

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE LOYALTY: A SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

This article reviews the literature on the interplay between career development programs and employee loyalty. This study analyzes secondary data from empirical and theoretical literature published between 2000 and 2024, focusing on how various career development initiatives affect employees' retention, commitment, and loyalty to the organization. The evidence suggests that the design of career development programs facilitates the employee's loyalty to the organization because of increased job satisfaction, skill enhancement, organizational support, and career advancement. However, these programs also depend on organizational culture, leadership, individual career interests, and overall execution. This review adds to human resource management literature by presenting an integrated framework detailing career development and loyalty and evaluative insights for organizational intervention through career development initiatives to increase employee loyalty.

**Keywords:** Career development, employee loyalty, organizational commitment, retention, professional development, human resource management

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations face serious problems retaining a committed and productive workforce because of the rapidly changing and highly competitive business environment. High employee turnover rates have been shown to negatively affect an organization's productivity and erode institutional knowledge while accruing recruitment expenses (Allen et al., 2010). This has meant that, in an attempt to sustain competitive advantage, many organizations have started focusing on fostering employee loyalty as a strategic priority (Kraemer et al., 2011).

Organizational efforts to cultivate loyalty have been reported as career development programs (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). McDonald and Hite (2005) defined career development programs as formal training programs that include mentoring, coaching, job rotation, career planning, and succession management. While these programs theoretically foster loyalty, studies across various organizational contexts face mixed findings (Benson et al., 2004; Kraemer et al., 2011).

To answer several important questions, this review seeks to purport the existing literature focusing on career development programs concerning employee loyalty.

1. What lines of reasoning could help explain the relationship between career development and employee loyalty?

2. What evidence verifies or disputes these lines of reasoning?
3. What elements or features of career development programs most powerfully enhance employee loyalty?
4. Which contextual elements influence the association between career development activities and employee loyalty?
5. What insights can be drawn from organizations aiming to increase employee loyalty through strategic career development initiatives?

This review advances the theory and practice of human resource management by answering these questions through detailed secondary data analysis. It explains the relationship between career development programs and employee loyalty, backed by data, and provides recommendations for organizational leaders on designing and implementing these programs.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This review applied systematic approaches to examine the literature on career development programs and employee loyalty at the intersection of these two concepts. The methodology comprised a series of distinct steps designed to achieve depth of coverage and analytical depth.

### **2.1 Search Strategy and Selection Criteria**

A comprehensive search was performed through various electronic platforms: Web of Science, Scopus, PsycINFO, Business Source Complete, and Google Scholar. Keyword combinations related to career development ("career development," "professional development," "training," "mentoring," "succession planning") and employee loyalty ("employee loyalty," "organizational commitment," "retention," "turnover intention") were employed.

Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

1. Published in peer-reviewed journals or reputable academic publications between 2000 and 2024
2. Authored in English
3. Having Examined the Correlation between Employee Loyalty and Career Development Programs.
4. Supplied supporting evidence and applicable theories that assist in comprehending this connection.

The preliminary search retrieved 478 publications. After title and abstract screening, 187 publications were deemed fit for full-text evaluation. In the end, 103 publications that examined the correlation between career development initiatives and employee loyalty were selected for the final evaluation.

### **2.2 Evaluation and Synthesis of Data**

A qualitative analysis and quantitative synthesis of findings, where appropriate, blended with qualitative and quantitative content analysis was employed on the selected publications. The analysis aimed at:

1. Uncovering the factors within the theories explaining the relationship between career development and organizational loyalty.

2. Empirical data of program effectiveness.
3. Classification of components of career development programs relative to impacts.
4. Critical examination of contextual variables affecting program effectiveness.
5. Practical conclusions helpful to organizations.

To ensure rigor in the analysis, multiple researchers coded the publications independently. Disagreements were settled through discussion until a consensus was reached. The findings were organized thematically to answer the research questions about the impact of career development programs on enhancing employee loyalty.

### **3. THE CONNECTING CONCEPTS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE LOYALTY BASED ON SUPPORTING THEORIES**

Various supporting theories justify the correlation between employee loyalty and career development initiatives.

Grasping the theoretical foundations is critical in understanding how initiatives and actions related to career planning and development systems impact employees' retention and their level of commitment to the organization.

#### **3.1 Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange theory is one of the most useful theories that can be used to analyze how career development fosters employee commitment. This theory posits that workplace relationships can be viewed as a series of transactions that give rise to reciprocal expectations of the employees and employer (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In organizations that invest in the employees' career development, the employees tend to perceive this as organizational support and commitment, which, in turn, creates a sense of obligation to repay and reciprocate through loyalty and commitment (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010).

This perspective has been studied empirically. For example, Lee and Bruvold (2003) demonstrated that the perceived investment in employee development significantly predicted organizational commitment and the intention to stay with the organization. In the same way, Wayne et al. (1997) showed that the availability of development opportunities enhanced employees' perception of the organization's support, raising commitment while lowering turnover intentions.

#### **3.2 Psychological contract theory**

Posits that employees believe in the extent of obligations they owe to their employers and vice versa (Rousseau, 1995). For most knowledge workers and professionals, career advancement opportunities are an important element of their psychological contracts (De Vos et al., 2003). When organizations meet these development expectations, employees are more inclined to remain loyal and committed.

In contrast, failing to provide the expected organization-sponsored development opportunities can be perceived as a breach of the favorable psychological contract, thus reducing commitment and increasing turnover intentions (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Career advancement unmet expectations tend to increase anticipatory outcomes. Sturges et al. (2005) showed that employees provided with promised career support helped manage their intentions to leave the organization more than those with unmet developmental expectations.

### **3.3 Human Capital Theory**

Investments in developing an employee's skills increase their personal and organizational value, known as the human capital theory (Becker, 1993). Within this framework, career development programs are considered investments in human capital that yield returns for the organization and employees. At the same time, however, the theory also points out a paradox: trained employees become more skilled and marketable, increasing the likelihood of leaving the organization (Cappelli, 2004).

Research suggests that the paradox is resolved when organizations implement programs that simultaneously develop employee skills and strengthen loyalty and commitment to the organization. For instance, in one study, Benson et al. (2004) reported that tuition reimbursement programs increased the likelihood of turnover prior to degree completion but significantly reduced turnover afterwards, mainly when there were internal promotion prospects.

### **3.4 Career Motivation Theory**

London's (1983) career motivation theory offers another valuable approach by proposing that career identity, insight, and resilience shape the employee's career choices and organizational commitment. These factors can be developed through career development initiatives to enhance loyalty. Day and Allen (2004) reported that career motivation was a mediator in the relationship between mentoring, a typical career development action, and organizational commitment. In the same way, Aryee and Tan (1992) illustrated that components of career motivation were strong predictors of organizational and career commitment.

### **3.5 Organizational Support Theory**

According to organizational support theory, employees develop overarching beliefs regarding how much an organization values their benefits and what the organization does to look after them (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Organizational support is delivered through career development initiatives, increasing employees' emotional connection and loyalty to the organization. Numerous studies have shown that perceived organizational support is one of the most important predictors of organizational commitment and retention (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle et al., 2009). Opportunities for career development represent an important element of organizational support for enhancing employee loyalty (Tansky & Cohen, 2001).

## **4. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND EMPLOYEE LOYALTY**

The empirical research regarding career development programs and employee loyalty relation shows that the association between the two variables is generally positive; however, this varies significantly across the different studies conducted. This section summarizes the findings from different empirical studies, including but not limited to cross-sectional surveys, longitudinal studies, and even meta-analyses.

### **4.1 Cross-Sectional Studies**

Few cross-sectional studies have identified a positive correlation between employee loyalty and career development activities. For example, in a survey of 270 managers, Bambacas and Bordia (2009) discovered that career development practices significantly predicted affective organizational commitment. Weng et al. (2010) studied 961 employees from different sectors in China. They found that career growth opportunities, including progress towards career

goals, development of professional abilities, and promotion rate, significantly predict organizational commitment.

Kuvaas (2008), in a study of 458 employees from different organizations, Perceived Developmental Human Resource Practices were found to correlate positively with affective commitment and negatively with turnover intentions. This was found to be the case due to perceived supervisor support and intrinsic motivation to undermine those relations. Newman et al. (2011) discovered that organizational support for career development positively impacted affective commitment while lowering intention to quit among employees in five multinational enterprises in China. This was based on a sampling of 437 employees.

#### **4.2 Retrospective Studies**

While cross-sectional studies focus on establishing associations between two or more variables, longitudinal studies focus more on establishing cause-effect relationships. According to Lee et al. (2018), after conducting a three-wave longitudinal study over 18 months, the extent to which an organization invested in employee development was predictive of increased commitment and decreased intention to quit—the fulfilment of the psychological contract mediated such effects. Kraemer et al. (2011) collected data from 264 employees at three different time points over a year in another longitudinal investigation. Their results showed that organizational support for development resulted in lower intention to quit only when employees perceived adequate career opportunities within the organization.

However, when internal career opportunities were perceived as limited, development support increased the intention to quit, supporting the theory that development programs must be aligned with advancement possibilities within the organization.

#### **4.3 Reviews and Systematic Analyses**

These are the first reviews dedicated to systematically drawing together evidence from several studies and analyzing the relationship between career development and employee loyalty.

In a meta-analysis of 67 studies, Ng and Sorensen (2008) highlighted that developmental experiences had a positive impact on affective commitment ( $\rho = .43$ ) and a negative influence on turnover intentions ( $\rho = -.38$ ). Blau et al. (2015) also conducted a meta-analysis of 82 studies on the impacts of various HR practices on employees and found that developmental HR practices significantly impacted organizational commitment ( $\rho = .48$ ) and weakened turnover intentions ( $\rho = -.24$ ). Unlike other HR practices, these effect sizes were equal to or stronger, indicating the need for development initiatives aimed at improving loyalty.

The systematic review conducted by Ghosh and Reio (2013) analyzed 71 studies published between 1980 to 2012. They found that mentoring at different career stages consistently bolstered organizational commitment and reduced turnover intentions irrespective of the employees' age or background.

#### **4.4 Qualitative Studies**

The qualitative analysis complements the quantitative analysis by examining how employees interact with and responds to different career development programs. In her interviews with 37 professionals, Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) noted that career development loyalty is primarily driven by organizational care and concern, offering growth opportunities congruent with personal value systems and alleviating career ambiguity. Sturges et al.(2010) analyzed 36 interviews with knowledge workers. They concluded that career development supports

enhanced loyalty by augmenting employees' valuation through meaningful work experiences, skill expansion, and the enhancement of prospective career opportunities.

## **5. COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

Some studies suggest that the initiatives' effectiveness toward loyalty enhancement differs across factors. This section concentrates on defining components and characteristics of career development schemes and their relative effectiveness on employee loyalty.

### **5.1 Formal Training and Education**

Formal training and education constitute one of the most common initiatives for career development. These initiatives enhance employee loyalty (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009), especially when they offer skills necessary for present job performance and future career advancement.

Benson et al. (2004) investigated the impacts of tuition reimbursement programs on turnover among 9,439 employees of a large U.S. manufacturing firm. They discovered that participation in these programs decreased turnover by 50% after degree completion, especially when promotions were available. Likewise, Dysvik and Kuvaas (2008) found that perceived training opportunities were predictors of not just affective commitment but also turnover intentions, with these relationships being mediated by intrinsic motivation. Nevertheless, formal training is contingent upon several factors. Pattie et al. (2006) noted that training levels between moderate and high had the best outcomes for retention, suggesting the link between training investment and turnover takes the form of an inverted U-shape. They indicated that breakthrough training signals organizational commitment, while minimal training does not increase employee attachment since marketability exceeds merit.

### **5.2 Mentoring and Coaching**

Personalized career development methods, including mentoring and coaching programs, have significantly impacted employees' loyalty towards the organization. Eby et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of 207 studies and found that mentoring has a moderate correlation to organizational commitment ( $\rho = .22$ ) alongside a moderate negative correlation to turnover intentions ( $\rho = -.23$ ).

In a longitudinal study of 1,033 army officers, Payne and Huffman (2005) noted that those who were mentored had more substantial affective and continuance commitment compared to non-mentored officers one year later. Mentoring enhanced organizational commitment by improving job-related satisfaction as well as perceptions of support from the organization. Similarly, research on coaching highlights its beneficial impact on employees' loyalty to the organization. Bozer and Sarros (2012) studied a sample of 126 executives from differing organizations and found that executive coaching was linked to increased affective commitment and reduced turnover intentions. These relationships were mediated by job and career satisfaction.

Barnett and Bradley (2007) found that career satisfaction and commitment to the organization were correlated to organizational support for career management after surveying 90 professionals. De Vos et al. (2009) studied organizational support among 491 employees from six large Belgian firms. They found an association between self-care management support, career satisfaction, and affective commitment. Sturges et al. (2002) also found that organizational career management affected graduates' job-seeking behaviour and enhanced their level of affective commitment a year after employment in a longitudinal study of 212 graduates.

#### **5.4 Job Rotation and Cross-Functional Assignments**

Job rotation and cross-functional assignments are additional employees' organizational role-exploring experiences that improve skill competencies. These experiences and enhanced knowledge of the organization improve skills, as reported by Campion et al. (1994), who found that job rotation programs contributed to the retention of high-potential employees. Zin et al. (2013) surveyed 147 managers in Malaysian firms and found that career development and job satisfaction-mediated relationships made job-rotation experiences predictive of organizational commitment. Burke and McKeen (1994) found that women in managerial positions with favourable career expectations were likely to commit to the organization after being given challenging assignments.

#### **5.5 Succession Planning and Leadership Development**

Planning succession and developing leaders demonstrates a commitment to long-term career investments, increasing employee loyalty. Conger and Fulmer (2003) studied effective systems for succession planning and reported that transparent succession management processes increased commitment among high-potential employees by offering clear pathways to advancement and development. According to Khoreva and Vaiman (2022), a survey of 239 high-potential employees found that talent management activities such as leading, developing, and planning for succession planning increased affective commitment and decreased intention to leave the organization. These outcomes were achieved through the fulfilment of the psychological contract, while organizational support shaped the perceived influence of these factors.

#### **5.6 Feedback on Performance and Development Discussions**

Feedback on performance and development discussions are some of the least resource-demanding and most impactful methods for supporting career development. Jawahar (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of 69 studies. He found that employees' satisfaction with performance appraisal feedback directly related to organizational commitment ( $\rho = .48$ ) and intention to leave the organization ( $\rho = -.26$ ). In a study of 519 employees in professional service firms, Farndale et al. (2011) found that career development conversations during performance reviews were strong predictors of organizational commitment, which in turn was influenced by perceived support, trust in management, and organizational commitment.

### **6. CONTEXTUAL FACTORS MODERATING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS**

The contextual factors regarding the effectiveness of career development programs relate to the context that maintains or enhances employee loyalty. These restraining factors make sense in the context of program design and implementation intended to maximize benefits.

#### **6.1 Organizational Culture and Climate**

An organization's culture influences employee loyalty and personal career development efforts. Van Vianen et al. (2011) highlighted that development practices accounted for higher organizational commitment in organizations with supportive learning cultures. In the same way, Kuenzi and Schminke (2009) showed that organizational climate for development heightened the relationship between development opportunities and organizational commitment. In Maurer and Lippstreu's (2008) study regarding development supports, a learning-oriented culture further enhanced commitment among high learning orientation workers. On the other hand, competitive, individualistic cultures within organizations tended to result in development programs that, while enhancing skills, did not increase attachment to the organization (Cappelli, 2004).

## **6.2 Leadership Support and Supervisor Involvement**

Supervisors play an important role in career development, focusing on translating formal structures into steps that enhance employee loyalty. Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) noted that perceived supervisor support for development moderated the relationship between perceived investment in employee development and work performance on which retention depended. Also, Kraemer et al. (2011) provided evidence that organizational commitment was higher when employees perceived their supervisors to have an accurate understanding of their career goals and supported their development. This explains why there is a need for greater supervisor participation in career development programs.

## **6.3 Individual Differences and Career Stage**

Individual differences in career orientation, motivational level, and stage in the career cycle influence the impact of career development programs in varying degrees. Weng and McElroy (2012) reported that employees with traditional career orientations linked career advancement opportunities with organizational commitment more strongly than those with boundaryless career orientations. So does the career stage. In his research, Conway (2004) observed that opportunities for further development were stronger predictors of commitment for employees in the early stages of their careers than for those in the mid or late-career stages. Likewise, Finkelstein et al. (2003) noted that formal mentoring was a stronger predictor of organizational commitment among early-career professionals compared to their more seasoned peers.

## **6.4 Program-Employee Fit**

The career development program's alignment with employees' career goals and objectives dramatically influences the program's impact. Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis on different types of fit. They found that both person-job fit and person-organization fit were strong predictors of organizational commitment ( $\rho = .47$  and  $\rho = .51$ , respectively) and negatively predicted turnover intentions ( $\rho = -0.46$  and  $\rho = -0.35$ , respectively). Nauta et al. (2009) studied 727 healthcare professionals and discovered that overall career satisfaction and fit to the employee's career anchors moderated the perceived relationship between development opportunities and turnover intentions. Aligning development opportunities with career anchors further predicted reduced turnover intention.

## **6.5 Organizational Size and Industry Context**

The organizational size and industry context impact the relationship between loyalty and career development. Underdeveloped organizations are unlikely to retain employees with advanced skills acquired from development programs without implementing job enrichment. Programs do not improve retention alone and must be implemented alongside other retention strategies (Cardy & Lengnick-Hall, 2011.) The context of the industry is also important. Batt (2002) has found that high-involvement work practices, including extensive training and career development, placed greater emphasis on turnover reduction for customer service and sales than in the manufacturing and industrial sectors. In the same way, Shaw et al. (2009) showed that the relationship between HR practices and turnover differed substantially according to industries, with predominant effects in knowledge-intensive industries.

## **7. AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE LOYALTY**

This part proposes an integrated linkage model between career development programs and employee loyalty, considering the theoretical frameworks alongside the empirical evidence

scrutinized in this section. Insights around mediating mechanisms and moderating factors that shift this relationship are synthesized.

### **7.1 Direct and Indirect Pathways**

The model outlines direct and indirect pathways linking employee loyalty to career development programs to cultivate greater employee loyalty. The direct pathway depicts social exchange phenomena in which employees return given development opportunities with increased loyalty (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The indirect pathways work through several mediating processes:

1. **Job Satisfaction:** Career development programs increase job satisfaction concerning the variety of skills, autonomy, and growth facets offered (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). With these antecedents, satisfaction predicts commitment and retention (Judge et al., 2017).
2. **Perceived Organizational Support:** Support from an organization is enhanced with development initiatives, as these confirm an organization's employee support (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and are a strong predictor of loyalty (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).
3. **Career Satisfaction:** Satisfaction with the progress and prospects in one's career is increased with career development programs and is likely to enhance attachment to the organization (Barnett & Bradley, 2007).
4. **Psychological Contract Fulfillment:** Employees' loyalty increases, and turnover intentions decrease when opportunities provided match development expectations induced by the psychological contract (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).
5. **Embeddedness:** The organizational embeddedness of employees is heightened as a result of development programs through increased organizational networks, enhanced fit, and increased sacrifice associated with leaving the organization (Mitchell et al., 2001).

### **7.2 Moderating Factors**

These elements are considered core moderating factors that alter the degree or direction of the influence of career development programs on employee loyalty.

1. **Program Characteristics:** The effectiveness of programs is moderated by their quality, comprehensiveness, accessibility, and customization (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010).
2. **Organizational Factors:** Program efficiency is influenced by organizational culture, support for programs from leadership, internal promotion pathways, and reward structures (Kraemer et al., 2011).
3. **Individual Differences:** Learning motivation, career focus, demographic factors, and career stage shape the context of the development-loyalty relationship (Weng & McElroy, 2012).
4. **Contextual Factors:** Development response from employees is shaped by their perception of labour market conditions, industry standards, and the economic climate (Trevor, 2001).

This model synthesis captures multiple approaches that may be used to understand the timing and ways career development programs escalate employee loyalty and helps advance theoretical and practical understanding of the issue.

## **8. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This literature review provides valuable practical insights for organizations wanting to bolster employee loyalty through career development efforts. The recommendations are grounded in primary data and organizational best practices documented in the literature.

### **8.1 Strategic Design of Career Development Programs**

Employers must design career development programs that fulfil organizational needs and employee aspirations. It has been noted that organized programs that include formal training, mentoring, career planning, and challenging activities have a more significant impact on loyalty than those that focus on singular items (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). Moreover, development programs should be tailored to the various distinct groups of employees within the organization. In early career, Conway (2004) noted that skill development and advancement opportunities are of concern, as well as work-life balance and job security for mid-career employees and recognition and autonomy for late-career employees. Addressing all these diverse needs at different career stages improves the effectiveness of career programs.

### **8.2 Creating Internal Career Opportunities**

Kraemer et al. (2011) capture the relationship between loyalty and alignment with an internal career path, saying, "No other combination of career development initiatives builds loyalty as strongly as viable internal career opportunities." Organizations should develop appropriate internal career ladders and promotion structures that provide opportunities to utilize developing skills during employment. Communicating the criteria for promotion and career paths enhances the commitment of high-potential employees (Dries & Pepermans, 2008). Fostering skill attainment decreases employee turnover in tuition reimbursement programs (Benson et al. 2004).

### **8.3 Fostering Supportive Leadership**

Organizational attention to the career-related performance of superordinates needs to be balanced with training to nurture practical career support skills (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010). The focus should be given to

Career conversations, feedback on development, learning opportunity identification, and supporting the directions a person wishes their career to progress. Retention of leaders and followers was shown to increase through more supportive supervision in leadership development programs (Park et al. 2018). Similarly, Rafferty and Griffin (2006) showed that leaders trained in developmental behavioural approaches in leadership caused followers to exhibit higher commitment levels and lower turnover intentions.

### **8.4 Improving Program Visibility and Accessibility**

All eligible employees should have equitable access to career advancement opportunities, and the selection criteria must be transparent and impartial. Fairness regarding the distribution of developmental resources and procedures to access these resources critically impacts the loyalty fostered by such opportunities (Moorman et al., 1998). McDowall and Fletcher (2004) reported that transparent communication of selection criteria and development opportunities increased the perception of organizational support for development, which heightened commitment. Similarly, Crawshaw et al. (2012) proved that perceived fairness in managing careers strongly predicted organizational commitment and reduced turnover intentions.

## **8.5 Communicating and Assessing Program Effectiveness**

Organizational career development programs should be evaluated systematically, using a variety of measures, including employee satisfaction, retained skills, overall performance, promotion rates, and retention (Phillips & Phillips, 2016). Evaluation results should guide the continuous improvement of the programs. In a meta-analysis of evaluation studies on training, Arthur et al. (2003) found that organizations which evaluated training effectiveness systematically reported more significant transfer of training benefits and more favourable organizational outcomes than those lacking evaluation. Saks and Burke (2012) also noted that the retention of employees was more excellent in organizations where comprehensive training evaluation systems were in place and that there was a stronger link between training and employee outcomes.

## **8.6 Developing a Supportive Culture of Development**

Organizations need to foster cultures that enable continuous learning and development. Maurer and Lippstreu (2008) showed that positive learning cultures mitigated the negative consequences of lacking developmental support on organizational commitment. In the same vein, Ellinger et al. (2002) showed that the characteristics of a learning organization were positive predictors of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Supporting the development culture means encouraging and rewarding learning, providing necessary resources for development, promoting knowledge "catching" and "giving," and fostering continuous learning at all levels of the organization (Marsick & Watkins, 2003).

## **9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Despite offering a comprehensive review of available literature on the linkage between career development programs and employee loyalty, the review identifies several limitations and gaps that require attention and could serve as direction for future research.

### **9.1. Methodological Limitations**

Most of the available literature is based on self-reported cross-sectional data, which presents difficulties in establishing causality and introduces possible standard method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). There is a need for more sophisticated research designs, such as longitudinal and quasi-experimental designs with multi-source data collection. Also, research samples are frequently drawn from only particular organizations or industries, restricting the results' scope. Research is still necessary for different organizational settings, such as industries, organization size, and organizational culture.

### **9.2 Conceptual and Measurement Issues**

The literature shows divergent approaches to defining and measuring career development programs and employee loyalty, making inter-study comparisons difficult. More uniform metrics for the characteristics and components of the career development program should be crafted in future studies.

Moreover, bridge loyalty is usually operationalized in a limited manner as a commitment to the organization or intent to leave the organization. More holistic definitions of loyalty that regard behaviour, attitude, and emotion should be adopted in future studies (Hart & Thompson, 2007).

### **9.3 Contextual and Boundary Conditions**

Even though several moderating factors have been identified in this review, there is a gap in the literature regarding the context and boundary conditions of the relationship between

career development and loyalty. Future research needs to examine the impact of national culture, economic environment, stage in the organizational lifecycle, and technological disruption on this relationship. Also, there is a gap in the literature on how diverse populations of employees such as temporary, remote, gig workers, and multicultural cross-border workers, relate to the development of loyalty through the career development programs offered (De Vos & Dries, 2013).

#### **9.4 Integration with Other HR Practices**

It is suggested that further research focuses on how other HR practices influence employee loyalty through career development programs and development in other works. While some studies have looked into career development as part of high-performance work systems (Batt, 2002; Kehoe & Wright, 2013), there remains a gap concerning the strategic use of HR combinations that would foster loyalty. Moreover, other organizational initiatives such as work-life balance policies, performance management, and compensation systems may create potential conflicts or synergies with career development programs that require further investigation.

#### **9.5 Emerging Trends and New Directions**

Some factors require further investigation. These include:

1. The effect of Technology Career Development (TCD) through online learning, virtual mentoring, and career management applications on employee loyalty.
2. The impact of agile organizational structures on the efficacy of career development programs aimed at building loyalty in the absence of traditional promotional pathways.
3. The contribution of career pathways to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and their collective effect on employee loyalty.
4. The impact of organizational change and disruption through mergers, acquisitions, and downsizing on employee loyalty vs. career development program offerings.
5. The impact of emergent career models such as protean and portfolio careers on the organizational response to career development initiatives and employee responsiveness.

### **10. CONCLUSION**

This study aims to consolidate the available theoretical and empirical works on the interconnection of career development programs and employee loyalty. The data shows that thoughtfully crafted initiatives promote career development and improve loyalty through increased job satisfaction, skill enhancement, perceived organizational support, loyalty, and overall career growth. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these programs depends on the program's characteristics, the organizational context, individual differences, and implementation strategies. Career development programs that foster loyalty are more effective when there is organizational support culture, declared leadership advocacy, organizational culture, alignment with employees' aspirations, and attainable career prospects.

Investing in career development within organizations seeking to enhance competitive edge through human capital will promote enhanced employee loyalty. Understanding the factors tying development initiatives to loyalty outcomes and those impacting the outcome enables designing more informed development programs. As the diversity in work arrangements and the diversity of career journeys increase, organizational responses to career development

changes must similarly shift. Further research is necessary to develop work and career-focused frameworks, approaches, and structural paradigms.

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