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## INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED RELATIONAL SKILLS ON CAREER SUCCESS AMONG SENIOR BANK EMPLOYEES IN LAGOS STATE NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The study examines the relationship between perceived relational skills and career success in the Nigerian banking industry. The research design used was a cross-sectional survey, and data was collected from senior bank employees in five different banks in Lagos State. The sample size consisted of 413 participants who met the eligibility criteria. The results of the study indicate that there is a significant relationship between perceived relational skills and certain dimensions of career success, such as interpersonal success, salary, and promotion. However, no significant relationship was found between perceived relational skills and overall career success, job success, life success, and financial success. These findings suggest that while relational skills may contribute to specific aspects of career success, they may not have a direct impact on overall career success. Based on the findings, it is recommended that banks incorporate the development of relational skills into their training programs and provide opportunities for employees to enhance their career success. Additionally, periodic psychological assessments and counseling can help identify areas for improvement and support employees in achieving their career goals. In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of the role of relational skills in career success among bank employees in Nigeria. While relational skills may not directly influence overall career success, they can have an impact on specific dimensions of career success, such as interpersonal success, salary, and promotion.*

**Key Words:** Perceived Relational Skills, Career Success, Nigerian banking industry



## Introduction

The problem of employees low career success in the Nigeria banking industry is a derivative of job frustration, which is a concept that human resource practitioners and industrial organizational psychologists study. It explains why some employees in the Nigerian banking industry succeed and why others fail despite equal commitment, educational qualifications and level of competence on the job. Indices of career success enables employees determine his level of job satisfaction, which in a great way depends on the employee's relational skills. It is evident that employees in the Nigerian banking sector have great expectations of career growth in their organizations, but prevailing circumstances in the sector make meeting such expectations a challenge (Okurame, 2012).

Judge et al. (as cited in Poon, 2004, p. 375) gives the following statement as a definition of career success: "the accumulation of achievements (real or perceived) arising from work experiences." Career success is an outcome of a person's career experiences. Career success may be defined as the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time. This encompasses the definition of career provided above. It also encompasses two meanings of success given by the Oxford English Dictionary (1989): "the attainment of an object according to one's desire," and "the prosperous achievement of something attempted." The first meaning suggests a form of success that is personally (i.e., subjectively) desirable, while the second suggests a form of success—prosperity—that is likely to rely on (largely objective) social comparisons. These alternative meanings suggest that there are two distinct ways of viewing career success (Arthur, Khapova&Wilderom, 2005).

The concept of success changes throughout the work lives of professionals. Young professionals perceive career success especially as an individualistic and multidimensional concept (Tu, Forret& Sullivan, 2006; McDonald, 2008). In this way, the generic term career success can be divided into objective and subjective forms (Nabi, 2001). Career success comprises both objective or extrinsic and subjective or intrinsic elements, and the variables that lead to objective career success are often quite different from those that lead to success as subjectively defined (Hetty, 2004). Extrinsic outcomes of career success (i.e., objective career success) comprise such visible outcomes as pay and promotions, and take a third-person perspective (Poon, 2004). There has been a tendency in the literature to give more attention to objective career success. An objective career success is defined as a sequence of official positions, salary changes, formal structures, and titles, all of which are publicly accessible and defined independently of any particular individual. Objective career success is therefore measured in terms of the society's evaluation of achievement with reference to extrinsic

measures, such as salary and managerial level (Hay & Hodgkinson, 2006). Intrinsic outcomes of career success (i.e., subjective career success) depend on a person's own appraisal of his or her success. Subjective career success refers to a person's own internal perspective on his or her success (Poon, 2004).

The idea of the protean career, managed by the person not the organization, was strongly advocated by Hall et al (2004), the criteria for success here being internal not external (Atkinson, 2002). Subjective career success is theoretically more complex. It refers to an employee's evaluations of his or her own career success with reference to self-defined standards, career stage, aspirations and the opinions of significant others. Subjective career success is a broad, multidimensional construct. It incorporates perceptions of intrinsic success (e.g., work-role, interpersonal success) and extrinsic success (financial, hierarchical success) with respect to achievements, aspirations and colleagues in the present organization (Nabi, 2001). Subjective career success may be defined as the individual's internal understanding and evaluation of his or her career, across any dimensions that are important to that individual. It has four dimensions, which includes: life success, financial success, job success and interpersonal success.

### **Statement of Problem**

Most bank employees do not consider such vital issues as how to make well-informed career choices, how to cope with conflicts between work and personal life, and how to arrive at career goals (Hall, 2002). Career development has become a significant component of policy development in many countries, because of its potential impact on the labour market. While there has been calls to expand the research on careers outside the West, to date, there are only few published studies on the career experiences of those in non-Western countries (Tu, Forret & Sullivan, 2006). Very few empirical research has examined the determinants of career success of bank employees in Nigeria by considering the dualities in the careers of bank employees (subjective and objective, individual and organizational), (Ismail and Mohd Rasdi, 2007).

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Social Exchange Theory**

The social exchange theory was propounded by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and reviewed by Blau (1964). The social exchange theory relates to the relationship between bank employees and their employers. It posits that this relationship is based on a rational exchange where employees provide skills, time, and effort for rewards such as salary, benefits, and job security. The theory emphasizes a



cost-reward analysis, where both parties assess their inputs and outputs to determine perceived profits, influencing their commitment levels. Dependence on the organization can lead to various outcomes, including attempts to restore equity when imbalances occur. The theory highlights that external factors, such as job market conditions, can impact this exchange relationship, leading to potential adjustments in behavior from both employees and employers. Ultimately, the success of this exchange hinges on the perceived balance of rewards and costs by both parties.

### **Review of Related Studies**

According to Kubat and Kurrzum (2009), relational skills are defined as beliefs, attitudes, preferences and interests about work that are related to job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a result of employees' perception of how well their job provides those things that are viewed as important (Adeyinka, et al., 2007). When the organisation fulfils the employees' needs and desires based on the extrinsic values, employee will enhance the psychological satisfaction, such as feeling valuable, helping the organisation to achieve its goals and expressing their talents in working (Adeyinka, et al., 2007). This confirms that positive work values among employees in organisation are important in increasing job satisfaction and job involvement; giving more attention on work values will help organisation in developing the human resource management system that is able to attract employees with the necessary relational skills, as well as enhance job satisfaction and job involvement among employees (Froese& Xiao, 2012).

In addition, cooperation between a supervisor and the co-workers in the organisation could potentially increase work values, increase job satisfaction, and job involvement which are strong determinants of employees attaining career success in the banking industry. Another study that investigated the relationship between relational skills and job satisfaction among nurses indicated that intrinsic and extrinsic relational skills enhanced job satisfaction and reduced intention to leave among nurses (Hegney, et al., 2006). Previous researchers found that relational skills have a significant relationship with job satisfaction. For example, Ho (2006) investigated the relationship between relational skills, job satisfaction and organisational commitment among 1047 nurses in Taiwan. The study revealed that relational skills positively related to job satisfaction. In the same vein, research by Lim (2010) among 92 employees of packaging industry in Penang also showed that intrinsic relational skills positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.

Further, Froese and Xiao (2012) found that there are significant relationship between relational skills and job satisfaction. This study was conducted among 500 whitecollar employees who are



employed by foreign companies in China. Findings from the study revealed that individuals who are able to and who readily change their behaviour so that it matches specific situations and make the best possible impression on others interact in different styles when dealing with different people. This is a further confirmation of relational skills having significant relationship with career success.

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a cross sectional survey design. The independent variable of the study was perceived relational skills, while career success was the dependent variable. This study took place in five banks with different branches located in different parts of Lagos state, Nigeria.

### **Sampling Procedure**

The multi stage sampling techniques was utilized in the selection of participants for the study. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the banks utilized in the study out of the 25 commercial banks that were licensed by the Central Bank of Nigeria. This involves listing out all the 25 banks, divide them into five groups, write the names of each bank on a piece of paper, wrap them up, then hand pick a bank from each of the five groups to represent all the 25 commercial banks. The banks selected after the simple random sampling are: First Bank Nigeria Plc, Guaranty Trust Bank, Plc, United Bank of Africa Plc, Union Bank of Nigeria Plc, Stanbic Bank, Nigeria Plc.

There was 39,045 bank staff in the five banks. The sample size was calculated using the sample size formular by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). A total of 413 senior bank officers were sampled, of which 82 each were selected from First Bank, Union Bank, Guaranty Trust Bank, and Stanbic Bank. A total of 85 senior bank officers participated from United Bank for Africa. Eligibility criteria were all senior bank staff with minimum of three years on the job. Reason for this is because any staff that must have spent three years on the job would have understood the culture, undergone relevant trainings and must have acquired the relevant relational skills required to attain high success on the job. Whereas, exclusion criteria involves bank employees who are not in the above categories.

### **Instrument**

**Perceived Career Success Scale:** Career success was measured with a career success scale (CSS) which is a 40 item-scale modified from the scale developed by Heredia (2007). The items measured the extent to which individuals perceive success in their career. The items were rated on 5-point Likert Scale with all them positively worded. The Cronbach Alpha for the scale is 0.91. The author also reported the Cronbach alpha coefficient of each of the career success dimensions as 0.93, JS (Job Success), 0.81, LS (Life Success) 0.89, FS, (Financial Success), 0.69 IS,(Interpersonal Success). Since

the original scale was in Spanish, it was necessary to translate them to English. Warwick and Sternson (1973) suggested that the problems of attaining linguistic equivalence through translation was wrongly focused on finding the exact “meaning” of words; the primary aim of translation, they argue, must be conceptual equivalence rather than strict lexical comparability. To achieve this proper lexical meaning, proper context, and proper response style, the translation process was developed following the procedures of Lesser (1067) as quoted in Warwick and Oarsperson (1973).The original and translated version was compared by two independent translators from the faculty of Arts of the University of Ibadan and discrepancies eliminated and corrected .The primary emphasis in translation was conceptual equivalence-comparability of ideas. For the present study, the scale yielded a coefficient Alpha and a standardized item Alpha of. .908.

**Perceived Relational skills:** This was measured using the interpersonal relationship skill scale developed by Okurame (2002). It is a 16 items scale which measures interpersonal relationship skill using a 5 point Likert scale. It has very good reliability as measured by the internal consistency Cronbach Alpha value of .91 and all the items were positively worded.The result of the pilot study to establish the reliability coefficient for the interpersonal relationship skill scale (IRSQ) for the population of interest showed an acceptable coefficient alpha of 0.91 and a Guttman split half reliability of 0.79. This led to the retention of which 15 items that was finally chosen for the main study. A high score on the scale indicate a high level of relational skills. In the present study, the 15 items yielded a standardized item alpha of 0.79.

An indication of the validity of the 15-item scale was established using the construct validity method with samples from banks similar to the respondents proposed for the main study. According to the author, convergent validity was also ascertained by correlating scores on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule by Rathus (1973) and the sociability scale by Buss (1989) while divergent validity was established with the shyness subscale of the sociability scale. The interpersonal relationship skill scale as reported by Okurame (2002) recorded a significant positive correlation with the Rathus Assertiveness schedule ( $r=0.57, p <.01$ ) and the sociability scale ( $r=0.53, p<.01$ ).

## **Results and Discussion**

This section presents the results obtained from the data analyses carried out. The analyses were undertaken with the aid of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). A zero-order correlation was performed to determine the relationship between career success, job success, life success, financial success, interpersonal success, salary, promotion and relational skills. This was shown in Table 4

**Table 4: Summary of 2x2x2 multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) showing the main and interaction effect of relational skill on career success**

Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	Df	M S	F	Sig.
Relational skill	Career success	247.971	1	247.971	.501	.479
	Job success	4.598	1	4.598	.035	.851
	Life success	2.404	1	2.404	.090	.765
	Financial success	1.534	1	1.534	.036	.851
	Interpersonal success	185.524	1	185.524	17.639	.000
	Salary	11.544	1	11.544	15.913	.000
	Promotion	90.791	1	90.791	101.561	.000

The result of the MANOVA used to test hypothesis one on table 4.8 above shows that there was a main effect of relational skill on interpersonal success  $F(1,405) = 17.64, p < 0.05$ ), salary  $F(1,405) = 15.91, p < 0.05$ ), and promotion  $F(1,405) = 101.56, p < 0.05$ ), while there was no main effect of relational skill on career success  $F(1,405) = .50, p > 0.05$ ), job success  $F(1,405) = .04, p > 0.05$ ), life success  $F(1,405) = 0.90, p > 0.05$ ), and financial success,  $F(1,405) = 0.04, p > 0.05$ ). This study sets out to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of industrial organizational psychology concerning the role of relational skills on career success. This is in line with the study conducted by Froese and Xiao (2012) which confirms that there were significant relationship between relational skills and job satisfaction among 500 white-collar employees by foreign invested companies in China. This emphasizes that fairness in the remuneration package tends to produce higher performance from workers and corresponds with the work of Mehri et al (2011) who found that, employees who joined the bank after merger are satisfied with the security and are highly motivated as well because they are not looking at any threat in the near future therefore, they feel themselves motivated and satisfied. This is also in line with the work of Sanusi (2010) who stated that the problems associated with individuals' poor performance is lack of cordial relationship between the managers and the employees, in the banking industry, which also discourages the employees from performing their duties effectively in the banking industry, which is a further confirmation of low career success among the Nigerian bank employees.

### **Recommendations and Limitations**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the banks management should incorporate amongst the existing factors like relational skills that were identified as having positive influence on career success of the staff. In particular, the management should incorporate and ensure that employees are exposed to seminars and courses aimed at developing and enhancing career success among bank employees. It is also important for the bank employees to undergo periodic psychological assessments which might be included in their appraisals as a way of identifying aspects of career



success training and counselling that might be necessary. It is further recommended that future studies should be carried out to establish other factors that may contribute to career success among all the financial institutions and employees of other occupational settings.

The budget at the disposal of the researcher placed a constraint in the scope covered for the study. Lastly the employees of the banking industry should be encouraged to be more cooperative in providing needed information in the area of remunerations and promotions without fear of been victimized. Another limitation is the fact that, data for the study are subject to the usual limitations of a survey research, as they were obtained from self-report instruments. This call for caution as under or over reporting cannot be totally ruled out despite the use of psychometrically sound measures.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

The causal frame work of this study provided measures of a number of highly important variables which empirical studies have related to career success. The conceptual framework explained the role of relational skills on employees' career success which however does not imply that the factors examined are exhaustive. Future researches with experimental design can certainly give strongest evidence of causality relationship between career success and its predictors.





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