

An Empirical Research on Causes and Effects of Career Plateau on Individual Performance with reference to IT and ITeS organizations in Pune City

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study investigates whether career plateau exists in IT - ITeS organizations in Pune City, causes of Career Plateau phase of managers in IT - ITeS organizations, impact of career plateau phase on individual performance, and techniques adopted by organizations to release career plateau phase of a managers. Career plateau is divided into several types according to nature of career plateau. Mainly career plateau is divided into two types such as organizational plateau and personal plateau. Data were collected from 136 employees working in wide variety of organizations across in IT - ITeS organizations in Pune City through a structured questionnaire and Non-Probability, Convenience Sampling was used. Results of this study showed that Career Plateau have a great impact towards employees as well the organization. This study also investigates an increasing importance of career plateauing, reasons behind intention to quit, job satisfaction level, and individual performance. There is a vast scope for research and analysis in the area of career plateauing, its causes of career plateau phase of manager in IT - ITeS organizations, impact of career plateau on individual performance and techniques adopted by organizations to release career plateau phase of a manager.

Keyword: - Career Plateau, Objective Career Plateau, Subjective Career Plateau, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Intention to Quit

1. An Empirical Research on Causes and Effects of Career Plateau on Individual Performance with reference to IT and ITeS organizations in Pune City

The changes in the environment of business, such as the downsizing trends and restructuring have resulted in huge numbers of employees competing for fewer promotional opportunities. In today's scenario, many managers are more likely to plateau at an earlier age than those of an earlier generation. Every employee will agree to the fact that; it is become very frustrating and uncomfortable experience in their life, if they will work on the same status for long time. This condition may result in career plateau for the employees. This term is referred as to stick in a status and wait for the promotion for long time. Employee's promotional hierarchy is very low in such cases of career plateau. It is a point in the career of an employee where the chances of vertical promotion within the official hierarchy become very less or absent altogether. Nowadays, due to flatter organization structure career Plateau is becoming widespread in many organizations. Career plateau is seen as a major problem in an organization, as it is increasing the frustration in the employees and eventually it is affecting the organizations performance. Many times, every organization follows pyramidal hierarchy in case of promotions. In such cases, the number of positions at the top is less. This is a major reason behind attaining the career plateau.

Career Plateau is further expanded by Bardwick (1986) into two distinct categories, namely structural plateau (also commonly known as the hierarchical plateau) and job content plateau. Based on these two categories, a career plateau is defined in this study as a stage in one's career where one perceives a low likelihood of future promotions, or a point where one does not feel challenged, due to a lack of new job responsibilities.

People respond to career plateaus in different ways. General reactions include:

- ◆ Feeling angry, bored and feeling frustrated

- ◆ Losing interest in work
- ◆ Blaming the Organization for such behaviour of individual
- ◆ Thinking to quit from the organization
- ◆ Accepting the plateau and using it as a motivator for change

Career plateauing is an important phenomenon; a number of demographic, organizational and economic factors are likely to significantly increase the incidence of plateauing in the future. The demands of greater service requirements, more complex technologies, and shorter product life cycle have created a need for more horizontally oriented organizational structures with fewer positions available for upward movement for employees in the organizational pyramid. Mergers and acquisitions have also a reason for downsizing the employee numbers which eventually resulting in career plateau. Many individual still value promotions highly they often face conflicting pressures with dual-career and family issues which may reduce their ability to accept promotions which involve relocation or much higher levels of responsibility. Although career plateauing does not affect every employee negatively. It is found that career plateau directly and indirectly impact individual, departmental and organizational effectiveness. Career plateau is an important topic due to the changing working environment and its potential detrimental effect on both the individual and the organization.

As consequences employees and organization face job satisfaction issues, organizational commitment issues, intention to quit, and job induced stress. Career plateau has been used as antecedent to many undesirable work outcomes such as low satisfaction, high stress, deficient performance, withdrawal symptoms, low organizational commitment and increased turnover intention.

Therefore, this paper tries to investigate if employee is in career plateau phase; it focuses on identifying which type of career plateau an employee is undergoing. This paper also tries to examine the drivers and effects of career plateau in organization and analyze various causes behind employee's intention to quit.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out the Causes of Career Plateau phase of manager in IT - ITEs organizations
2. To find out the Impact of Career Plateau phase on Individual Performance
3. To find out the Techniques adopted by organizations to release Career Plateau phase of a manager

3. SCOPE

The study aimed at understanding the concept of Career Plateau and its impact on Individual Performance. Sample respondents for the study are Managers, Senior Operational Executives and HR Professionals. The geographical scope: IT- ITEs organizations from Pune City. Here for the study purpose, Pune area will comprise of Haveli Taluka, Pune City Taluka, Pimpri-Chinchwad City Taluka and Mulshi Taluka, Khed Taluka and Ambegaon Taluka, Maval Taluka.

4. HYPOTHESIS

- H1: Career Plateau Exists in IT - ITEs organizations
 H2: There is a relationship between Career Plateau and Individual Performance at work
 H3: There is a relationship between Career Plateau and Intention to Quit
 H4: There is a relationship between Career Plateau and Job Satisfaction

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

(Lin Mayasari) Have researched on the topic “Managing Career Plateau Professionally in Organization Setting”, (Clark, 2004) has researched on the topic “Marketing Management Implications of Career Plateauing”, 2004.

These papers conclude that Career Plateau can be both subjective and objective. It is an organizational phenomenon reflecting a long-term interaction between an individual and his/her work place. Plateauism is measured by job attitudes, job performance, job satisfaction and job tenure. But it should be measured on an individual basis always. Career Plateauing can have either a positive or negative impact on individual morale and organizational productivity, depending upon individual goals and circumstances. A research article on "Career Management" states that every individual think differently about career and have their own perception about it. This article focuses on Career Management and Career Plateau. Every researcher has defined career in their own way. The set of activities performed by the individual and the organization, in enhancing career is referred to as career planning and career management. There are various types of career plateau like structural, content and life plateau which may affect an employee to a great extent.

"Career paths and career plateau" This article focuses on understanding the concept of career plateauing, its types and the strategies to deal with career plateau. According to the article, career plateau is the condition of less promotions or advancement, low learning rate and professional stagnation. Career plateau can be of different kinds, like; structural content, contribution, life plateau etc. which can be dealt by strategies like managing expectations, restructuring the view of success, finding a balance etc. This article was helpful in understanding the concept of career plateauing in detail and measures to deal with the condition.

(Milliman) Has conducted a research on **"Causes, Consequences and moderating Factors of Career Plateauing"** which investigates various causes of career plateauing. Study states that career plateau does not affect all employees negatively but there some negative relationship between career plateau and employee's attitude, motivation, organizational commitment, job satisfaction etc. Career plateau is gender unbiased as no difference is found in perception of career plateau in male and female. Career plateau is strongly related to organizational commitment, intention to quit, promotion, job satisfaction as per Milliman. It also has significant but low moderate effects on satisfaction with job and pay, job involvement, number of work ours and performance.

As per the research on "Managing Career Plateau Professionally in Organization Setting" by Lin Mayasari, Universitas Paramadina Jakarta there are various causes of career plateau based on individual and organization variables. Individual factors that cause career plateau are individual skill, intrinsic motivation, and perception of individual, familial factor and locus of control. Organizational factors that lead to career plateau involve absence of work content dimension, organizational career orientation, innovative climate and business strategy. Career Plateau is connected with a number of negative work outcomes and thus organization plays a key role in managing and helping the employees to develop new skills or improve the old ones and prepare them for higher level of responsibility within the organization.

(M) have researched on the topic **"Career management strategies among IT professionals in offshore outsourced IT firms in Sri Lanka"**, **(Baoguo Xie)** have researched on the topic of **"The Effect of Career Plateau on Chinese Employee's Affective Commitment: An Indigenous Career Plateau Scale and Two-Mediator Model"** and **(Samin Khabaz Yazdiha)** have researched on the topic of **"A Study of Factors Affecting Occupational Stagnation of Employees of Social Security Organization of West Region of Tehran"**.

Sri Lanka having Journal name as Journal of Management Development helps in exploring career management strategies used by IT professionals in Sri Lanka and to evaluate those against hierarchical plateau, firm size and individual demographic characteristics (age, gender and marital status) that may predict the use of it. The outcome of this research paper showed that Hierarchical career plateau, demographic characteristics (age, gender and marital status) and firm size predicts the use of certain career management strategies only. According to a research article, in structural plateauing, the individual is not able to rise further in the organization and reaches a point where promotion is very low.

Managers should pay attention to job content plateau and inclusive plateau, as the findings indicate that job content plateau and inclusive plateau could exert more effects on job attitudes such as job satisfaction (especially intrinsic job satisfaction) and affective commitment.

"A Study of Factors Affecting Occupational Stagnation of Employees of Social Security Organization of West Region of Tehran" helps in investigating the factors affecting occupational stagnation. There is a significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and career plateau. Intrinsic motivation means satisfaction, happiness,

love, inherent joy and rewards. Lack or sense of failure in any of these motivations can cause a person's career plateau. It is also said that there is significant negative relationship between extrinsic motivation and career plateau.

(Zhuo Chen, 2010) have researched on the topic of **“Examining the Role of Gender in Career Advancement at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention”**. A study was conducted to identify the root cause of continuing low rates of participation of women in scientific research careers. Data for this study was extracted from the administrative personnel records of Federal Civilian Employees employed at the CDC during 2002-2006. 2-sample t tests with unequal variances and 2-sample proportion tests to compare individual characteristics among men and women. The findings were that the gender gap in promotion within the CDC’S workforce is diminishing. This diminishing gap is a result of improvement in education and experience among female employees. Hence, the gender gap in promotion has diminished across time and this reduction can be attributed to changes in individual characteristics and may give rise to Career Plateau to a greater extent.

(Shecket) has researched on the topic of **‘Career Plateauing: A Survey of Technical College Employees’**. ‘Career Plateauing: A Survey of Technical College Employees’ shows that there is no significant difference between age, gender and marital status as well as number of years served in the job and the degree of plateauing experienced by the respondents. Support workers had significantly higher scores for content and structural plateauing than technical staff, teachers or administrators. Career Plateauing was experienced differently by employees from different position whereas; age, gender, marital status and years of experience did not have measurable effects.

(Lee, 2002) has researched on the topic of **“Going beyond Career Plateau using Professional Plateau to account for Work Outcome”**. It focused on to determine whether the relationship between career plateau and work outcome namely: career satisfaction and job satisfaction still exists. A survey was conducted in 20 engineering multinational companies based in Singapore in the form of 300 questionnaires. The findings showed that career plateau is associated with career satisfaction and job satisfaction but not related to age and turnover retentions. It was concluded that career and professional plateau are two independent constructs. Outcome showed that organizations should communicate to their employees the available career paths and help them to achieve their goals easily. Also, organizations must expose them to stimulating jobs that will help them to upgrade their skills and maintain stability in the current profession.

“The Career Plateau and Job Dissatisfaction” this research article discusses the relationship between career plateau and job satisfaction. Also mentions the advantages of introduction of work role and job rotation programs in the organizations. The article focuses to change the perception about job rotations as a tool to encourage employees instead of considering it as a punishment. The article proves its point by concluding with a case study on DBS Bank, a Singaporean bank, which uses job rotation as a tool to attract and retain high quality employees.

(Sharon G.Helimann, 2008) have researched on the topic of **“Effects of career plateauing on turnover”** which talks about reason behind leaving organization, which includes pay concern, social support concern, job stress and limited promotion opportunities. The result shows that career plateau is positively related to intent to leave organization. Career plateau reflect employees feelings towards growth and development through promotion and internally through challenging work. Sometimes external job opportunities influence one’s decision to leave organization. So organization should notice feelings of stagnation and provide additional opportunities when such situation occurs. There is also relationship between job search behavior and job satisfaction, organizational commitment and career plateau. The various variables were considered in analysis, which include age, gender, education, remaining service commitment.

Career plateau is positively associated with intentions of an individual to leave an organization and more a person feels career plateaued, the more that person thinks about leaving his job. Compared with studies on the private sector, the results of this study on the public sector show some differences. However, the link between career plateauing and intention to leave university is positive but weak.

(Weitz, 1998) have researched on the topic of **“Career Plateaus Reconsidered”** to analyze the impact of Career Plateau on individual performance. It identifies various sources of impact of Career Plateau on job performance and job attitudes. The findings were that six set of factors at individual and organizational level contribute to career plateau which includes individual skills and abilities, individual needs and values, lack of intrinsic motivation, lack of extrinsic rewards, stress and burnout and slow organizational growth, which leads to poor job performance and

poor job attitude. Managers can improve the training method which is given to the employee; provide proper job rotation so that employee does not undergo any stress, redesign of compensation system and promotion policies which will help in increasing the extrinsic rewards. It was concluded that depending on the source of career plateauing, plateaued employees will exhibit different changes in their performance and work-related attitudes.

Job performance is efficient strategy for improving plateaued employees attitude and behaviour at work place. By doing so weaknesses would be self-identified that would lead to self-renewal. There should be a system of providing employees with regular, participative performance evaluations along with personal discussion to motivate the plateaued employees. It also suggested that management has to stay in touch with the concerned staff by periodically asking them how they feel their work progressing.

(Donnelly) Has researched on the topic of article **“Have You Reached A Career Plateau? How to Regain Control.”** It focuses on Career Plateau is a situation where an employee may feel under- appreciated, thinks that job could be more challenging or have lost out on a promotion. Career Plateau can be good for brief period of time because one can regroup, collect and focus on thoughts and assess prospects on own horizon. But at times, Career Plateau may also lead to burnout, undergoing a negative presence and feeling bored (a regular normal routine). Hence, an individual should not stay on Career Plateau for too long, because that can even imply a period of minimal growth or even a decline in his life.

(Wei-Ning) Has researched on the topic of **‘That's Not what I Signed Up for!’**. A Longitudinal investigation of the Impact of Unmet Expectation in the relation between Career Plateau and Job Outcomes which states that career plateaued employees have lower job satisfaction and lower organizational commitment while have higher turnover intentions. Also, there is negative influence of career plateau at any age. Also, it has enhanced the understanding of career plateau from a longitudinal perspective. This research has helped to understand the relationship between career plateau and job outcomes and also to analyses the effect of age of the employees considering the unmet expectations.

(Shahzad Aziz Choudhary, 2013) have researched on the topic of **“Strategies for Career Plateau: Empirical Investigation of Organization in Pakistan”**. The report was to find out the most suitable strategy for each type of career plateau by doing proper empirical investigation of downsized organizations in Pakistan. This Paper focus on impact of different organizations strategies on each type of Plateau. Job rotation, mentoring, job enlargement and job enrichment are different organization strategies that are used in organizations.

The findings showed that by enhancing mentoring practices, the lack in ability or lack of motivation can be improvised and also by enlarging the job content, knowledge and skill level of employees can be enhanced which result in improvement of content plateau. By providing proper mentoring and enhancing job enrichment practices, employee’s current perception for existing structural plateau can be reduced. If any employee is facing career plateau, he/she can redefine his career goals and explore on what his next move could be. In this phase, an employee can always find a good mentor in the organization, someone who can always motivate and inspire him/her. Outcome showed that by adopting various strategies provided by the organization, an employee can overcome his career plateau and can be more inclined towards his/her existing job.

(Rooy, 2014) has published an article on **“Busting Up Career Plateaus: How to Avoid Complacency and remain Engaged in your Work”**. It focuses on certain decisions an individual can make and can choose to do to overcome Career Plateau. First, break out of it, if he is unhappy with the situation, take control of it and don’t blame others for the same. Second, embrace and ride it, if an individual like what he is doing and is enjoying it, he should continue with the same, and things might go on his way to a greater extend. Third, ignore it, and individual must always remember he is the one who own his decisions and his career, others will just help him, but ultimately, he is the one who must take ownership of it. Hence, Plateaus are not always bad, nor are they always good. They are situational. When an individual undergoes a plateau, certain decisions he can make and can choose to do one of the three things: Break out of it, embrace it or ignore it.

(John W Slocum, 1987) have published an article on **“Whose Career is likely to Plateau?”**. It elaborates on various techniques to overcome Career Plateau, Managers can use rewards other than promotions and money to motivate, they can give honest feedback to their employees, try to eliminate content plateauing and make the facts about the plateauing known. John W Slocum, Jr, William L Cron and Linda C Yows states that different types of plateaued employees based on their gender and position need different management. Plateaued people spend

progressively longer period of time in each job prior to their present position and they are more likely to be assigned to low growth and market share territories than non-plateaued people.

(Clark, 2004) has researched on the topic of “**Marketing Management Implications of Career Plateauing**”. There are various steps Organisations/Managers can take in order to overcome Plateau in an individual’s life. Individual are bound for Plateauism. Managers should provide self-development seminars to their employees, job skills training sessions and sometimes reward their employees which will help them in overcoming Plateau. It was concluded that organization can make career plateaus an acceptable reality in organizational life by focusing on showing appreciation for an employee’s performance. Plateauism is influenced by Personal, Organizational, and Cultural factors.

A research article on “Career Management” states that organization must undergo proper practices which include various rewards, recognition, promotion and transfer which will help employee’s in overcoming their plateau.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was focused at testing about career plateau exist in the organization or not? If it exists, then what’s the tae of career plateau managers on that? To examine the numerous reasons or causes of career plateau in an organization. It also concentrated on understanding the consequences of career plateau on individual performance and does the organizations uses appropriate methods in overcoming the career plateau of a manager. It also studies and understands the direct impact of career plateau on individual performance of a working manager in an organization.

Type of Research: Quantitative

Quantitative Research: This research quantifies data and generalizes results from the sample of the population. It used to measure the incidence of various views and opinions of the respondents. It is measured by numerical, mathematical, and statistical analysis and data collected through questionnaires, surveys, interviews and polls.

Method of Research: Descriptive

Descriptive Method: Descriptive studies may be characterized as simply the attempt to determine, describe or identify what is, while analytical research attempts to establish why it is that way or how it came to be.

Research Instrument: Questionnaire

Research Instrument: Research Instrument is measurement tool designed to obtain data on a topic of interest from research subjects. They include the purpose/ variable measured, sample population, methodology, other instruments, items and questions and the source for the instrument.

Questionnaire: A Questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents.

Sampling Method: Non-Probability, Convenience Sampling

Non-Probability, Convenience Sampling: Non-Probability sampling is a sampling technique where the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population equal chances of being selected.

Sampling Size: 136

Sampling Size: Sampling Size determination is the act of choosing the number of observations or replicates to include in a statistical sample. The sample size is an important feature of any empirical study in which the goal is to make inferences about a population from a sample.

Sample Unit: Employees working in IT - ITEs organizations in Pune City and HR Professionals working in IT - ITEs organizations in Pune City.

Sample Unit: Sample Unit can be defined as a single section selected to research and gather statistics of the whole.

Data Collection

Data collected through structured questionnaire were presented in the form of Pie Chart and Bar Graphs.

Primary Data

Primary data is information that a researcher collect specifically for the purpose of his own research project. An advantage of primary data is that it is specifically tailored the researcher’s needs. A sample of 136 employees was

surveyed through a pre-tested questionnaire. Out of which 50 were HR Professionals and 86 were employees working in IT/ ITeS Organizations.

Secondary Data

Secondary data is information that has been collected for a purpose other than the current research project but has some relevance and utility for research. Secondary data was collected from Research Papers, Articles, Thesis and Books.

Data Analysis Tool

Data is analyzed using statistical tool SPSS Software.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1) Gender

IT Professionals

Gender	
Male	77.90%
Female	22.10%
Other	0.00%

HR Professionals

Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Male	30	56.6
Female	20	37.7

2) Age

IT Professionals

Age	
18-20	0.00%
21-25	30.20%
26-30	32.60%
31-35	16.30%
36-40	15.10%
41-45	3.50%
46-50	2.30%
51-55	0.00%
Above 56	0.00%

HR Professionals

Age		
	Frequency	Percent
18-20	0	0.00%
21-25	8	15.1
26-30	17	32.1

31-35	13	24.5
36-40	6	11.3
41-45	4	7.5
46-50	1	1.9
51-55	0	0
Above 56	1	1.9

3) Work Experience IT Professionals

Work Experience	
1-3	45.30%
4-6	10.50%
7-9	11.60%
10-12	11.60%
13-15	7.00%
16-18	8.10%
19-21	3.50%
22-24	1.20%
25 & above	1.20%

HR Professionals

Work Experience		
	Frequency	Percent
1-3	14	26.4
4-6	11	20.8
7-9	7	13.2
10-12	6	11.3
13-15	3	5.7
16-18	6	11.3
19-21	0	0
22-24	1	1.9
25 & above	2	3.8

4) Educational Qualification IT Professionals

Educational Qualifications	
Graduation	41.90%

Post-Graduation	57.00%
PhD	1.20%
Post Doctorate	0.00%
Other	0.00%

HR Professionals

Educational Qualifications

	Frequency	Percent
Graduation	9	17
Post-Graduation	40	75.5
Other	1	1.9

To assess our Hypothesis, we performed Regression using SPSS Software. Most of the responses were received from employee's/ Manager's age ranging between 26-30 years and having work experience of 1-3 Years for IT as well as HR Professionals. Also, only IT and ITEs organizations in from Pune City was covered.

Result of this study indicates that Career Plateau exists in IT - ITEs organizations in Pune City. Most of the employees/ Manager are undergoing Content Plateau, but very few are experiencing Structural Plateau. Personal Plateau and Perceived Plateau does not exist in IT – ITEs organizations. Data collected from various organizations showed that Manager's suffering from Career Plateau is due to Lack of challenging tasks, no variety in job for the employee, lack of opportunities to learn and grow within the organization, feeling of ignorance and preference to leisure than promotion.

It is observed that only Career Plateau have a significant impact on individual performance of employees with respect to Task Proficiency, Task Adaptivity and Task Proactivity. Whereas Career Plateau has no significant impact on stress and intention to quit behavior of employees working in IT – ITEs organizations. Also, it has a very low impact on Job Satisfaction in terms of culture only.

Various Techniques that can be adopted by organizations to release Career Plateau phase may include providing more promotion opportunities within the organization, more focused on Time Management, Lateral Transfers, emphasizing on leisure activities for relaxation and reducing stress which will help in minimizing the Career Plateau phase of employees. If employee exhibit Career Plateau, this feeling can negatively impact their individual performance. This confirms the impact of Career Plateauing on Individual performance of employees.

Questionnaire 2 has helped to understand that various strategies that HR Professionals are adopting to keep the Career Plateau level low. Strategies such as Career Planning, Career Counseling, Mentoring, Promoting Higher Education, and Continuous Training & Development helps to reduce the Plateau phase of employees.

Hence, we can state that Individual Performance of employees is significantly dependent on Content Plateau.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The results suggest several major conclusions both from theoretical and practical perspective in real life. First, they confirm reasons behind career plateau and relationships between career plateauing in terms of objective career plateau and subjective career plateau and key variables in the field of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to quit which have responsibility towards individual and organization. From a practical perspective,

the results are interesting in which career plateaued employees need proper guidance which will decrease the impact of content plateau on job dissatisfaction, low organizational commitment, and intention to quit.

Most of the employee experience content plateau, personal plateau, and perceived plateau. Measures that could help to avoid these feelings of content, personal, perceived career plateauing would include job satisfaction, low stress level, individual performance in task proficiency, task adaptivity and task proactivity. Ineffectiveness and Inefficiency in the management of organization and not focusing towards employee's concern, may contribute to employees turnover in various industries. To study further demographics aspects are taken into consideration such as gender, age, educational qualification, and work experience.

To extend this research, future researchers should explore the link between objective career plateau, subjective career plateau and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to quit. This link has already been studied in this paper, but it indicates that intention to quit should not necessarily increase because of Career Plateauing. As Career Plateauing is not a reflection of Intention to Quit behaviour of employees.

9. REFERENCES

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