

Research Article

The Moderating Effect of Organization Tenure on Job Rotation and Career Development

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Abstract: Career development serves as an important personnel factor with many consequences for business and individual self. The literature outlines many factors that can influence career development prospects, such as job rotation. To understand how such a relationship can be augmented further, the current study presents and discusses the moderating effect of organization tenure on the relationship between job rotation and career development. A survey instrument that included career development measures, job rotation and organization tenure was used to collect information from production workers in Japanese manufacturing companies in Malaysia. The study was conducted among 209 production workers and was analyzed by using hierarchical regression analyses. The result found that job rotation effects on career development are significantly stronger for employees with longer organization tenure than employees with lower organization tenure. The paper provides important research implications and suggestions for business owners based on the study findings. The authors also provide scope for future to guide researchers interested in studying career development, job rotation and organization tenure.

Keywords: *Career Development; Job Rotation; Knowledge; Skills; Organization Tenure*

1. Introduction

Career is defined as a sequential progression of skills, knowledge, attitudes, experiences and actions related with work-related responsibilities and activities over the tenure of employees' career life (Guan, Deng & Zhou, 2020). A variety of career development designs can develop a career for instance, workplace socialization, task enlargement, job flexibility, job rotation, workplace training and development, conferences and education (Collahan, 1996; Lazim, Faridahwati & Subramaniam, 2013; Mohan & Gomathi, 2015). Regarding job rotation practice, it has long been implemented in developing a career inside an organization because of its potential benefits to facilitate learning activities among employees (Campion, Cheraskin & Stevens, 1994; Lazim et al., 2013). Several studies reported that job rotation is one of the important training and career development tools (Raduan, 2002; Lai Wan, 2001). For instance, Raduan (2002) stated that job rotation is a common tool for improving skills and knowledge for all employees, especially among production workers in Japanese Manufacturing companies. It is also an appropriate tool for this group of employees because job rotation provides a considerable space for excelling their skills in an assembly line at a factory or manufacturing facility, whereby duties for production workers vary according to their skills.

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1.1. Problem Statement

An interesting side of job rotation is its effect on skills development. Job rotation also provides the right medium for production workers to develop various job-related skills and knowledge (Bolton & Gold, 2004; Friedrich, Kabst, Weber, & Rodehuth, 1998; Jiang, Hu & Wang, 2018). As pointed out by Raduan (2002), the central purpose of job rotation is for developing multi-skilled employees. History of job rotation practice could be tracked as early as the 1950s and was implemented among electrical engineers who were rotated from circuit design to fabrication to assembly. This practice also gave an opportunity to technicians to work on different equipment or in a new unit within the same assembly line. The same soul of job rotation also emphasizes flexibilities and utilization of skills and knowledge among operational workers in the manufacturing sector (Cosgel & Miceli, 2000).

On the other hand, job rotation practice and its effect on career development can be viewed from many areas of employees' development. For instance, some senior managers believe that job rotation is potentially the most effective career development tool for employees because it can give employees more opportunities to widen their skills based on the multitasking approach and special assignments. In line with this foundation, the importance of career development has been emphasized in the literature. Many researchers have empirically examined that job rotation correlates with career development (Campion et al., 1984; Lazim et al., 2013; Mohan & Gomathi, 2015). However, there is a scarcity of empirical studies on the moderating effect of job tenure on the relationship between job rotation and career development. The introduction of job tenure as a moderator is crucial because previous studies have argued that job tenure could be a stronger influencer between training and development interventions and careers (Jiang, Hu & Wang, 2018). For instance, Jiang et al. (2018) found that job tenure moderates the relationship between job plateau and career success, whereby the relationship was stronger for workers with longer tenure. Therefore, since the seminal study on job tenure in job rotation and career development fields, the role of job tenure as a moderator has attained substantial research attention.

1.2. Objectives

This study embarks on meeting the following objectives:

- i. To examine the influence of job rotation on career development.
- ii. To investigate the moderating effect of organization tenure on the relationship between job rotation and career development.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Job Rotation and Career Development

Career development has been of an interesting area of study for researchers and practitioners. Managing career development is important since it potentially impacts on the organization's human resources practices (Darwish et al., 2021) and employees' career life, personal life and social development. A career is defined as an individual process of developing and gaining experience, skills, knowledge and abilities throughout their work lives (Bolton & Gold, 2004). Thus it is not surprising that a career is always assumed to have related with individual career goals. Meanwhile, career development is the process of improving individual experience, skills, knowledge and abilities in order to achieve his or her career goals (Kirk, Downey & Duckett & Woody, 2000). In a similar vein, career development is also defined as a series of development activities that improve and strengthen employees' career in the future.

Concerning job rotation and career development relationship, the direct effect of job rotation could be justified based on three plausible reasons. Firstly, empirical evidence can be tracked outlining the positive influence of job rotation outcomes, including administrative knowledge gained among employees (Campion et al., 1994; Olorunsula, 2000; Orpen, 1994). For instance, according to Campion et al. (1984), job

rotation could be used to improve employees' administrative skills set. This would enable employees to gain and potential new jobs and get a better view of career possibilities. In a similar vein, employees who rotate through various departments or positions within an organization have greater chances of learning and developing new skills, knowledge, and attitudes. This effort enables employees to develop broader and deeper learning capabilities about organization business activities (Erikson & Ortega, 2006).

Second, according to Kaymaz (2010), technical knowledge accelerates during job rotation whereby, employees get to experience and learn different technical work that could positively impact career growth. Keeping in view of the knowledge like in the area of technical prospects of the work, job rotation enables people to gain more skills and command overwork and its effective completion which results in higher performance (Kampkotter, Harbring, & Sliwka, 2016), which ultimately can help employees to excel his or her career in organization. Third, according to Champion et al. (1994), business knowledge prospect of job rotation enhances individual abilities as an employee proceeds with several career experiences. Consistently, Lazim et al. (2013) have highlighted that several potential employee outcomes like satisfaction and organizational commitment through job rotation is attainment of business knowledge. Parallel to business administrative and technical knowledge, business knowledge has been termed to be of significance when it comes to fostering performance, satisfaction and commitment attitudes amongst the employees (Olorunsula, 2000). All these work-related outcomes indirectly will influence career growth opportunity inside an organization. For instance, Orpen (1994) has pointed out that when employees are rotated within an organization, it helps them gain crucial business knowledge relating to different tasks and job roles, thus enriching their capabilities and skills for more promising outcomes and behaviors.

Nonetheless, what remains to be empirically outlined, specifically how it can help employees in their career development. In sum, job rotation provides employees a platform to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of employees in relation to their career development. Skills and knowledge of both general roles and responsibilities that affect job performance allow employees to develop more accurate career planning (Erikson & Ortega, 2006).

2.2. Moderating Effect of Organization Tenure

Previous research and preliminary evidence on the influence of job rotation on career development has ignored the role of organizational tenure as a moderator, even though a few of scholars have suggested that employee's organization tenure should be a strong moderator on job rotation-career development correlation (Champion et al., 1994; Erikson & Ortega, 2001; Susan, 1996). For instance, according to Champion et al., (1994), job rotation is a common learning mechanism for employees who have less industrial experience, and they must be rotated more frequently as compared to those who have more industrial experience. This argument claims that employees with low levels of organization tenure should be encouraged to be involved in job rotation more frequently than those with longer tenure in the organization. This is consistent with an argument by Susan (1996) that the effect of job rotation on career development is likely to be uncertain because it depends on the duration of an individual's tenure in an organization. Moreover, new employees (those with less job tenure) should be rotated much more frequently because job rotation may enhance skills, knowledge and ability early in an employee's job tenure, but may then constant or decrease steadily at different paths of career development (Susan, 1996)

Second, job tenure is significantly related to employee's job experience, and job experience may be used as a valid predictor of career development (Erikson & Ortega, 2001; Lazim et al., 2013; Noe & Ford, 1992; Wright & Bonett, 2002). For instance, according to Wright and Bonett (2002), employees with low tenure levels always feel uncertain about their performance in a new job. The uncertainty could be changed by increasing their commitment and motivation if they find that they are provided with skills enhancement activities such as job rotation practice. This argument could justify the crucial effect of job rotation on career development prospects among younger employees compared to senior employees (Dell & Kumassey,

2013). It implies that some employees may not accept job rotation practice at the early age of their career, which may probably affect their readiness to adapt the job rotation practice within an organization.

Last but not least, it is theorized that job tenure and career development are not consistently related (Champion et al., 1994; Brown & Reich, 1997; Dell & Kumassey, 2013; Eriksson & Ortega, 2001). According to Dell and Kumassey (2013), organizational tenure has an intrinsic value to develop a mutual employment relationship between employee and employer. In line with this, job rotation on career development may also be influenced by organization tenure because it gives different values of job rotation to employees, which depend on their tenure in the organization. Empirical study has also found more direct evidence for the decreasing relationship between job rotation and career development with organizational tenure. For instance, Wright and Bonett (2002) have pointed out that the correlation between job rotation and career development may be very small or even negative among workers with high levels of tenure. This was expected because employees with high job tenure levels had a lack of interest in job rotation. Based on the above discussion, previous studies and researchers have argued that organizational tenure moderates the relationship between job rotation and career development. All these pieces of evidence suggest that organizational tenure could be a crucial variable when investigating the relationship between job rotation and career development. Consistent with these arguments, the following hypotheses on the moderating effect of job tenure on the relationship between job rotation and career development.

3. Conceptual Framework

This study aims to examine the moderating effect of organizational tenure on the relationship between job rotation and career development. In the present work, a research framework has been proposed based on literature review that explained foundation of the relationship between job rotation and career development and the moderating effect of organization tenure on this relationship. The proposed conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 1. The basic nature of the relation between job rotation and career development are justified based on the following reasons such as; (i) job rotation could be used as a practical way for enhancing employees career because it involves the process of improving individual experience, skills, knowledge and abilities in general and specific job requirements, (ii) job rotation could be used as in-house on the job training technique for improving employees' business, technical and administrative skills set. This would enable employees to gain and potential new jobs and get a better view of career possibilities. Meanwhile, the prediction for the moderating effect of organization tenure in the relationship between job rotation and career development is based on the reasonable assumption that job rotation is more effective in developing a career, especially for those who have less organization tenure and experience. For that reason, they must be rotated more frequently as compared to those who have more organizational tenure and experience. This statement gives a relatively strong reason to hypothesize that job rotation on career development may also be influenced by organization tenure because different levels of employee skills, knowledge and experiences will determine the strength of the effect.

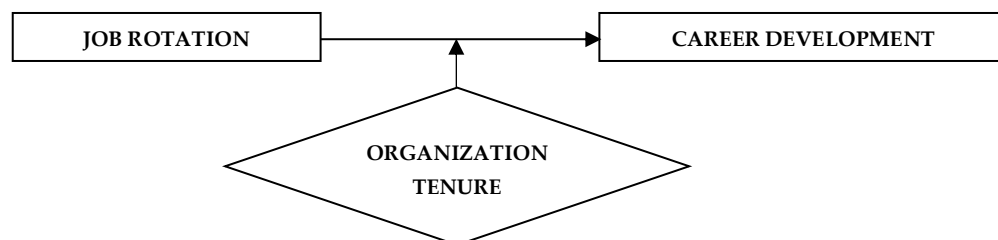


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3.1. Hypotheses

H1: Job rotation has a positive relationship with career development.

H2: Organization tenure moderates the positive relationship between job rotation and career development.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Nature of the Study

Research design is a crucial element in management and business research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). In order to answer the research questions, the present research was carefully designed by considering issues on methodological aspects such as quantitative research design, unit of analysis and data collection approach. This study used a quantitative approach to answer the research questions and research objectives. It was purposely employed for testing the influence of job rotation and career development and to what extent organization tenure moderates the relationship between job rotation and career development. The quantitative study was appropriate because it provides a good platform for identifying the relationship between the variables and not manipulating the variables as the study is conducted in the natural environment.

4.2. Population and Sampling Technique

The study population consisted of production workers in Japanese manufacturing companies in the central region of Malaysia. The target respondents were production workers who were involved and experienced in job rotation practice. In this study, convenience sampling was used to reach the targeted respondents. A total of 1000 questionnaires were distributed to production workers in 20 Japanese Manufacturing Companies. The self-administered approach was used to distribute the questionnaire because researchers have decided to use the 'drop and collect' technique for managing the administration of the survey.

This technique gives an excellent potential for personal contact (face-to-face contact and verbal communication) between the respondent and the research team member. After the three weeks of the data collection period, a total of 225 questionnaires were received. However, 16 responses were eliminated due to excessive missing data. Therefore, the reliable data for the study was 209, which represented a 20.9% response rate.

4.3. Measurement of Variables

Career development – Career development was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Ledkin and Juwaheer (2000). A five-point scale ranging from '1' as strongly disagree and '5' as strongly agree was used to answer each item. Examples of items include 'creates a working environment that allows me to advance in my career'. The items demonstrated an acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .85). Job rotation is operationalized as employee perceptions of skills and knowledge gained from the job rotation practice in the organization. This construct was measured using an instrument containing 17 items, adapted from Campion et al. (1994). All items employed a five-point scale ranging from '1' as strongly disagree to '5' as strongly agree. Sample items include "I am generally in favour of job rotation for training and development" and "I would be interested in job rotation in the near future". The items showed an acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .76). Lastly, organization tenure was assessed by the number of years an employee has worked for the company.

4.4 Tools and Techniques

In this study, the correlation analysis technique was used to identify whether one variable is dependent on the other(s) and is not concerned with the relationship between variables; instead, it estimates the degree of association between the variables. In fact, correlation analysis tests the

interdependence of the variables. Furthermore, the hierarchical regression technique was used to test the research hypotheses. It is a technique that allows the prediction of moderating effect scores on one variable on the basis of their scores on several other variables. It is a technique to show if job rotation can explain a statistically significant amount of variance in career development after accounting for moderating effect of organization tenure.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Demographic Statistics

The participants of the study were mainly females (67.5%), married (67%), of Malay origin (53%), and the majority had SPM/STPM as their highest qualification (36.4%). The mean age was 30.45 years, and the mean length of service was 6.78 years.

5.3. Correlational Analysis

Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient of the study. In terms of correlations amongst variables, as shown in table 1, job rotation ($r = .568, p < .05$) and organization tenure ($r = .342, p < .01$), were found significantly positively correlated with career development.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic and Correlations Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	JR	OT	CS
Job Rotation (JR)	4.23	2.34			
Organization tenure (OT)	6.78	2.12	.372**		
Career development (CS)	4.51	2.71	.568*	.342**	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

5.4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Table 2 shows the results of hierarchical regression that test the hypothesis for the moderating effect of organization tenure on the relationship between job rotation and career development. As depicted in Model 2 of regression analysis, job rotation ($\beta = .321, p < .05$) and organization tenure ($\beta = .235, p < .05$) were significant correlated with career development. When an interaction term was tested in Model 3, (job rotation and organization tenure), the interaction variable had a significant correlation with career development ($\beta = .271, p < .05$). Thus, H2 was supported. As indicates in Table 2, the addition of the organization tenure resulted in an R^2 change of .08, The results support the presence of a moderating effect of organization tenure. In other words, the moderating effect of organization tenure explains 8% of variance in the career development increase above and beyond the variance explained by job rotation and organization tenure.

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Result – moderating effect of organization tenure

Variables	Dependent variable (Career Development)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Job rotation	.276*	.321*	.137
Organization Tenure		.235*	.345**
Job rotation*Organization tenure			.271*
R^2	.28	.346	.389
Adjusted R^2	.24	.339	.387
R^2 Change		.346	.08*
Sig. F. Change	.000	2.53*	3.15*

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

To understand the meaning of the interaction between job rotation and organization tenure, the plot regression line was drawn as depicted in Figure 2. This plot represents the regression line of the positive

correlation between job rotation and career development and the moderating effect of organization tenure on this correlation. As shown in Figure 2, this plot indicated that when the organization tenure is low, increased involvement of employees in job rotation hardly affects the positive correlation between job rotation and career development. However, when organization tenure is high, the higher involvement of employees in job rotation practice, the lower the positive correlation between job rotation and career development.

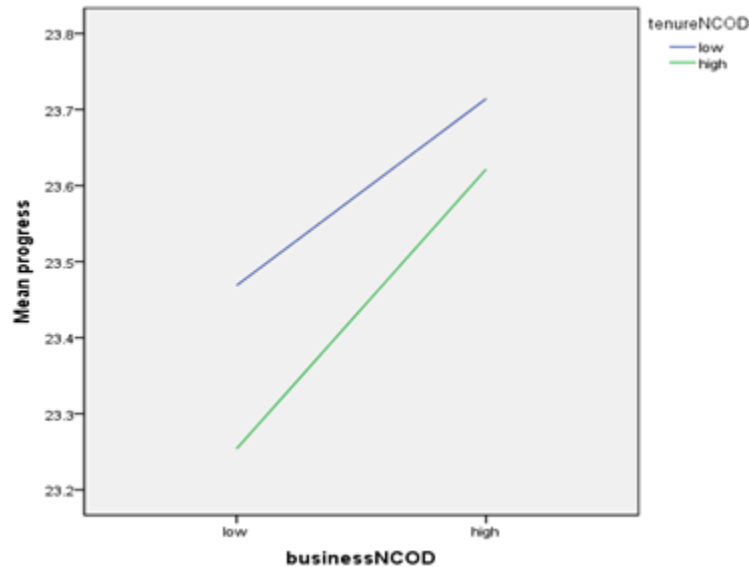


Figure 2. Slope for job rotation and career development on organization tenure

6. Discussion, Recommendation and Future Work

Overall, this research provides empirical findings for the relationship between job rotation and career development and the moderating role of organization tenure in this relationship. Concerning the first research objective that focused on the direct relationship between job rotation and career development, the result found that the hypothesis was supported. This implies that job rotation practice has a positive correlation with career development among production workers in Japanese manufacturing companies. This result is consistent with previous studies (Lazim et al., 2013; Campion et al., 1994). One plausible reason for this finding is the skills and knowledge gained from the job rotation practice that are important for employees' career progression. As noted earlier in the literature review, job rotation is an effective way to strengthen employees' skills and knowledge by offering them much access to diverse tasks and job-related activities. This is why many managers or supervisors appear to recognize the value of allowing production workers to move into roles in different areas of the assembly department.

The empirical result also found that organizational tenure plays a significant moderating role in the relationship between job rotation and career development. The results show that for the sample of production workers, there is a stronger effect of organization tenure on this relationship. Given the nature of production workers, where younger workers must have multi-skills in various units in the assembly departments, it is not surprising that the impact of organization stress on career development is stronger for employees with low tenure levels than for high level employees of tenure. This result is consistent with Dell and Kumasse (2013) claim that organizational tenure has an intrinsic value to new employees because it can develop a positive bond between the employee and employer and give different value of job rotation for enhancing their skills and knowledge. One of the plausible reasons for justifying the moderating role of organization can also be seen in employee learning. As theorized by experience based learning (Marsick, 1900), the experience of employees occupies a central place in all considerations of

training, teaching and learning. Thus, for example, employees' experience in the job rotation practice seems to have good value to employees in excelling their skills and knowledge in their early career because the experience they gained could be transferred to their actual jobs immediately.

On the other hand, like job rotation, learning at work is also influenced by employees' job-related needs and requirements. In our view the implementation of job rotation must reflect the significant qualitative changes emerging from employees at early career stage. It means that any job quality requirements must be addressed at the early tenure of production workers in the Japanese manufacturing companies rather than at the late-career growth stage. In this context, job rotation may be an effective learning mechanism for developing good skills and knowledge among new workers because they usually demand systematic support, guidance, and coaching from supervisors and managers. Overall, these explanations could justify why the results of this study demonstrate that the effect of organization tenure on career development was more significant among production workers with low job tenure than high job tenure.

The direct effect of job rotation on career development may significantly impact managers in two aspects. Firstly, managers need to determine the right duration for job rotation. This is because different production workers will take different amounts of time to learn in each unit or department, which will strongly affect their career development prospects. Second, managers need to support production workers to participate in job rotation actively. This idea is relevant because job rotation practice needs to be communicated regularly, whereby any new changes on its system and how it will affect employees' skills and knowledge cannot be overlooked. There are numerous ways organizations can offer support to production workers. For example, managers can establish a cohort for production workers to go through a rotational development program. Coaching teams for new rotated workers may also be used to guide and make the best out of it.

The results of the moderating role of organization tenure may suggest that managers may need to consider employees' tenure differences when implementing job rotation practices in Japanese Manufacturing companies. As stated in the finding, the effect of job rotation on career development was stronger for employees at low-level tenure than those at a high level of tenure. Close monitoring of skills and knowledge learned from its implementation shall be done regularly for job rotation to be implemented effectively. While the duration and time of job rotation within unit or department in assembly department is crucial, managers need to be open to accepting feedback from employees at the beginning of their tenure. It is essential to be addressed here that job rotation must develop specific job-related skills rather than general skills required because of job description and job specification requirements for working in the production department. This study also has practical implications regarding the stimulating effect of organization tenure on career development. This is because job rotation has given a lot of opportunities for production workers to develop skills and knowledge at an early stage of their career, which in turn will affect their career development in the future

7. Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study provides a good insight into the relationship between job rotation and career development and a significant moderating role of organization tenure on this relationship. Thus, examining the association of job rotation with other behaviour constructs and important moderating variables are welcomed for future studies.

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