

Abstract

Stratified Systems Theory classifies roles within organisations according to varying discontinuous levels or layers of work (Stamp, 1981). These levels are differentiated according to the time frames within which employees typically see results, the level of responsibility they are expected to take on, as well as the complexity of the work they are engaged in (Jaques, 2007a). The aim of the current study was to contribute towards existing literature on managerial derailment by investigating whether there is an association between the level of work and the risk of derailing behaviour, and if the degree of fit between an individual's level of work and their current and future cognitive capability is associated with the risk of derailing behaviour. Derailing behaviour is conceptualised as destructive actions that have a detrimental effect on the career progression or success of an individual (Freedman, 2005). Archival data was made available to the researcher from a single large, international telecommunications organisation based in South Africa. Participants who had been assessed using the Modified Career Path Appreciation (MCPA) as well as the Hogan Development Survey (HDS) were included in the study. The final sample (n=252) consisted of managers working at various levels of the organisation who had been assessed for the purposes of either selection or development during 2015.

Overall, the research hypotheses were not supported. Contrary to what was expected, a higher level of work was not associated with a greater risk of derailing behaviour. In fact, a greater number of derailers were evident at a lower level of work when compared to a slightly higher level of work. Furthermore, contrary to what was hypothesised, those whose level of work exceeded their current or future capabilities did not display a greater risk of derailing behaviour than those who achieved fit with their environment. On the contrary, a greater risk of derailing behaviour was found for those whose current or future capabilities exceeded that required by their level of work. No differences in the types of derailing behaviour reported were found to be associated with the level of work an individual is operating at, the degree of fit they experience between their current capability and their work environment, or the degree of fit they experience between their future capability and their work environment. All the analyses conducted reinforced the same finding that participants in the sample

were more likely to report a high risk of displaying derailers falling into the 'moving against' category, regardless of these factors.