valuable tool for career progression in the contemporary organizations where mobility and self-driven careers are the major focus of attention.

The results also reveal that linear career path progression and multi-directional career path progression were weak predictors. The results suggests that, some of the administrative staff preferences were not on either of the two. Baron and Eshed (2017) argue that, institutions attempt to cater employees with different career anchors corresponding to their individual inclinations. Although disparities exist in career paths, employees would perceive progression that go along with the career path that would increase one's visibility or status. Presumably offering additional responsibility and authority. Despite the variation on the three types of career path progression, there was need to observe the group variable relative significance of career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction as shown in table 4.

**Table 4: Coefficients for Career Path Progression and Administrative Staff Job Satisfaction**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	3.281	.115	28.412	.000	3.054	3.508
	Career Path Progression	.232	.030	.382	7.612	.000	.172
<b>a. Dependent Variable:</b> Administrative Staff Job Satisfaction							

The results in table 4 show that career path progression significantly predicts administrative staff job satisfaction. The standardized coefficients ( $\beta = .382$ ,  $t = 7.612$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) show that, a unit increase in career path progression would increase administrative staff job satisfaction by 38.2% if more effort is put on career path progression in chartered public universities. It also implies that administrative staff would achieve job satisfaction if public universities put more effort in particular boundaryless career path progression. Therefore, the result showed that career path progression positively and statistically significant relate with administrative staff job satisfaction. Thus the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfactions in chartered public universities in Kenya is rejected. The results of the study shows that career path progression positively and significantly correlates with administrative staff job satisfactions.

## **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS:**

Correlation and regression analysis examine the nature and magnitude of the relationship between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction. The results indicates that for every one unit increase in career path progression, administrative staff job satisfaction increases by ( $r = .382$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The results also showed that the relationship between career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction was statistically significant relationship.

The results reveal that administrative staff job satisfactions could increase more with designed boundaryless career path progression that was found more significant in the study. These study findings are in agreement with Himid (2016) study on relationship between personality traits and career choice, found career path choice was important for both employee and employer because an employee profession and personal life are argued to be consistent. On the contrary, failure in a career path choice cause no professional development (stagnation), and the negative attitude towards work, mental stress will eventually leads to job dissatisfaction. These findings concur with Robert and Geffen (2016) who found positive and significant correlation between career path and job satisfaction. Further argue that, employees' can map their career path progression from education, goals, hopes, wishes and feelings of the roles and positions taken over during work life. Observation was also noted on the same, on respondents' not in favour of a linear career path progression. According to McElroy and Weng (2016) lack of a clear career path progression affects individuals efficiency and effectiveness, decreased job satisfaction and increases employee turnover and job burnout.

Bernerd, Nzuki, Kilika and Nzulwa (2014) argued that, the benefit of career path progression is to provide vivid image, and shape of employees' future prospects and how employees can conduct their activities toward satisfying important needs. The results found that administrative staff who were are more proactive preferred boundaryless career path progression. This findings was consistent with Raufman (2016) study on promoting purpose career, who found personal characteristics and behavior had the greatest influence on career path progression that enable employees not only satisfied but also encourage career growth within institution. However, Baffour and Achemfour (2016) stated that in the contrary, when career path is skewed employee can remain in the initial post level to which they were appointed for longer period lead to frustration and disillusionment. Prompting employees to feel they would never achieve self-fulfillment under a situation where the opportunity for career path progression is skewed, and employees who feel their career path was skewed might leave the career in numbers or underperform due to lack of job satisfaction. These findings concur with those of Harris, Pattie and McMahan (2015) study on advancement along a career path found out that institutions with skewed career path progression might influence employees decisions to leave or look for extra work in other fields related to their job including part-timing to compensate the period awaiting to progress.

These diverse views expressed by other studies indicate that, it is imperative for chartered public universities in Kenya to consider career path progression in career management practices. Administrative staff demonstrated their career path expectations from their institutions they work for. The satisfaction of career path progression would result from a boundaryless career path progression. The more they feel their career path was appropriate the more they would feel satisfied. Since majority of the respondents were in a career path that they aspired to be on while in that university, also their current jobs were geared to their preferred career path progression they are pursuing. This implies more precisely that, boundaryless career path progression sustain employees from external threats, and breaks the traditional linear path progression. Concur with Mayo (2013) recommendation that, institutions need to manage career path progression more flexible to enable employees to assume multiple roles while advancing up the hierarchy. Meaning, boundaryless career path progression can be adopted to overcome dissatisfaction especially in a competitive global environment in chartered public universities in Kenya. Perhaps, the reason why this study, found no significance relationship between linear career path

progression and administrative job satisfaction. The possible explanation would be administrative staff to make cognitive evaluations of their jobs against a benchmark on available alternative opportunities across the hierarchy in chartered public universities in Kenya. They rely on promotion; promotion has a significant change in wage, hierarchy and responsibility. Some of them feel they have remained in low-level positions. Biron and Eshed (2017) found that the pace of career path progression through the linear path was slow, because of the context in which public institutions are operating. Maree (2018) acknowledged that although the concept of boundaryless career was a 'wakeup' call found that the linear career path progression was still the dominant and was still valid in many public institutions in Kenya. Therefore, these study findings underline the importance of boundaryless career path progression. Consequently, it has also implications for chartered public universities in Kenya.

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

Despite the fact that chartered public universities in Kenya practice linear career path progression that seem restricted, the findings suggests that boundaryless career path progression reduce the challenges of career path progression and administrative staff job satisfaction in Chartered public universities in Kenya need to implement flexible career path progression to allow boundaryless career path progression for those who have the skill and knowledge to retain talent.

### **RECOMMENTATIONS:**

Chartered public universities in Kenya need to embrace career path progression especially adopting a boundaryless career path progression in this competitive global environment to overcome job dissatisfaction.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:**

The study target administrative staff in chartered public universities; however, the same study can be conduct in private universities in Kenya to enhance more understanding on career path progression and job satisfaction, and further comparison and generalization of results.

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