

Nexus between career pathing and employee loyalty: A basis for strategic management plan in private schools

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Abstract

Continuous learning is essential for staying ahead in today's fast-paced business environment. This study employed a correlational design to examine the nexus between career pathing in terms of work environment, work engagement, leadership style, and work-life balance, and employees' loyalty in terms of integrity, service, and competence. More specifically, it aimed to propose a strategic management plan to enhance workforce commitment in private schools. To collect the needed data, validated questionnaires were distributed and retrieved personally by the researchers from the 102 employees of 8 private schools in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The findings of this study reveal a highly significant correlation among the demographic profile, integrity, and service of employees, supporting a p-value of 0.001. However, no significant relationship exists between the profile and the competence of the employees. This suggests that competence is more likely shaped by experience, skills, and professional training rather than inherent demographic factors. Moreover, there is also a significant relationship between employees' loyalty and career paths in the private schools, except for leadership style, work-life balance, and integrity. This suggests that leadership style or work-life balance cannot significantly impact integrity on their own, and ethical behavior may be more determined by personal character or firm culture than by leadership style or work-life balance. Thus, a strategic management plan was proposed to enhance employees' workforce commitment in private schools. Therefore, it is recommended that private schools consider establishing structured career pathing programs that include clear promotion tracks, opportunities for professional development, and mentorship initiatives.

Keywords: nexus, career pathing, employees' loyalty, competence, private schools

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1. Introduction

In an era where climbing the career ladder is a powerful driving force, companies that do not prioritize formal career pathing programs risk losing their valuable employees, which can drastically impact overall performance. This challenge is particularly critical in private schools, where employees greatly influence student success. Without clear career paths, employees may experience a standstill, leading to decreased job satisfaction, dwindling motivation, and increased turnover rates. In this context, Wikardo (2023) indicated a strong connection between career pathing and employee loyalty.

Moreover, continuous learning is essential to staying ahead in today's fast-paced business environment. Training programs make employees more adaptable, ensuring their career growth while enhancing the organization's ability to deal with industry changes. Without these efforts, companies risk high turnover and stagnation. Thus, leaders must understand that fostering engagement through support, transparency, and development opportunities is beneficial and crucial for long-term sustainability and success. Manjoo et al. (2023) emphasize a significant challenge for modern organizations: recruiting and retaining millennial employees who value career growth and development. Unlike previous generations, millennials are not primarily motivated by job security; they focus on meaningful career advancement, acquiring new skills, and enjoying a supportive work environment. The latest expectation is to go beyond formal employment obligations and invest in structured career growth, ongoing training, and open dialogue. These expectations must be met, and failing to do so can result in high turnover since millennials are more likely to seek greener pastures. Companies that offer a clear career path, mentoring, and training programs are more likely to retain top talent. Additionally, since millennials prefer constructive feedback over direct communication, organizations may need to adjust their open leadership practices to better fit their needs. Ultimately, organizations that adapt to shifts in workforce dynamics will gain competitive advantages through employee loyalty, innovative contributions, and sustained commitment. Career paths play a significant role in employee satisfaction and organizational productivity. Firms that focus on providing defined career advancement opportunities tend to cultivate a more satisfied and productive workforce. According to Agrawal & Tambe (2016), career moves benefit both employees and the organization's bottom line due to improved retention and performance. It's surprising how many businesses underestimate the long-term consequences of neglecting career development. This oversight can lead to higher turnover rates and increased recruitment costs, as employees who feel stagnant are more inclined to explore opportunities elsewhere. Conversely, companies that invest in their employees' professional growth nurture a more knowledgeable workforce and gain a significant advantage over their competitors by developing a committed team.

Career pathing provides a framework for employees to navigate their working lives, set career goals, and achieve long-term organizational development. When employees have strong career development prospects, Setyawati et al. (2020) explained that they demonstrate greater commitment, productivity, and loyalty. Quiet quitting, a phenomenon where employees psychologically and emotionally disengage from work while fulfilling their responsibilities, is becoming increasingly common in modern workplaces. This behavior is primarily attributed to a lack of solid career growth opportunities, insufficient support, and limited professional development programs. Aduna et al. (2020) identified that strategies must consider teachers' current salary levels and the necessary training for their professional growth. Private school institutions must reassess their human resource management policies, particularly regarding compensation and benefits, rewards, and retirement plans. Both employees and their organizations benefit when they exhibit loyalty and commitment to their workplace and profession. According to Valdez & Limos (2023), employees in developing economies who are satisfied with their jobs are significantly less likely to leave or seek alternative opportunities.

However, in many private schools, career pathways remain underdeveloped, leaving employees uncertain about their future. As a result, private schools may struggle to retain qualified educators, ultimately affecting educational quality and organizational stability. In this light, this study sought to bridge this gap by determining the nexus between career pathing and employee loyalty and proposing a strategic management plan to strengthen workforce commitment. The insights will enable schools to formulate policies that foster career progression, boost employee satisfaction, and enhance school performance. Ultimately, investing in structured career pathways is not only beneficial for employees, but it's also vital to the organization's overall success.

Statement of the Problem - This study aimed to determine the nexus of career pathing and employee loyalty and propose a strategic management plan to enhance workforce commitment. Specifically, the study was conducted to answer the following: (1) Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile and employees' loyalty in terms of integrity, service, and competence? (2) Is there a significant relationship between employees' loyalty and career paths in the private schools in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, in terms of work environment, work engagement, leadership style, and work-life balance? (3) What strategic plan may be proposed to enhance workforce commitment of the employees in private schools?

Significance of the Study - This study is expected to provide significant benefits to various stakeholders. First, to the community, the findings will allow future professionals to pursue careers in educational institutions. Second, the study will give job seekers knowledge about private school-run career pathing programs so they may make wise career choices. Third, employees benefit from knowing how career paths might enhance their working lives and stability in the future. This study highlights the importance of a structured career path to ensure that educators feel valued and supported. Fourth, the findings will support attempts to retain employees by enhancing loyalty via competence, integrity, and service for stakeholders and private schools. This study also contributes data to human resource managers and school administrators who may rely on these findings to design effective career pathing frameworks. The tools it gives are essential in helping to align organizational expectations with individual ambition, generating a culture of loyalty and commitment through the work it enables by offering career pathing programs that help meet employee needs and those of the organization. Sixth, for private school leaders, this research will assist school administrators in creating strategic plans that improve career development opportunities, resulting in greater job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and enhanced employee engagement. The results can be used as the basis for amending regulations related to pay, benefits, incentives, and training programs. Seventh, the research provides information that policymakers might use to advocate for career pathing programs in private schools. It focuses on the necessity for career development approaches that benefit employees and enhance corporate performance. Lastly, this research will be a good reference point for future research on employee loyalty and career pathing.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study - This study focused on determining the nexus between career pathing and employee loyalty among San Jose Occidental Mindoro private schools. The study included teaching and non-teaching personnel who had served in their respective schools for at least five years, ensuring that respondents had sufficient work experience to provide meaningful insights. The study was undertaken in five private schools in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro: Bethany School of Technology and Humanities, Inc., Divine Word College of San Jose, Grace Christian School, Maranatha Christian Academy, and Holy Family Academy. The study, however, had some limitations. Some respondents refused to answer the questionnaire due to time constraints and confidentiality issues. Also, several schools were not able to support the research request because their board of directors imposed some constraints and limited the availability of key personnel. Notwithstanding the challenges, the researcher made a conscious effort to ensure the collected data was reasonable enough to present significant findings about the connection between career pathing and employee loyalty in private schools.

2. Methodology

Research Design - This research utilized a correlational research design to determine the relationship among

the demographic profile of the respondents, employees' loyalty, and career paths in the private schools.

Respondents of the Study - Eight private schools that had been in operation for at least five years in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, served as respondents of this study. Since the study focused on schools that had been in operation for at least five years, the complete enumeration method was employed to guarantee that all eligible respondents' data were collected. The respondents of this study were employees from private schools; the researcher utilized 100% of the target population, comprising 102 respondents.

Research Instrument - The data for this study were gathered through a researcher-made questionnaire, which served as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire was presented in three sections: (1) demographic profile of respondents, (2) career pathing across four dimensions, including work environment, work engagement, leadership style, and work-life balance, and (3) employees' loyalty, assessed in terms of integrity, service, and competence. Career pathing was evaluated in the second section according to work-life balance, leadership style, work environment, and work engagement. Lastly, the third section assessed employee loyalty regarding competence, integrity, and service.

Six research experts validated the questionnaire to ensure its validity. These experts evaluated the relevance of each item to the research problem and its adequacy in assessing the intended constructs. In addition, the researcher-made questionnaire was tested for reliability to confirm the consistency of responses. A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents, who were not included in the final survey, to assess the questionnaire's reliability. The instrument comprised 42 items, including 24 on career pathing and 18 on employee loyalty. The split-half method was used for inter-item reliability testing, followed by the Spearman-Brown correction formula since the instrument was administered only once. The Cronbach's alpha values for the four career pathing dimensions were work environment, 0.905 (very high reliability); work engagement, 0.716 (high reliability); leadership style, 0.849 (high reliability); and work-life balance, 0.815 (high reliability). The findings for employee loyalty were as follows: competence, 0.794 (high reliability); service, 0.864 (high reliability); and integrity, 0.521 (moderate reliability). Based on the overall reliability coefficients, which demonstrated a high level of consistency, the questionnaire was approved for final distribution to the targeted respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure - The researcher sent eight request letters to selected private schools in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, each of which had been operating for at least five years. However, only five schools agreed to participate, while the others declined due to board restrictions and the unavailability of key personnel. A few employees from the participating schools were approved after the adviser reviewed the request letters. The researcher personally distributed the validated questionnaires and collected them from participants. Employees from the selected schools worked together to coordinate the distribution and retrieval schedule. The researcher ensured data collection was accurate and confidential by personally administering the questionnaires and closely monitoring the process.

Statistical Treatment of the Data - To treat the collected data, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used in this research to process data statistically for effective analysis of the demographic profiles, employee loyalty, and career pathing factors in private schools. To identify the correlation, strength, and the direction of the relationship between employee loyalty (measured in terms of integrity, service, and competence) and career pathing variables like work environment, work engagement, leadership style, and work-life balance, Pearson's r Correlation Coefficient was used.

Ethical Considerations - This research was dedicated to maintaining rigorous ethical principles to protect the welfare of all participants. Before collecting data, the researcher ensured that everyone who participated gave informed consent voluntarily after fully understanding the purpose of the research, procedures involved, risks, and benefits. Participation was purely voluntary, and people could withdraw without incurring any adverse consequences. The researcher also made it a point to treat all the respondents equally and respectfully, irrespective of background or employment status, to eliminate any bias. In addition, the study was conducted with the highest level of academic integrity, avoiding any form of data manipulation or misrepresentation and

ensuring proper credit was given to all sources. In developing the research instruments, the researcher was careful to avoid any possible harm, ensuring that the questions were respectful and non-intrusive to personal and professional experiences. The researcher also obtained the required clearances and approvals from the concerned academic and institutional authorities before initiating the study. Finally, participants may avoid responding to questions with which they were uncomfortable, and they were assured that they could seek access to the study's findings upon completion. These moral controls were instituted to safeguard the integrity of the research and the rights and dignity of all those who participated.

3. Results and Discussions

Table 1

Standard error, t-stat, and p-values for Hypothesis Testing (1)

Indicators	Standard Error	t-Stat	p-value	Interpretation
Demographic Profile→Integrity	0.573	3.363	0.001	Highly Significant
Demographic Profile→Service	0.451	3.534	0.001	Highly Significant
Demographic Profile→Competence	0.117	1.818	0.072	Not Significant

**Significant at $p < 0.05$

A statistical analysis was performed to evaluate the hypothesis related to problem 1. Table 1 reveals a highly significant correlation between the demographic profile and the integrity of private school employees and their profile and service, supporting a p-value of 0.001. This indicates that the demographic profile of respondents influences both integrity and service. In addition, a p-value of 0.072 falls on the demographic profile and competence, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This means there is no significant relationship between the demographic profile and competence. This suggests that competence is more likely shaped by experience, skills, and professional training rather than inherent demographic factors.

In summary, the demographic profile significantly impacts integrity and service but not competence. Thus, the impact on integrity is weak, meaning other factors influence ethical behavior more. However, demographic profile moderately affects service, but training and experience remain crucial. The observations made by Amegayibor (2021), Valdez and Limos (2023), and Marcus and Gupinath (2017) highlight important workforce management issues that institutions need to take into account. Integrity fosters trust, accountability, and moral decision-making, contributing to a strong corporate culture. Integrity is unquestionably a crucial quality in employees. Integrity is desirable, but it must be paired with abilities, expertise, and continual professional development to reap its benefits fully. Moreover, the analysis of demographic profiles by Amegayibor (2021) is especially applicable in the modern, diverse workforce. The demographic profile affects employees' adaptability, work attitude, and career mobility, and managing these can contribute to better productivity and job satisfaction. Organizations attuned to and responsive to these differences—either through customized training, inclusive policies, or career development programs—are likely to perform better. In addition, Marcus and Gupinath's (2017) take on age and employment perceptions presents a fascinating perspective: Older employees who encounter a more challenging job market should not automatically stay in their existing positions because of necessity. When companies provide senior employees with career growth opportunities and mentorship roles and support their skills development through upskilling programs, they demonstrate appreciation for their older workforce. Combining new talent with seasoned professionals results in a team that exhibits dynamism and completeness.

These studies stress that an organization can only succeed if its employees are deserving and try to target demographic factors. Implementing a deliberate approach to workforce development, from employees to the executive suite, prioritizing integrity, adaptability, and age-related attitudes, can help an organization cultivate a more engaged, high-performing team. Rizki et al. (2023) is an interesting read on the effect of demographics on employee retention. Although age, tenure, income, gender, and education have long been seen as critical determinants of whether someone stays or leaves, their research challenges some of these established assumptions.

Table 2*Standard error, t-stat, and p-values for Hypothesis Testing (2)*

Indicators	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	R-Square	Interpretation
Work Environment→Integrity	0.088	1.346	0.000	0.018	SIGNIFICANT
Work Engagement→Integrity	0.073	0.123	0.000	0.000	SIGNIFICANT
Leadership Style→Integrity	0.090	-1.009	0.316	0.010	NOT SIGNIFICANT
Work-Life Balance→Integrity	0.115	0.275	0.784	0.001	NOT SIGNIFICANT
Work Environment→Service	0.085	7.612	0.000	0.367	SIGNIFICANT
Work Engagement→Service	0.069	7.610	0.000	0.367	SIGNIFICANT
Leadership Style→Service	0.101	3.754	0.000	0.115	SIGNIFICANT
Work-Life Balance→Service	0.120	5.539	0.055	0.235	SIGNIFICANT
Work Environment→Competence	0.116	7.457	0.000	0.357	SIGNIFICANT
Work Engagement→Competence	0.085	9.646	0.012	0.482	SIGNIFICANT
Leadership Style→Competence	0.130	5.169	0.009	0.211	SIGNIFICANT
Work-Life Balance→Competence	0.164	5.386	0.000	0.225	SIGNIFICANT

**Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 2 reveals the influence of career paths in terms of work environment, work engagement, leadership style, and work-life balance on employee loyalty in terms of integrity, service, and competence. The p-values indicate statistical significance, and R^2 values indicate the strength of fit. Work environment ($p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.018$) and work engagement ($p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.000$) significantly impact integrity. However, the low R^2 values suggest that these variables explain little of the variance in integrity. Leadership style ($p = 0.316$, $R^2 = 0.010$) and work-life balance ($p = 0.784$, $R^2 = 0.001$) do not significantly impact integrity. This suggests that leadership style or work-life balance did not significantly impact integrity, and ethical behavior may be more determined by personal character or firm culture than by leadership style or work-life balance. Work environment ($p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.367$) and work engagement ($p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.367$) significantly and strongly impact service, accounting for 36.7% of the variance. This implies that staff would likely deliver improved service when they are in a positive environment and are operating at an engaged level. Leadership style ($p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.115$) also impacts service significantly but to a lesser degree. This implies that leadership can impact service, but it is not the overriding factor. Surprisingly, work-life balance ($p = 0.055$, $R^2 = 0.235$) is borderline significant in explaining service. Employees with a high work-life balance can be happier and more vibrant, thus offering better service. Work environment ($p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.357$) and work engagement ($p = 0.012$, $R^2 = 0.482$) are both statistically significant predictors of competence, with the effect of work engagement being the strongest. This suggests that employees who are highly engaged in their work tend to develop and demonstrate greater competence. Leadership style ($p = 0.009$, $R^2 = 0.211$) and work-life balance ($p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.225$) also have significant roles to play in determining competence. Employees with good leadership and work-life balance could be more likely and energized to develop their competence.

To sum up, integrity is moderately impacted by work environment and work engagement but not by work-life balance and leadership. Service is heavily affected by work environment and work engagement, with work-life balance also having an impact. Work engagement heavily affects competence, with work environment, leadership, and work-life balance also impacting it. Moreover, Karneli's (2023) research pointed out that a positive organizational culture, high work motivation, and a favorable organizational climate can foster employee integrity. These are not just drivers of ethical conduct but also enhanced general performance. If employees are motivated, work in a positive culture, and are guided by the same values as the organization, they are most likely to possess integrity. This points out the organizational initiatives that create a culture that encourages ethical standards and promotes productivity and commitment. The findings of Valdez and Limos (2023) suggest that employee loyalty, to some extent, still depends on an open career path but not exclusively on this.

Contrary to the widespread impression that career development is the only guarantee of retention, the study emphasizes leadership style, working environment, work engagement, and work-life balance more than career

development. A school administrator's ability to build a positive and challenging work environment is a stronger driver of employee commitment. This aligns with the belief that employees are more likely to remain if they feel valued and engaged and have a work-life balance. In contrast, even the most formalized career development will lose employees if these workplace conditions do not exist. Furthermore, Olga and Nurraihan (2025) observe that the success of an organization hinges on a core reality of organizational management: Employees perform best in an environment where they are valued, cared for, and empowered to develop. Leadership and organizational care are not niceties but are key drivers of engagement and retention. When the management makes the extra effort to invest in employees' well-being and professional growth, it fosters a culture of trust and loyalty, eventually benefiting employees and the organization.

Table 3

Proposed Strategic Management Plan for Private Schools

Strategic Initiative	Objectives	Action Steps	Persons Involved	Time Frame	Success Indicator
Work Environment Enhancement Program	To create a work environment that's positive and supportive, helping to build employee loyalty.	Make it a habit to assess the work environment and hold feedback sessions regularly. When it makes sense, consider introducing flexible work schedules.	School Administrators, HR Department, Faculty & Staff	6-12 months	Improved job satisfaction and lower rates of turnover.
Employee Engagement and Development Program	To improve employee motivation and professional development through focused training and mentorship.	Facilitate regular team-building exercises. Develop mentorship programs that link senior and junior staff members. Offer continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities.	School Administrators, HR Department, Faculty & Staff	1 year	Boosting employee engagement scores and enhancing teaching effectiveness.
Leadership Development Initiative	To develop practical leadership competencies in school administrators and principals, focusing on ethical leadership.	Provide leadership training and workshops. Institute coaching and leadership feedback systems. Develop a leadership succession plan.	School Administrators, HR Department, Faculty & Staff	6-12 months	Enhanced leadership rating scores and better decision-making.
Work-Life Balance Optimization Program	To strengthen employee well-being by encouraging a healthy work-life balance.	Implement wellness programs (e.g., mental health seminars and fitness activities). Offer flexible scheduling where applicable. Promote family-friendly policies.	School Administrators, HR Department, Faculty & Staff	Quarterly	Increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and enhanced employee well-being.
Future Research and Development	To encourage continuous research on employee loyalty and career paths for sustained improvements	Conduct further studies on other factors influencing employee loyalty. Establish research partnerships with educational institutions. Implement pilot programs based on research findings.	Researchers, School Administrators, Faculty Members	Quarterly	Published research and data-driven policy enhancements.

This strategic management plan presents a systematic method for building employee loyalty in private schools via career pathing activities. It is vital that schools enrich the workplace environment, increase work engagement, promote effective leadership, and foster a healthy work-life balance to develop a committed, moral,

and service-minded team. The suggested strategies not only plug current gaps but also set the groundwork for a sustainable and motivated teaching community. Instituting these ventures will ultimately lead to increased job satisfaction, enhanced service, and long-term institutional success. This strategic management plan aligns with the recommendation of Valdez & Limos (2023), who emphasized the importance of providing employees with a clear career ladder. Moreover, the study of Samat et al. (2020) underscored that organizational performance is significantly influenced by having the right people in the team. This suggests that effective career pathing should focus on vertical movement and ensure that individuals are strategically placed where their skills and values align with the institution's mission.

4. Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings: demographic profile and integrity have a significant but weak relationship. The high standard error (0.573) indicates less precision in estimating this relationship. Despite statistical significance, other factors likely have a more substantial influence on integrity. Demographic factors significantly influence service. The standard error (0.451) suggests moderate stability in the estimate. There is no significant relationship between demographic profile and competence (p -value = 0.072). Competence is better influenced by professional training, experience, and skills rather than demographics. High t -statistics with low p -values confirm significant relationships for integrity and service, but not for competence. Standard errors indicate that estimates for competence are more precise than those for integrity and service. Integrity is slightly influenced by work environment and engagement, but leadership style and work-life balance do not significantly impact it. Service is highly affected by work environment and engagement, explaining many of the variations. Leadership style plays a moderate role in influencing service, but it is not the primary factor. Work-life balance significantly affects service, indicating that a well-balanced work-life dynamic may improve employee performance. Work engagement strongly affects competence, followed by work environment, leadership style, and work-life balance. Work engagement has the most significant influence on competence, which indicates that highly engaged employees develop stronger skills and capabilities.

5. Recommendations

Based on the important findings, the following recommendations were presented: Private schools may consider establishing structured career pathing programs that include clear promotion tracks, opportunities for professional development, and mentorship initiatives. This will ensure enhanced employee involvement, job satisfaction, and long-term commitment. School administrators, human resource professionals, and the board of directors can enhance the work culture by developing leadership, employee recognition, and work-life balance programs. Strengthening these aspects can improve employees' sense of integrity, service, and competence. Lastly, future researchers may explore additional factors beyond demographic profiles and career pathing, such as compensation, organizational culture, and technological advancements, to gain deeper insights into employee loyalty determinants in private schools.

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