

Influence of Organizational Climate on Career Progression of Engineers: Evidence from a Leading Telecommunication Company in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: Career progression is a phenomenal factor in the industry, where it starts someone's career from the beginning and flow till, he/she retires. There are numerous factors affecting the career progression of an employee. Early studies show that there are so many areas in concern related to Sri Lankan culture, telecommunication sector, career progression etc. This study specifically investigates on the impact of organisational climate to the career progression. In this study, a structured questionnaire was shared among 138 participants and then was analysed via SPSS version 20. Descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and multiple regression analysis were used to analyse the collected data. Organisation climate was further split in to four dimensions, which are psychological, structural, social, and bureaucratic. The analysis revealed that the organisational climate was having a positive strong significant relationship over career progression. The findings suggested that the management should focus on few strategic human resource management practices to improve the career progression.

Keywords: *Career Progression, Organizational Climate*

Introduction

Human resource management is utmost important in today's world economy. A company can sustain and groom according to the approach on strategic human resource management. According to Shivarudrappa, et al., (2010, p. 3), the current competitive environment thoroughly depends of the quality of the human resources in a company at the exact time period. "Good management and the establishment of a positive employment relations climate means that an organisation is better able than its competitors to recruit, retain and motivate staff" (Torrington, Hall, Taylor, & Atkinson, 2020, p. 18). Typically, an employee starts their career at the age of 20 – 25 and ends around 60 – 65. Throughout the ages, employee is expected to have a growth in their career, which is called career progression. There are two main factors affecting the career

progression, which are individual and organisational. Individual factors are related to the specific person. This depends on this family/social background, attitudes and beliefs, personality, and individual discretions. Organisational factors are affecting almost all the individuals in the company. Fair policies with good remuneration facilities alongside with a career ladder are some of the key points in organisational factors. Besides, according to Schneider & Barbera, (2014, p. 7), there are typologies such as process, clan, hierarchy etc for culture orientations. According to Hidayat & Latief (2018), there are many important factors in the context of employee development including individual characteristics, that greatly affect the capacity as well as core competences of employees. Organisational climate plays a pivotal role in an employee's growth. Hidayat & Latief (2018) states that organizational climate greatly affects the enthusiasm at work due to conducive

situations and support performance. Key companies in the world invest in the employees so that the company would also grow eventually. For an example, knowledge matters a lot in the industry. Shanker, et al., (2017) states that, to have a competitive advantage and innovation, employee knowledge is crucial. Increasing the knowledge level is a good way to grow the career of an employee.

Research Problem

As SLT is delivering technical solutions to the nation, engineers are instrumental at work. Currently, there are more than 600 engineers working at SLT in grades, 1. Engineer – A5, 2. Engineer – A4, 3. Senior Engineer – A3, 4. DGM (Deputy General Manager) – A3, 5. GM (General Manager) – A2, 6. Chief Officer – A1. This study consists only for the engineers in grades A5 to A3.

Engineers are recruited to SLT in the following methodologies

- ❖ Internal promotion
Technical officers can be promoted after they obtained the associate membership from IESL followed by exam and interview.
- ❖ External recruitment
Any engineer, who is having a BSc or above degree with less than 30 years of age, can be recruited followed by exam and interview.

Just after joining/promoting as an engineer, they are having a great attitude and fresh knowledge. Then, majority of them stagnate in a particular point in their career due to various seasons. It starts when the employee comes to a stage, where he/she is wondering about the career goals, “yet relatively little is known about the factors influencing career goals and when and how career goal setting occurs” (Greco, Kraimer, & Chen, 2020).

Further, following symptoms are identified.

1. Issues in professional level upgrades:
It was observed that when an engineer is going to complete the Chartered qualifications, they had lack of experiences in few areas. Chartered Engineer should have the capability of demonstrating 17 competencies according to the UK-SPEC (Engineering Council, 2020). But there are some instances where Engineers do not fulfil multiple criteria's since they have been stagnated for over 10 years in a single location.
2. Engineers are unable to move out:
There are cases where the specific job is only available at the company. With that experience, employees cannot apply for another job even in the same industry.
3. Lack of explicit knowledge of engineer:
Most of the engineers have not upgraded themselves after their basic degree. Hence, they do not have an idea on the latest updates in the world. Since the telecommunication industry is changing rapidly, this has become a major concern.
4. Lack of tacit knowledge of engineer:
Since the engineers are doing the same job over many consecutive years, they are not exposed to lot of projects with multiple changes in the nature. Even though they are well experienced in their job, they cannot even sort out a simple enhancement or issue.

Research by Arvanitis, et al. (2016) shows that the innovation improves the performance of the employees, whether they will not stagnate in the current position. Similarly, it is understood that the career growth is happening up to some

level in the telecommunication industry, but it saturates very quickly. Current organisational career path for SLT engineer is a very complicated process. Unless they go in DGM – GM – Chief Officer very quickly, they will be stagnated in the senior engineer A3 grade. In recent times, though engineer is eligible to be a DGM, it took average 12 years to become a DGM.

Due to above, engineers automatically become loyal soldiers, where the employer “intends to keep employees for longer periods, but such employees do not need specialised skills to succeed” (Oppong & Nisar, 2017). Hence, the employer sometimes will not give lot of benefits and take a tremendous work out from the employees. Thus, heavy workload keeps the career progression away from the employees.

So, the research problem statement has been taken as the “influence of organization climate on the career progression of engineers at Sri Lanka Telecom”.

Accordingly, following has been identified as the research questions.

- What is the status of organisational climate in SLT, relevant to the engineers?
- What is the status of career progression of SLT engineers?
- Is there any relationship with organisational climate and career progression of SLT engineers?
- What are the suggestions to enhance the career progression of engineers at SLT?

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the status of organisational climate in SLT, relevant to the engineers.
- To identify the status of career progression of SLT engineers.

- To identify the relationship with organisational climate and career progression of SLT engineers.
- To make recommendations to support engineers on their career progression.

Literature Review

Telecommunication Sector Employees in the Globe

Uddin, et al., (2013) showed that the employee performance is governed via motivation, rewards, and codes of conduct. Conflicts are well managed by regular meeting and open discussion. It often improves organizational culture while promoting open learning. According to Mehmood, et al (2017) and he suggests that the motivation depends on gender, age group, education, income, marital status, sector, managerial level and years of experience. A research based on Telkom Kenya suggests that the employees “were motivated by the compensation and benefits structure set-up in the organization” (Otera, 2018). In general, it is known fact the remuneration is a critical fact in this industry. Further, a research based on engineers in UK’s national telecommunication service providers suggest that change is an inherent feature in the telecommunication industry and “historically, change was embraced as part of the job and was seen as inevitable, even desirable” (MacKenzie, Marks, & Morgan, 2017).

Research by Shangase & Proches (2014), which was based on females in telecommunication industry, found out that there are not enough opportunities in leadership development. Yet, they have identified that the female workers are capable of handling leadership positions. Further, a research based on selected multinationals at Ghana in telecommunication industry shows that “male employees see their female

counterparts as subservient, creating a sense of entitlement instead of a competitive environment” (Appiah, Adeyeye, & Gikunoo, 2021). Adaptation to the rapid change is a challenge indeed especially in later part of a career. A research based on engineers in UK’s national telecommunication company suggests that the occupational identity/reputation is a key phenomenon. “Enduring role of occupational identity in navigating change, both in terms of organizational change and major transitions in the life course” (MacKenzie & Marks, 2019).

Career Progression

According to Martocchio (2019, p. 245), career is a “general course that a person chooses to pursue throughout his or her working life” and career path is a “flexible line of movement through which a person may travel during his or her work life”. Martocchio (2019, p. 245) further describes, that career progression can be happened in the traditional path, where the employer moves vertically upwards from the current job to the next level position. In SLT and Sri Lankan context, this is the progression hierarchy.

Seniority is one of the advantages in someone’s career progression. However, during recent research in Korea, “Contrary to the assumption that seniority plays a marginal role today; we found seniority still to be pronounced and important in Korean HRM” (Horak & Yang, 2019). Depends on where you are in the globe, the influence on the seniority in career progression will be varied. In fact, the ‘tacit’ knowledge, which is “personal and difficult to express, such as beliefs, insights, experience, and know-how” (Project Management Institute, 2017, p. 100), will be higher with the experienced employees. Organisation culture is a critical aspect on the career progression. “The organizations should support their employees in terms of creation of a career

progression culture and providing career support by the senior management, the outcome of which is the increased career satisfaction” (Wickramaratne, 2020). When an organisation becomes a part of your family, you intend to follow the inherent family cultures. Mentoring, coaching, and training should be a mandatory requirement for the career progression. Specially, “mentoring becomes an integral and essential part of one’s growth, and begins early in life with parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, siblings, and friends as the obvious and traditional contributors to these processes” (Busse, 2021). Coaching and training will be required for early days of someone’s career.

Sri Lankan Industry

According to Malmadana Kapuge & Smith (2007), Sri Lankan garment industry is having the following advantages, which are 1. Cheap labour 2. High-labour standards 3. A literate labour force 4. Investment-friendly government policies 5. Strategic shipping lanes. Further, Malmadana Kapuge & Smith (2007), had stated the following disadvantages as well, which are 1. Readily apparent: long lead times 2. Lack of product development 3. Weak marketing 4. Low labour productivity partly due to outdated technology. The point is most of the above advantages and disadvantages are common for all other industries in Sri Lanka.

There are few common issues arise in the HRM due to the low economy of the country. Research (Manoharan, Dissanayake, Pathirana, Deegahawature, & Silva, 2020) based on construction industry highlights the following key highlights out of 73 issues, which are 1. Lack of training facilities for labourers 2. Delay in salary payments 3. Lack of motivation for labourers 4. Low salary for labourers 5. Poor performance evaluation of labour skills. Research was done to

understand the work life balance and the employee performance by Mendis & Weerakkody (2017), where they had found out it was well balanced. “employees benefit by feeling less stressed and happier both at work and at home. And more people have the opportunity for paid work. Ultimately, these things cause to increase employee performance” (Mendis & Weerakkody, 2017). A research based on the customer brand switching behaviour in the telecommunication sector had identified that the emotional appeal and the products and services were more important than the other variables such as vision and leadership, social responsibility, financial

performance etc. (Jayawickramarathna, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

The framework was built upon dependent and independent variables. Dependent variable is the career progression, and it is independent variable is the organisational climate. Organisational climate itself is having many definitions. According to Pines Model (Kusnan, 2005), work climate in an organisation can be measured by 1. Psychological dimension, 2. Structural dimension, 3. Social dimension, 4. Bureaucratic dimension. In this research, all above dimensions have been taken as the independent variables.

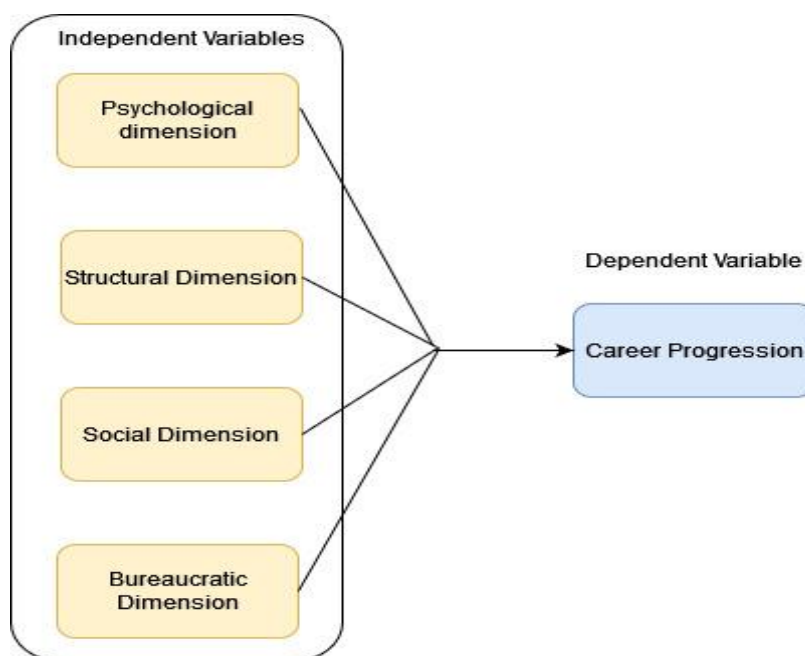


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Definitions of the independent variables are described below.

- **Psychological Dimension**
This can be taken as the “workload, lack of autonomy, lack of self-

fulfilment and lack of innovation” (Badaruddin, Dwinanda, Fatmasari, & Hidayat, 2020). Job satisfaction, work-family balance, management/organisation structure,

goals, and violence in the working place (Lumen, 2021) are also key parameters in this independent variable.

- **Structural Dimension**
This covers the variables “such as physical, sound and level of harmony between work needs and physical structure” (Badaruddin, Dwinanda, Fatmasari, & Hidayat, 2020). Further, this illustrates the internal characteristics of an organisation.
- **Social Dimension**
This covers the “aspects of interaction with clients (in terms of quantity and nature of the problem), colleagues (level of support and cooperation), and supervisors (support and rewards)” (Badaruddin, Dwinanda, Fatmasari, & Hidayat, 2020).

“Social skills such as dialogue, engagement, transparency are essential and supported by community values as trust, respect, fairness, harmony and care” (van Marrewijk, 2004).
- **Bureaucratic Dimension**
This includes “laws and regulations of role conflict and role ambiguity” (Badaruddin, Dwinanda, Fatmasari, & Hidayat, 2020). Bureaucracy is a form of “formalized, hierarchical, specialized with a clear functional division of labour and demarcation of jurisdiction, standardized, rule based, and impersonal” (Olsen, 2006) idea.

Development of Hypotheses

Following hypothesis is generated to understand the career progression and the organisational climate.

H1: There is a relationship between organisational climate and career progression

H1_a: There is a relationship between psychological dimension and career progression

H1_b: There is a relationship between structural dimension and career progression

H1_c: There is a relationship between social dimension and career progression

H1_d: There is a relationship between bureaucratic dimension and career progression

Methodology

There are multiple ways and methods to do the operationalization. The researcher selected the onion approach, which has 6 layers, and the core is having the data collection and analysis (Saunders, et al., 2019, p. 129). The first layer is the research philosophy. By considering the ontological, epistemological, and axiological parameters, positivism philosophy was selected. For the second layer, deductive approach was selected, since the research started with a theory, where the researcher understood from the literature review and the researcher is defining a strategy to justify the theory with quantitative examples. The third layer is methodological choice. Since the research was going to have more specific and realistic figure, quantitative research design was selected. The fourth layer is research strategies. Survey strategy was used in this research as it is usually matching with deductive approach as well as to convert this to an “exploratory and descriptive research” (Saunders, et al., 2019, p. 194). The fifth layer is the time horizon and due to the limited time, where the data is collected only once, cross-sectional time horizon was used in this research. For the final layer,

Questionnaire, SPSS, excel were used to data collection and analysis.

Sample

There are more than 600 engineers in SLT, who are scattered across the country, in different organisation positions. While respecting the timelines in the research, engineers who were currently in A3 to A5 grades and currently not in DGM or above positions were taken as the target population. Further, engineers who recruited in 2020/2021 are not having enough idea on the specific details relevant to the organisational climate, as they were not exposed to all the segments. So, the target population was 210. According to Krejcie & Morgan (1970) developed model, sample size was obtained from Kenpro (2012) site. Accordingly, 136 sample size was required to obtain from 210 population size. Data collection method was mainly focused via online survey, which was developed by google forms. This was developed by analysing the Minnesota satisfaction questionnaire model (UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, 1977) and the research from Kusnan (2005). Google form carried out structured questionnaire with 35 questions in 4 different pages in a five-point Likert scale. Further, mails were also sent to the employees who preferred mails. Then, those who were reluctant to fill the forms, they were taken as researcher completed questionnaire with face-to-face questionnaire as well as telephone questionnaire were conducted. Since all of

136 engineers did not respond due to their busy schedule, a second iteration was also done by reaching 50 more and 138 samples were collected finally. The data analysis was entirely based on primary data given by the employees by answering the questionnaire hence survey method adopted by the study.

Study Setting

The study's main goal is to examine the link between the dependent and independent variables; hence this study was analytical or in hypotheses testing in nature. The goal was not to demonstrate a clear cause-and-effect link between the factors. As a result, the type of investigation used in this study was correlation. The unit of analysis is individual engineer at SLT.

Reliability

This was tested by Cronbach's Alpha via the SPSS software. "Cronbach's alpha reliability describes the reliability of a sum (or average) of q measurements where the q measurements may represent q raters, occasions, alternative forms, or questionnaire/test items" (Bonett & Wright, 2015). It was observed that the psychological dimension is having "Acceptable" range and the rest of the variables are having "Good" range of internal consistency. Hence, the questionnaire is a suitable for the research work.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Calculations for the Variables

Number	Variable	Chronback's Alpha	Number of Items
1	Psychological Dimension	0.746	7
2	Structural Dimension	0.891	7
3	Social Dimension	0.823	7
4	Beurecratic Dimension	0.861	7
5	Career Progression	0.834	7

Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

Five hypothesis were taken in to consideration in this study. Via descriptive analysis, mean and standard deviation of the variables were obtained as below.

Individual items have less than 0.75 standard deviation, which means all the given answers in 138 samples are very closeby. Mean value was also changing very closely from 3.3 to 3.9. Hence, the average answer is close to “Satisfied” range.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis for all Variables

Number	Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Psychological Dimension	3.6304	.51283
2	Structural Dimension	3.6366	.73050
3	Social Dimension	3.8944	.55188
4	Beurecratic Dimension	3.3449	.56595
5	Organisational Climate	3.6278	.45321
6	Career Progression	3.8820	.45730

Correlation co-efficient enables to understand the relationship with two variables. “A value of + 1 represents a perfect positive correlation . This means that the two variables are precisely related and that as values of one variable increase, values of the other variable will increase. By contrast, a value of – 1 represents a perfect negative correlation”. (Saunders,

Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019, p. 615). Accordingly, Psychological and Social dimensions were having positive strong relationship, whereas Structural and Beurecratic dimensions were having positive weak relationship. As a single indedpenant variable, Organisational Climate itself is having a positive strong relationship.

Table 3: Correlation Coefficient against Career Progression

Number	Variable	Correlation
1	Psychological Dimension	.518**
2	Structural Dimension	.418**
3	Social Dimension	.520**
4	Beurecratic Dimension	.344**
5	Organisational Climate	.581**

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Regression Analysis

“The process of calculating the coefficient of determination and regression equation

using one independent variable is normally termed regression analysis” (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019, p. 618). Regression analysis for the hypothesis H1 is as follows.

Table 4: Regression Analysis for the Hypothesis H1

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.581 ^a	.337	.332	.37364		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Climate						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.663	1	9.663	69.221	.000 ^b
	Residual	18.986	136	.140		
	Total	28.650	137			
a. Dependent Variable: Career Progression						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Climate						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.756	.257		6.820	.000
	Organizational Climate	.586	.070	.581	8.320	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Career Progression						

Above table shows that the coefficient of determination (R^2) as 0.337. This shows that the organizational climate has a positive influence in career progression of 33.7%. Rest of the 66.3% depends on the other reasons. Further, R values is positive and having a strong relationship. ANOVA model shows value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Hence, conceptual model is significant and having a relationship in-between independent and dependent

variable. Further, ANOVA model shows F value of 69.221. Following equation can be obtained by analysing the coefficients.

$$\text{Career Progression} = 1.756 + 0.586 (\text{Organizational Climate})$$

This indicates that, if organizational climate improves by one unit, career progression will be improved by 0.586 units.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis for the Hypothesis H1

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.603 ^a	.364	.345	.37012

a. Predictors: (Constant), Structural, Psychological, Bureaucratic, Social

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.430	4	2.608	19.035	.000 ^b
	Residual	18.219	133	.137		
	Total	28.650	137			

a. Dependent Variable: Career Progression

b. Predictors: (Constant), Structural, Psychological, Bureaucratic, Social

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.659	.263		6.314	.000
	Psychological	.267	.080	.300	3.336	.001
	Bureaucratic	.024	.066	.029	.356	.722
	Social	.192	.080	.231	2.404	.018
	Structural	.118	.051	.188	2.313	.022

a. Dependent Variable: Career Progression

Above table shows that the coefficient of determination (R^2) as 0.364. This shows that the organizational climate has a positive influence in career progression of 36.4%. Rest of the 53.6% depends on the other reasons. Further, R values is positive and having a strong relationship. Following equation can be obtained by analysing the coefficients.

Career Progression = 1.659 + 0.267 (Psychological Dimension) + 0.024 (Bureaucratic Dimension) + 0.192 (Social Dimension) + 0.118 (Structural Dimension)

This indicates that, if the independent variables are constant or zero, career progression will be constant in the value of 1.659.

Discussion

The research identified that overall, 3.6278 of mean for the organisational climate, which is closer to the satisfied field in the questionnaire. Accordingly, the dependant variable is also having

3.8820 of mean. Thus, it is understood that the engineers in SLT is having a positive idea in both organisational climate as well as career progression. Since the standard deviation is less than 0.5 in both dependant and independent variables, it is observed that this is quite common across the engineers. Other than that, the four dimensions in the independent variable (psychological, structural, social, and bureaucratic) also impact positively in career progression.

In the regression analysis, it was observed that the Beta value is 0.581 for organisational climate over the career progression. Hence it is observed that there is a significant impact on career progression due to the organisational climate. In the individual dimensions, it is observed that the Beta value is 0.300 for psychological dimension and the Beta value is 0.029 for bureaucratic dimension. Hence, from the multiple regression analysis it was noted that, all dimensions' impact on the career progression whereas, the impact from psychological dimension

is the highest and bureaucratic dimension is the lowest.

Correlation analysis found out that there is a positive strong relationship between organisational climate and career progression with 0.581 correlation coefficient. In the individual dimensions, psychological and social dimensions were having positive strong relationships related to career progression with 0.518 & 0.520 correlation coefficients. Further, structural, and social dimensions were having positive weak relationships related to career progression with 0.418 & 0.344 correlation coefficients.

Uddin, et al., (2013), Mehmood, et al (2017) & Otera (2018) suggested that the salary is a key phenomena in telecommunication sector in globe. In this research, it was observed that the salary received to SLT engineers are 3.20 in Likert scale, which is neutral. So, there is a chance that the engineers might seek high salary opportunities. MacKenzie, Marks, & Morgan (2017) identified that the change is an inherent factor in this sector and SLT engineers have acustom to this with 3.72 value in Likert scale. Thus the engineers are accepting the changes in SLT. Wickramaratne (2020) suggested to have a career progression culture to improve the job satisfaction. In this research, the overall career progression mean was 3.8820, which is closer to satisfied range. Thus the job satisfaction reflects on psychological dimension with 3.6304.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there is an impact on organisational climate to the career progression for SLT engineers. The hypothesis was built upon the conceptual framework on these two variables, whereas the independent variable was further split in to four dimensions, to test the relationship. From the research, it was

observed that career progression depends on 33.7% due to the organisational climate for the SLT engineers. The rest of the 66.3% depend on various other concerns, which were not tested in this research. The study further revealed the following aspects, which was built in the conceptual framework.

- Psychological dimension has a relationship with career progression
- Structural dimension has a relationship with career progression
- Social dimension has a relationship with career progression
- Bureaucratic dimension has a relationship with career progression

Implications for Policy Makers

Career advancement factor should be critically analysed by the SLT management for the engineers, since there are 37% of the engineers are stagnated in the same position for more than 10 years. Company policies should be revised and modified in a practical manner, so that everyone will follow that eventually without taking that as a hassle. Further, regular programs should be implemented to enhance the knowledge in the company policies. Aesthetic locations at work should be improved with overall improvement to the working condition. It will be supportive to relax the engineers even in a stressful job environment.

Implications for Managers

Salary given to the SLT engineer should be revised according to the industry standards. A study should be conducted comparing the engineers not only in Sri Lankan telecommunication sector, but also in the other industries to overcome in this. Technical knowledge and the capacity should be increased to develop the career of the SLT engineer. Sufficient training programs with hands on experience sessions will enhance these aspects. Proper respect and recognition

should be provided wherever necessary. Programs should be conducted monthly/quarterly/annually to motivate the extraordinary performances by the engineers.

Directions for Further Research

This research was based on one company in Sri Lankan telecommunication sector, which is SLT. There are multiple telecommunication sector companies in Sri Lanka such as Mobitel, Dialog, Airtel etc. Hence, the study can be further enhanced across all the companies and take a combined output for overall Sri Lankan telecommunication sector.

Further, individual company wise analysis can also be obtained. Recently recruited engineers were omitted in this study due to lack of exposure inside SLT. Further study can be done specifically focusing on them, whereas different factors such as comparison between their earlier organisations, support from the seniors, adaptation to SLT etc. can be taken as independent variables against their career progression. SLT senior officers (beyond DGM's) can be taken to a further study on their career progression as a retrospective study. It will support to justify/analyse the same results, which the researcher obtained from this research, in a backward direction.

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