

The effects of work social support and career adaptability on career satisfaction and turnover intentions

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Abstract

Applying career construction theory, this study develops and tests a research model that investigates whether career adaptability mediates the effect of work social support on career satisfaction and turnover intentions. Data obtained from frontline hotel employees with a 2-week time lag in three waves in Nigeria were used to assess the previously mentioned relationships. The results from structural equation modeling suggest that work social support boosts career adaptability and career satisfaction, while it mitigates turnover intentions. Surprisingly, the results suggest that career adaptability triggers turnover intentions, while it has no bearing on career satisfaction. The results further suggest that career adaptability partially mediates the relationship between work social support and turnover intentions.

Keywords: career adaptability, career satisfaction, Nigeria, turnover intentions, work social support

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INTRODUCTION

Career management refers to ‘... the management practices that aim to facilitate and promote employees’ career development in organizations’ (Guan, Zhou, Ye, Jiang, & Zhou, 2015, p. 231). Having effective career management in place enables managers to know what their employees need and expect from the organization. Organizations can use a number of effective career management practices such as career advancement opportunities, performance appraisal, participation in decision-making, autonomy, and mentoring (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005; Kong, Cheung, & Song, 2012). Such career management practices can enable employees to focus on their career planning and development and decision-making better. For example, employees who receive feedback about their performance based on a fair appraisal process can identify their strengths and weaknesses and develop career goals accordingly (Kong, Cheung, & Song, 2012). Effective career management practices also contribute to employees’ knowledge, skills, and abilities and foster their career adaptability (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005).

As a psychosocial construct, career adaptability is related to individuals’ personal resources that enable them to cope with present and expected work-related tasks, vocational traumas, and transitions in occupational roles and amend their social integration (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Career adaptability consists of four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. According to Savickas and

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Porfeli, the adaptable individual is conceptualized as ‘becoming *concerned* about the vocational future, taking *control* of trying to prepare for one’s vocational future, displaying *curiosity* by exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and strengthening the *confidence* to pursue one’s aspirations’ (2012, p. 663). Concern, control, curiosity, and confidence are career adaptability resources. These resources can be used in the management of various difficulties and challenges in career development (Guan et al., 2015). However, it is unlikely that employees are able to manage their careers successfully without social support in the workplace (Yarnall, 1998).

A work environment that promotes social support is needed for individuals who pursue changing career roles and try to manage career transitions. Social support emerging from coworkers and supervisors refers to ‘an interpersonal transaction that involves emotional concern, instrumental aid, information, or appraisal’ (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999, p. 514) and is potentially the most important socialization source (Saks & Gruman, 2011). Coworker and supervisor support represent important parts of the social support system in the workplace and signal that there is an employee-focused work environment (Karatepe, 2013; Michel, Kavanagh, & Tracey, 2013). It seems that the presence of work social support is an important job resource contributing to employees’ career adaptability resources. When individuals work in a supportive environment that includes support arising from coworkers and supervisors and/or are able to build their careers by taking advantage of the abovementioned adaptability resources, they are likely to have affective outcomes such as career satisfaction and intention to remain in the organization (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005; Karatepe & Uludag, 2008; Guan et al., 2015). In short, career adaptability is the underlying mechanism linking work social support to career satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of our study is to develop and test a research model that investigates career adaptability as a mediator of the effect of work social support on career satisfaction and turnover intentions. Career adaptability is manifested through concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), while coworker and supervisor support are treated as the indicators of work social support (Karatepe, 2013). We use data gathered from frontline hotel employees through three surveys 2 weeks apart in Nigeria, which is an underrepresented sub-Saharan African country in this research stream.

Our study makes several contributions to the current literature. First, career adaptability is a relatively new concept and has received little empirical attention in the current knowledge base. An examination of the extant literature reveals that career adaptability in frontline service jobs in the hospitality industry has been largely ignored. Therefore, it is important to examine the antecedents and consequences of career adaptability of frontline employees. Due to their boundary-spanning roles, frontline employees differ from other employees. Specifically, frontline employees have frequent face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with customers and play a critical role in service delivery and complaint handling processes (Bettencourt & Brown, 2003; Karatepe, 2013). They provide feedback to management about customer requests and expectations and come up with ideas and solutions for novel customer problems (Karatepe, 2013). These employees also represent the organization to outsiders such as customers and foster the image of the organization (Bettencourt & Brown, 2003).

Second, Savickas and Porfeli (2012) argue that adaptability may change based on different resources offered in different industries. Career construction theory contends that interpersonal relationships within the social environment predict career adaptability (Savickas, 2005). A work environment which promotes social support shows that employees are not left alone with decisions on their career development and adaptability. However, empirical research about social support mechanisms predicting career adaptability is scarce (Tian & Fan, 2014). With this realization, coworker and supervisor support are treated as resources activating career adaptability. Treating coworker and supervisor support as the indicators of work social support makes it possible to ascertain their joint effects on career adaptability.

Third, it appears that there is a need for more empirical research about the outcomes of career adaptability (cf. Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori, & Dauwalder, 2012; Zacher, 2014). Informed by

this need, career satisfaction and turnover intentions are used as job outcomes of career adaptability. There are at least two reasons for selecting such organizationally valued job outcomes. Specifically, high employee turnover rate is still a challenge in the hospitality industry (Davidson, McPhail, & Barry, 2011; Karatepe, 2013). Management has to seek ways to mitigate employee turnover rate, because it impedes productivity and erodes employee morale. Consistent with the work of Vidal, Valle, and Aragón (2007), we use turnover intentions, since it is a good substitute for turnover rates.

As a career subjective success, career satisfaction signifies the satisfaction an employee derives from the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of his or her career (Kong, Cheung, & Song, 2012). There are empirical studies that have examined the relationships between work social support, career satisfaction, service recovery performance, and/or perceived organizational support (Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009; Karatepe, 2012). Though limited in the current literature, empirical studies have investigated the effect of career adaptability on job satisfaction or task performance (Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013; Zacher, 2015). However, what is lacking in current knowledge is the relationship between career adaptability and career satisfaction (cf. Zacher, 2014). The importance of career satisfaction as an organizationally valued job outcome is also consistent with Deery and Jago's (2015) observation that management of hotels has to offer decent career advancement opportunities. Otherwise, it is difficult to retain a pool of competent individuals who are expected to be satisfied with their careers in the current organization.

In the next section, we present the background, hypotheses, and research model. Discussions of the method and results of the empirical study conducted with frontline hotel employees in Nigeria comprise the next two sections of the paper. We culminate with theoretical and management implications and avenues for future research.

BACKGROUND, HYPOTHESES, AND RESEARCH MODEL

Background

Career construction theory is used as the theoretical underpinning to link work social support to career satisfaction and turnover intentions through career adaptability. According to career construction theory, '... individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their vocational behavior and occupational experiences' (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). That said, the theory emphasizes the need for continuous adjustment, development and implementation of self-concepts at all levels of vocational tasks and transitions in order to reach occupational success and satisfaction. Career construction theory also contends that the types of vocational personality and vocational development tasks help individuals to adapt to frequent vocational changes and transitions. Individuals need certain coping resources to adapt to these changes and solve problems associated with present and expected work-related tasks, vocational traumas, and transitions in occupational roles (Savickas, 2005).

On the other hand, individuals show differences in terms of vocational characteristics such as ability, personality traits, and self-concepts (Savickas, 2005). This is not surprising, because not every individual is qualified for a wide variety of occupations in the competitive labor market. For example, frontline service jobs in the hospitality industry require individuals to be customer-oriented, handle various customer requests, and manage complaining customers. Therefore, employees are in need of support arising from coworkers and supervisors to serve customers effectively, respond to their needs successfully, cope with work-related problems, and obtain feedback on overall job performance. Work social support is also an important resource for career-specific information and advice (Creed, Fallon, & Hood, 2009). In addition to such work social support, employees need to use the attitudes, competencies, and behaviors in fitting themselves to the challenging work/service encounters.

Career adaptability refers to ‘... the attitudes, competencies, and behaviors that individuals use in fitting themselves to work that suits them’ (Savickas, 2005, p. 45). Career adaptability resources are concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. These resources are the self-regulation strengths or capacities that can be used to solve problems arising from occupational transitions, vocational traumas, and current and expected work-related tasks and direct adaptive behaviors (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). These resources are also viewed as human capital, which refers to ‘... accumulated competencies and knowledge gained through education and experience ...’ (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 663). The presence of work social support fosters career adaptability, because individuals with sufficient social support in the workplace take advantage of career adaptability resources to be able to manage a number of difficulties and challenges in their career development (Guan et al., 2015). Under these circumstances, they display higher career satisfaction and lower intentions to leave the organization.

Creed, Fallon, and Hood (2009) discuss that individuals are dependent of the social environment. That is, they are in need of job resources to be able to manage their careers successfully. Not surprisingly, social support which is associated with emotional and instrumental support is a resource that can be used for obtaining information and assistance concerning career success (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). The presence of social support in the workplace is likely to foster individuals’ career adaptability (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). Such individuals in turn are likely to display higher satisfaction with their careers in the current organization and have lower intentions to leave the current organization (e.g., Ito & Brotheridge, 2005; Guan et al., 2015).

Despite the significant role of career adaptability in the management of critical tasks and transitions in career development (e.g., Guan et al., 2014), there are limited empirical studies presenting some evidence about its antecedents and outcomes in the relevant literature. For instance, in a study of a large and heterogeneous sample of employees in Australia, Zacher (2014) found that overall career adaptability fostered career satisfaction and career performance. In a Chinese healthcare environment, Tian and Fan (2014) showed that student nurses’ adversity quotients, individualized clinical learning environment, and family social support were positively related to their degree of career adaptability. Wilkins, Santilli, Ferrari, Nota, Tracey, and Soresi (2014) reported that hope and optimism were significantly associated with a number of career adaptability dimensions (e.g., confidence, control) among Italian high school students.

Guan et al.’s (2014) study conducted with Chinese university graduate students demonstrated that future work self-stimulated career adaptability, while career adaptability fostered job search self-efficacy and employment status. In another empirical study in the Australian context, Tolentino et al. (2014) showed that elevated levels of personal adaptive readiness were positively related to higher career adaptability. Johnston, Luciano, Maggiori, Ruh, and Rossier (2013) found evidence in a German-speaking Swiss working population that the relationship between orientations to happiness and work stress was mediated by career adaptability. Career adaptability was also shown to exert a positive impact on career planning, proactive skill development, and proactive career networking as well as affective and performance outcomes (Hirschi, 2009; Ohme & Zacher, 2015; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015).

Though the abovementioned empirical studies shed significant light on career adaptability, empirical research concerning its antecedents and outcomes in frontline service jobs is scarce. Due to their frequent face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with customers, employees in frontline service jobs are expected to deliver quality services to customers, handle customer requests and problems successfully, and provide information about customer needs and expectations to managers (Bettencourt & Brown, 2003; Karatepe, 2013). These employees are in need of social support and career adaptability resources because of the stressful work-related situations and the demanding nature of the job. Accordingly, our study examines the mediating role of career adaptability in the relationship between work social support and career satisfaction and turnover intentions based on data collected from frontline hotel employees in Nigeria. The hypothesized relationships are discussed below.

Work social support and career adaptability

Coworker support refers to the care and consideration frontline employees receive from other members in the organization (Mossholder, Settoon, & Henagan, 2005). The amount of assistance employees feel they have received from their coworkers may help them to direct their adaptive behaviors concerning their careers. Supervisor support is defined as ‘individuals’ beliefs that supervisors offer them work-related assistance to aid in the performance of their job’ (Susskind, Kacmar, & Borchgrevink, 2003, p. 181). The availability of supervisor support sends signals to employees that supervisors listen to employees’ problems in the workplace, encourage them about skill acquisition, career development and progress, and exchange opinions and ideas (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005; Michel, Kavanagh, & Tracey, 2013). When employees find that they obtain sufficient emotional and instrumental support from their coworkers and supervisors in addition to their self-regulation strengths or capacities, they can focus on their career plans and monitor their career progress.

However, very little is known about the relationship between work social support and career adaptability. Specifically, in a study of Canadian federal civil service employees, Ito and Brotheridge (2005) found that the presence of supervisor support stimulated employees’ career adaptability. In Creed, Fallon, and Hood’s (2009) study, it was reported that social support (e.g., significant others) was positively related to career adaptability. Hirschi (2009) demonstrated that social support bolstered career adaptability among students in Switzerland. Tian and Fan’s (2014) study also provided support for the positive relationship between social support (i.e., family) and career adaptability. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Coworker and supervisor support as the indicators of work social support will be positively related to career adaptability, as manifested by concern, control, curiosity, and confidence.

Work social support, career satisfaction, and turnover intentions

Supervisor support given in the form of career guidance and information, performance feedback, provision of challenging tasks that promote career development, acceptance, friendship, and counseling can enrich employees’ careers (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Wickramasinghe & Jayaweera, 2010). However, supervisors who are not interested in their followers’ career aspirations and the assignment of challenging tasks are likely to hinder employees’ advancement in the organization and trigger career dissatisfaction (Aryee & Luk, 1996). Such discussion appears to be valid for support emerging from coworkers. That is, coworker support can contribute to employees’ careers through career guidance and information, development of new skills, and friendship. Such supportive relationships are also likely to boost employees’ satisfaction with their careers in the current organization.

When employees find that they are able to manage their work-related problems and deal with their career development and progress via emotional and instrumental support obtained from coworkers and supervisors, they are satisfied with their careers and are less inclined to leave the current organization. There are numerous studies to support such argument. For example, Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley’s (1990) study conducted in different industries showed a direct and positive linkage between supervisor support and career satisfaction. Evidence obtained in a study conducted among full-time workers in Hong Kong revealed that supervisor support stimulated both husbands’ and wives’ career satisfaction (Aryee & Luk, 1996). Yarnall’s (1998) study provided evidence regarding the positive association between management support and career satisfaction. Karatepe and Uludag’s (2008) study conducted with frontline hotel employees in Turkey revealed that supervisor support enhanced career satisfaction. One empirical study among information technology professionals in Sri Lanka reported that supervisory career support fostered employees’ career satisfaction (Wickramasinghe & Jayaweera, 2010). Recently, Kang, Gatling, and Kim (2015) also found that supervisor support activated frontline hotel employees’ career satisfaction.

Previous studies have empirically validated the impact of work social support on turnover intentions. For instance, Ito and Brotheridge (2005) showed that supervisor support mitigated employees' turnover intentions. Ng and Sorensen's (2008) meta-analytic study reported that supervisor and coworker support were negatively associated with turnover intentions. Basford and Offermann (2012) also found that both coworker and supervisor support enhanced service employees' intent to stay. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2a: Coworker and supervisor support as the indicators of work social support will be positively related to career satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2b: Coworker and supervisor support as the indicators of work social support will be negatively related to turnover intentions.

Career adaptability, career satisfaction, and turnover intentions

An examination of the current literature reveals that there is little empirical research concerning the outcomes of career adaptability. For example, in a recent study of Swiss sample, Rossier et al. (2012) showed that individuals who had high levels of career adaptability were more engaged in their work. Maggiori et al.'s (2013) investigation among employed and unemployed adults in Switzerland revealed that career adaptability enhanced general well-being (e.g., life satisfaction) and professional well-being (e.g., job satisfaction). On the other hand, past research reported a conflicting finding regarding the effect of career adaptability on job outcomes. For example, Ito and Brotheridge (2005) demonstrated that career adaptability triggered employees' affective organizational commitment and turnover intentions. They argued that future-oriented attractive employment alternatives and adaptation to changes would heighten turnover.

As Savickas and Porfeli state, 'In career construction theory, adaptability resources help to form the strategies that individuals use to direct their adaptive behaviors' (2012, p. 663). Consistent with career construction theory, this study proposes that frontline employees who perceive themselves as willing and able (e.g., having resources such as curiosity and confidence) will respond by fulfilling the requirements of the jobs and remaining in the organization. Such employees will also display professional well-being such as career satisfaction. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: Career adaptability, as manifested by concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, will be positively related to career satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3b: Career adaptability, as manifested by concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, will be negatively related to turnover intentions.

Career adaptability as a mediator

It seems that social support is an important job resource enabling employees to manage their careers successfully (Yarnall, 1998). Hirschi, Niles, and Akos' (2011) study supports this assertion. Specifically, they have documented that the availability of social support enables individuals to be more engaged in career preparation. Social support in the workplace is also treated as a resource stimulating employees' career adaptability. Employees with sufficient social support in the workplace are likely to be high in career adaptability (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). Work social support has been reported to activate employees' career satisfaction (e.g., Kang, Gatling, & Kim, 2015) and mitigate employees' intentions to leave the current organization (Ng & Sorensen, 2008). Similarly, career adaptability has also been shown to stimulate career satisfaction and weaken turnover intentions (Guan et al., 2015).

In short, both work social support and career adaptability are directly related to career satisfaction and turnover intentions.

The previously mentioned relationships implicitly refer to the partial mediating role of career adaptability in the relationship between work social support and career satisfaction and turnover intentions. According to career construction theory, concern, control, curiosity, and confidence are considered as self-regulation capacities that help individuals to deal with a number of challenges everyday (Maggiori et al., 2013). This is important, because employees are in need of skills that enable them to quickly adapt to various situations (Rossier et al., 2012). The availability of sufficient social support in the workplace helps employees about how to be well prepared for future and accomplish their career goals (concern). Having social support in place enables employees to make decisions on their own (control). The presence of such support also makes employees become curious about future career-related scenarios (curiosity) and helps them to overcome barriers (confidence). Savickas (2005) also argues that the aforementioned career adaptability resources can be developed via various practices such as orientation exercises, decisional training, information-seeking activities, and self-esteem building. Employees who can achieve their career goals, assume responsibility for their actions and make decisions on their own, solve career-related problems, and are curious about a number of future career-related scenarios display desirable job outcomes such as higher career satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions. Maggiori et al.'s (2013) investigation demonstrated that career adaptability had a partial mediating role in the relationship between professional context (i.e., job insecurity and job strain) and general and professional well-being.

In this study, we surmise that employees who perceive themselves as willing and able can perform tasks and adapt to various situations. In addition, the presence of coworker and supervisor support coupled with such skills or self-regulation capacities stimulates employees' career satisfaction and mitigates their turnover intentions. In short, when employees find work social support helpful, they are more likely to use their adaptability resources to have career satisfaction and other potential positive job outcomes such as reduced turnover intentions. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4: Career adaptability, as manifested by concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, will partially mediate the effects of coworker and supervisor support as the indicators of work social support on (a) career satisfaction and (b) turnover intentions.

Research model

The relationships among study constructs are shown in the research model Figure 1. The model proposes that work social support emerging from coworkers and supervisors fosters frontline employees' career adaptability. Frontline employees with high levels of career adaptability are in turn satisfied with their careers in the current organization and are less inclined to leave the organization. The model also proposes that career adaptability partially mediates the effect of work social support on the aforementioned attitudinal outcomes. That is, work social support, as manifested through coworker and supervisor support, influences career satisfaction and turnover intentions directly and indirectly through career adaptability.

METHOD

Sample and procedure

Respondents in this study were full-time frontline employees in the international five- and four-star chain hotels in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria. Information obtained from the National Institute of Hospitality and Tourism in Abuja at the time of the present study demonstrated that there were five

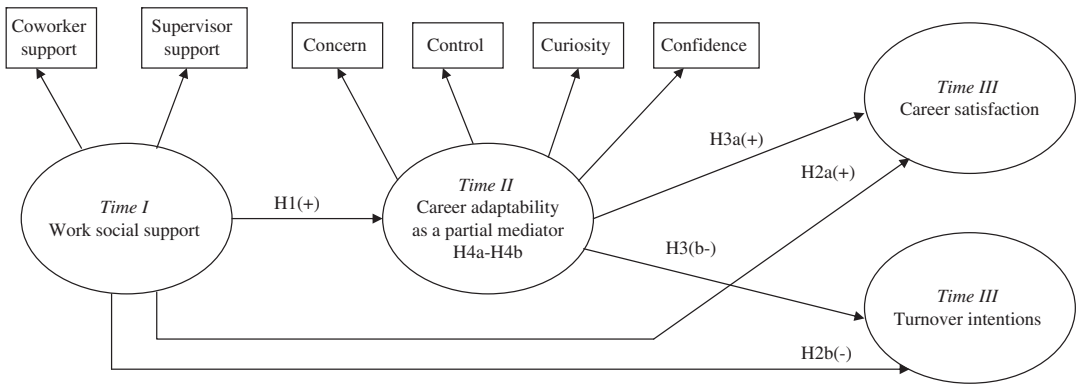


FIGURE 1. RESEARCH MODEL

international five-star chain hotels and 19 international four-star chain hotels in Nigeria. The researcher was able to contact human resource managers of 20 hotels via a letter that included the purpose of the study and permission for data collection. However, management of two five-star and nine four-star hotels agreed to participate in the study.

Since human resource managers did not allow the researcher to directly contact frontline employees, the self-administered questionnaires that consisted of information about the anonymity and confidentiality of the study were distributed to frontline employees through one of the representatives assigned by human resource managers in each hotel. Respondents were also assured that there were no right or wrong answers to items in the questionnaires. These representatives were instructed to distribute the questionnaires to a wide variety of frontline employees who had intense face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with customers (e.g., front desk agents, guest relations representatives, food servers, bell attendants, reservations agents).

The Time I questionnaire included the coworker and supervisor support measures and items about respondents' profile such as age, gender, education, organizational tenure, and marital status. The Time II questionnaire consisted of the career adaptability measure, while the Time III questionnaire contained the career satisfaction and turnover intentions measures. Consistent with procedural remedies recommended by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), data were collected from frontline employees with a time lag of 2 weeks in three waves to minimize the potential risk of common method bias. Using a 2-week time lag or a shorter one is also observed in the current literature (e.g., Srivastava, Locke, Judge, & Adams, 2010; Karatepe, 2013; Kim, Kim, Han, Jackson, & Ployhart, 2014). An identification number used in each questionnaire enabled the researcher to match the questionnaires with each other. Each frontline employee sealed the questionnaire in an envelope to assure anonymity and confidentiality.

In total, 298 questionnaires were distributed to frontline employees at Time I. A total of 287 questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 96.3%. A total of 287 Time II questionnaires were then distributed to the same frontline employees. The researcher was able to obtain 287 questionnaires at Time II. A total of 287 Time III questionnaires were also distributed to the same frontline employees. The researcher was able to collect 287 questionnaires at Time III. As a result, the response rate remained the same at Time II and Time III. Response-enhancing techniques such as gathering data in three different waves via identification numbers and using advance notice given to respondents through managers as well as obtaining strong management support and coordination for data collection led to such a high response rate (cf. Anseel, Lievens, Schollaert, & Chorghwicka, 2010). It should be noted that this response rate is not unusual in empirical studies

and can be compared with recent writings (e.g., Michel, Kavanagh, & Tracey, 2013; Liu, Kwan, & Chiu, 2014).

The majority of the respondents were female. That is, 147 (51%) respondents were female and 140 (49%) were male. The sample included 120 (42%) respondents who ranged in age from 18 to 27 years and 148 (52%) respondents who were aged between 28 and 37 years. The rest were older than 37. With respect to education, 28 (10%) respondents had secondary and high school education. The sample consisted of 167 (58%) respondents with 4-year college degrees, while 78 (27%) respondents had 2-year college degrees. The rest had graduate degrees. In terms of organizational tenure, 256 (89%) respondents had tenures of 5 years or less. The rest had been with their hotel for more than 5 years. The sample consisted of 208 (73%) respondents who were single or divorced, while the rest were married.

Measurement

Five items taken from Hammer, Saksvik, Nytrø, Torvatn, and Bayazit (2004) were used to measure coworker support. Sample items are 'I receive help and support from my coworkers' and 'I feel I am accepted in my work group.' Supervisor support consisted of five items from Karasek, Triantis, and Chaudhry (1982). Sample items are 'My supervisor encourages employees he/she supervises to work as a team' and 'My supervisor offers new ideas.' Career satisfaction was measured with five items taken from Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). The sample items for the 5-item career satisfaction scale are 'I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career' and 'I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals.' A 3-item scale from Singh, Verbeke, and Rhoads (1996) was used to operationalize turnover intentions. The sample item for this scale is 'I often think about quitting.' Responses to items in coworker support, supervisor support, career satisfaction, and turnover intentions included options ranging from 5 = 'strongly agree' to 1 = 'strongly disagree'.

Career adaptability was measured using the career adapt-abilities inventory-international version from Savickas and Porfeli (2012). Each of the indicators of career adaptability (i.e., concern, control, curiosity, and confidence) was measured with six items. The sample items for the concern scale are 'Thinking about what my future will be like' and 'Realizing that today's choices shape my future.' The sample items for the 6-item control scale are 'Keeping upbeat' and 'Making decisions by myself.' The sample items for the curiosity scale are 'Exploring my surroundings,' and 'Investigating options before making a choice.' Lastly, the sample items for the 6-item confidence scale are 'Performing tasks efficiently' and 'Taking care to do things well.' Responses to items in concern, control, curiosity, and confidence were elicited on a 5-point scale ranging from 5 = 'strongest' to 1 = 'not strong'.

Consistent with past and recent studies, the Time I, Time II, and Time III questionnaires were tested with three different pilot samples of 10 frontline employees. The results demonstrated that none of the respondents had difficulties understanding items in the Time I, Time II, and Time III questionnaires. Therefore, no changes were made in these questionnaires.

Data analysis

The present study utilized Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach to assess the psychometric properties of the measurement model and test the relationships in the structural model. Specifically, the first step consisted of the assessment of the measurement model in terms of convergent and discriminant validity as well as composite reliability using confirmatory factor analysis (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). In the second step, the proposed model was compared with the alternative nested models. This is also consistent with the

recommendations provided by James, Mulaik, and Brett (2006) for testing the mediating effects through alternative models.

The relationships depicted in the research or proposed model were tested via structural equation modeling. Sobel test was employed to assess the significance of the mediating relationships (Preacher & Hayes, 2004; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). In addition to Sobel test, bias-corrected bootstrapping method was used to test the significance of the mediating effects (Hayes, 2013). The overall χ^2 measure, comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were used to assess model fit. These analyses were employed through LISREL 8.30 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996).

RESULTS

Measurement results

The measures were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis for the assessment of psychometric properties. Several items were removed from further analysis due to correlation measurement errors as a result of confirmatory factor analysis. Broadly speaking, one item each from the coworker and supervisor support measures and two items each from the curiosity and confidence measures were discarded. Three items each from the concern and control measures were also discarded. The final results showed that the measurement model fit the data adequately ($\chi^2 = 848.16$, $df = 377$; $\chi^2/df = 2.25$; CFI = 0.91; IFI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.066; SRMR = 0.051). The results in Table 1 showed that the overwhelming majority of the loadings were >0.70 and all t -values were significant. As illustrated in the same table, the average variance extracted by each latent variable was ≥ 0.50 . Overall, there was evidence of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Discriminant validity was checked using criteria given by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Anderson and Gerbing (1988). First, we checked whether the average variance extracted was greater than the squared correlation (Φ^2) between variables. The results revealed that the squared correlations between variables were smaller than the average variance extracted by each variable, excluding the ones between the indicators of career adaptability. Therefore, we recontrolled discriminant validity based on pairwise χ^2 difference test. The χ^2 difference scores for concern and control, concern and curiosity, concern and confidence, control and curiosity, control and confidence, and curiosity and confidence were 43.1, 46.26, 97.29, 95.55, 91.14, and 197.18, respectively. These results were significant ($p < .05$). In addition, the same procedure was repeated for other variables. The results were also significant for the rest of pair of variables. Overall, the results provided evidence of discriminant validity.

Table 1 also presents composite reliability and α coefficients. Composite reliability for each latent construct was above 0.60. These results demonstrated that all measures were reliable (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). α Coefficients were also greater than the commonly accepted cut-off value of 0.70. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of observed variables are given in Table 2.

Tests of hypotheses

The results in Table 3 reveal that the partially mediated model C or the hypothesized model appears to provide a better fit than alternative models. Accordingly, this partially mediated model fits the data well based on the following fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 200.67$, $df = 72$; $\chi^2/df = 2.79$; CFI = 0.93; IFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.079; SRMR = 0.049).

According to the results depicted in Figure 2, coworker support ($\lambda_1 = 0.71$, $t = 11.49$) seems to be the best indicator of work social support, followed by supervisor support ($\lambda_2 = 0.69$, $t = 11.10$), while

TABLE 1. CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS

Scale items	Loading	t-Value	AVE	CR	α
Coworker support			0.50	0.80	0.78
I receive help and support from my coworkers	0.80	15.09			
I feel I am accepted in my work group	0.74	13.38			
My coworkers are understanding if I have a bad day	0.62	10.68			
My coworkers back me up when I need it	–	–			
I feel comfortable with my coworkers	0.64	11.19			
Supervisor support			0.73	0.92	0.91
My supervisor encourages employees he/she supervises to develop new ways of doing things	–	–			
My supervisor shows me how to improve my performance	0.82	16.57			
My supervisor encourages employees he/she supervises to work as a team	0.90	19.08			
My supervisor offers new ideas	0.85	17.58			
My supervisor encourages employees he/she supervises to exchange opinions and ideas	0.85	17.45			
Concern			0.55	0.78	0.78
Thinking about what my future will be like	–	–			
Realizing that today's choices shape my future	–	–			
Preparing for the future	0.80	15.43			
Becoming aware of the educational and career choices that I must make	0.76	14.38			
Planning how to achieve my goals	0.66	11.90			
Concerned about my career	–	–			
Control			0.60	0.82	0.82
Keeping upbeat	–	–			
Making decisions by myself	0.75	14.07			
Taking responsibility for my actions	0.80	15.55			
Sticking up for my beliefs	0.76	14.39			
Counting on myself	–	–			
Doing what is right for me	–	–			
Curiosity			0.57	0.84	0.84
Exploring my surroundings	0.69	12.63			
Looking for opportunities to grow as a person	0.80	15.61			
Investigating options before making a choice	–	–			
Observing different ways of doing things	0.79	15.22			
Probing deeply into questions I have	0.73	13.76			
Becoming curious about new opportunities	–	–			
Confidence			0.67	0.89	0.89
Performing tasks efficiently	0.73	14.07			
Taking care to do things well	–	–			
Learning new skills	0.90	19.28			
Working up to my ability	0.86	17.66			
Overcoming obstacles	–	–			
Solving problems	0.76	14.65			
Career satisfaction			0.56	0.86	0.86
I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career	0.76	14.34			
I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals	0.86	17.13			
I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income	0.72	13.47			
I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement	0.73	13.65			
I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills	0.66	11.83			
Turnover intentions			0.67	0.86	0.85
It is likely that I will actively look for a new job next year	0.77	14.46			
I often think about quitting	0.78	14.77			
I will probably look for a new job next year	0.88	17.17			
Model fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 848.16$; $df = 377$; $\chi^2/df = 2.25$; CFI = 0.91; IFI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.066; SRMR = 0.051					

Note. AVE = average variance extracted; CFI = comparative fit index; CR = composite reliability; IFI = incremental fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; (–) = dropped during confirmatory factor analysis.

All loadings are significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 2. MEANS, SD, AND CORRELATIONS OF OBSERVED VARIABLES

Variables	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Coworker support	3.82	0.72	–							
2. Supervisor support	3.80	0.90	0.494 ^a	–						
3. Concern	3.96	0.86	0.545 ^a	0.409 ^a	–					
4. Control	3.86	0.85	0.358 ^a	0.352 ^a	0.653 ^a	–				
5. Curiosity	3.86	0.83	0.468 ^a	0.364 ^a	0.663 ^a	0.630 ^a	–			
6. Confidence	3.91	0.89	0.349 ^a	0.332 ^a	0.624 ^a	0.691 ^a	0.652 ^a	–		
7. Career satisfaction	3.09	0.93	0.328 ^a	0.353 ^a	0.363 ^a	0.245 ^a	0.255 ^a	0.318 ^a	–	
8. Turnover intentions	2.79	1.03	–0.010	–0.204 ^a	0.103	0.051	0.008	0.010	–0.065	–

Note. Composite scores for each variable were computed by averaging scores across items representing that variable.

^aCorrelations are significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

TABLE 3. RESULTS OF MODEL COMPARISONS

Models	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	Model comparison
1. Fully mediated model Work social support → Career adaptability Career adaptability → Career satisfaction, turnover intentions	224.40	74	23.73	2	1 and 4
2. Partially mediated model A Work social support → Career adaptability, turnover intentions Career adaptability → Career satisfaction, turnover intentions	218.50	73	17.83	1	2 and 4
3. Partially mediated model B Work social support → Career adaptability, career satisfaction Career adaptability → Career satisfaction, turnover intentions	206.89	73	6.22	1	3 and 4
4. Partially mediated model C Work social support → Career adaptability, career satisfaction, turnover intentions Career adaptability → Career satisfaction, turnover intentions	200.67	72			

Note. The partially mediated model C seems to have the best fitting model.

concern ($\lambda_1 = 0.82$) appears to be the best indicator of career adaptability, followed by control ($\lambda_2 = 0.80$, $t = 14.96$), curiosity ($\lambda_3 = 0.80$, $t = 14.96$), and confidence ($\lambda_4 = 0.79$, $t = 14.81$).

The results from structural equation modeling demonstrate that work social support exerts a strong positive influence on career adaptability ($\gamma_{11} = 0.71$, $t = 9.68$). Hence, there is empirical support for Hypothesis 1. The results indicate that work social support significantly and positively affects career satisfaction ($\gamma_{21} = 0.46$, $t = 3.64$), while it has a significant negative effect on turnover intentions ($\gamma_{31} = -0.41$, $t = -3.03$). Hence, Hypotheses 2a and 2b are supported. However, career adaptability is not significantly related to career satisfaction ($\beta_{21} = 0.07$, $t = 0.62$, not significant). Therefore, Hypothesis 3a cannot be supported. Contrary to Hypothesis 3b, the results show that career adaptability significantly and positively influences turnover intentions ($\beta_{31} = 0.36$, $t = 2.84$). Therefore, there is no empirical support for Hypothesis 3b.

Hypothesis 4a cannot be supported, because career adaptability as a mediating variable is not significantly related to career satisfaction. The indirect effect of work social support on turnover

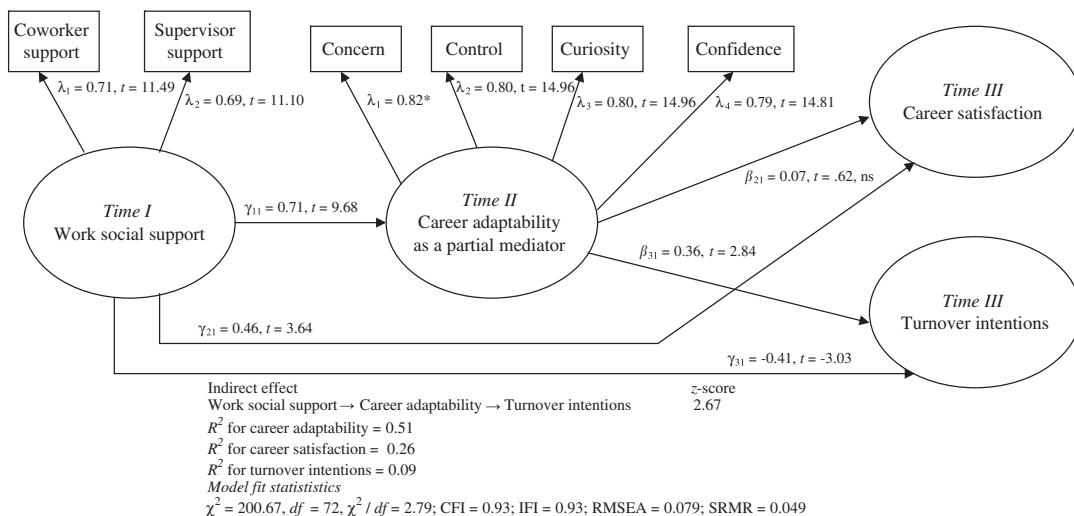


FIGURE 2. STRUCTURAL MODEL TEST RESULTS

NOTE. THE EFFECT OF CAREER ADAPTABILITY ON CAREER SATISFACTION IS NOT SIGNIFICANT. THE OTHER DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS AS WELL AS INDICATORS OF WORK SOCIAL SUPPORT AND CAREER ADAPTABILITY ARE SIGNIFICANT ($p < .05$). CFI = COMPARATIVE FIT INDEX; IFI = INCREMENTAL FIT INDEX; NS = NOT SIGNIFICANT; RMSEA = ROOT MEAN SQUARE ERROR OF APPROXIMATION; SRMR = STANDARDIZED ROOT MEAN SQUARE RESIDUAL. * T -VALUES ARE GIVEN EXCEPT FOR THE LOADING OF CONCERN THAT WAS INITIALLY FIXED TO 1.00 TO SET THE METRIC FOR THE UNDERLYING CAREER ADAPTABILITY VARIABLE.

intentions through career adaptability is significant, but positive based on Sobel test ($z = 2.67$). Bootstrapping analysis was also employed using the bootstrapped 5,000 sample size at 95% confidence interval. The results revealed a partial mediation for the work social support → career adaptability → turnover intentions relationship (indirect effect = 0.26, $p < .05$, lower limit of the confidence interval 0.065, and upper limit of the confidence interval 0.511). This is contrary to Hypothesis 3b. Therefore, Hypothesis 3b is not supported. The results explain 51% of the variance in career adaptability, 26% in career satisfaction, and 9% in turnover intentions.

DISCUSSION

Summary of findings

Our primary purpose in this empirical study was to develop and test a research model that investigated whether concern, control, curiosity, and confidence as the indicators of career adaptability acted as a mediator of the impact of work social support, as manifested by coworker and supervisor support, on career satisfaction and turnover intentions. Unlike limited empirical studies regarding the antecedents and outcomes of career adaptability in the extant literature, we used data collected from full-time frontline hotel employees with a time lag of 2 weeks in three waves in Nigeria to test the above-mentioned relationships.

The results suggest that coworker and supervisor support as the indicators of work social support jointly boost career adaptability resources (i.e., concern, control, curiosity, confidence). The results further suggest that work social support activates career satisfaction, while it mitigates turnover intentions. Surprisingly, the results do not lend any credence to the relationship between career adaptability and career satisfaction. Contrary to the hypothesized relationship, career adaptability

positively influences turnover intentions. This leads to an indirect positive impact of work social support on turnover intentions through career adaptability.

Theoretical implications

The theoretical implications of our empirical investigation are threefold. First, we used data obtained from full-time frontline hotel employees in Nigeria, as an underrepresented country in the field of career adaptability research, to empirically assess the study relationships. This is relevant and significant, because the overwhelming majority of the empirical studies have not focused on career adaptability in frontline service jobs in the hospitality industry. Since frontline employees are the main actors in service delivery and complaint handling processes (e.g., Karatepe, 2013), are important sources of information about customer requests and solutions for novel customer problems, and represent the organization to outsiders (Bettencourt & Brown, 2003), the empirical findings shed light on the understanding of employees' career adaptability who work in boundary-spanning positions.

Second, our study contributes to the relevant literature by investigating the relationship between work social support and career adaptability. That is, our study tests the joint effects of coworker and supervisor support as the indicators of work social support on career adaptability, as manifested by concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. This is important, because little is known about the antecedents of career adaptability (e.g., Coetzee & Harry, 2014).

As career construction theory contends, career adaptability resources are concern, control, curiosity, and confidence individuals need to manage their careers, and '... career adaptability enables individuals to effectively implement their self-concepts in occupational roles, thus creating their work lives and building their careers' (Savickas, 2005, p. 51). Based on this reasoning, it seems that frontline employees can avail themselves of career adaptability resources to find solutions to problems associated with occupational transitions or current and expected work-related tasks (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). However, these employees are not independent of the social environment (Creed, Fallon, & Hood, 2009). They may need additional resources to manage their careers effectively. Employees can use work social support as a resource to receive information and assistance about their career success (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). As a result, work social support, combined with career adaptability resources, enables employees to plan their career-related possibilities in the current organization. Since career adaptability resources are viewed as self-regulatory and psychosocial competencies, such employees with instrumental and emotional support arising from their coworkers and supervisors can focus on various strategies that result in the accomplishment of adaptation goals.

The results reported in this study suggest that work social support boosts career satisfaction, while it mitigates turnover intentions. These results are in line with existing research that employees with elevated levels of support emanating from their coworkers and/or supervisors are satisfied with their careers in the current organization and display lower turnover intentions (e.g., Ng & Sorensen, 2008; Basford & Offermann, 2012).

Third, our study also contributes to the relevant literature by examining the outcomes of career adaptability. In other words, this study responds to recent calls for research pertaining to the outcomes of career adaptability (e.g., Rossier et al., 2012). Career satisfaction and turnover intentions are used as attitudinal outcomes of career adaptability. Surprisingly, the results suggest that career adaptability has no bearing on career satisfaction, while it triggers turnover intentions.

There seem to be three plausible explanations for the aforementioned intriguing findings. First, changes occurring in terms of pay, advancement, achievement of career goals, and/or development of new skills in the current organization make employees with career adaptability resources focus on career exploration and attractive employment alternatives (Klehe, Zikic, Van Vianen, & De Pater, 2011; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Second, the potential risk of job insecurity inherent in the hotel

industry makes such employees center on career exploration. The presence of work social support may not always be enough to promote career satisfaction. Therefore, work social support, combined with career management practices such as career opportunities, job security, training, and rewards, can reduce the possibility of career exploration and voluntary turnover. Third, other variables such as pay and advancement opportunities which are not controlled in this empirical study may result in a positive relationship between career adaptability and turnover intentions. Fourth, it seems that work social support as an antecedent to career adaptability has attenuated the impact of career adaptability on career satisfaction. As Ito and Brotheridge (2005) cautiously discuss, career adaptability serves as a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it may increase affective organizational commitment. On the other hand, it may also trigger turnover intentions. Future research should gather data from frontline hotel employees in non-Western countries to gauge the outcomes of career adaptability (e.g., turnover intentions, career satisfaction, affective organizational commitment) and respond to such mixed findings.

Management implications

The results of our study provide useful implications for managers for business practice. First, management should focus on promoting career adaptability, because this gives the necessary tools to employees to handle their career development effectively. As Savickas (2005) underscores, career adaptability resources can be developed. For example, concern through orientation exercises, control through decisional training, curiosity through information-seeking activities, and confidence through self-esteem building can be developed. Employees may utilize these career adaptability resources in response to different situations (Johnston et al., 2013).

Second, it should be noted that employees need job resources to be able to handle difficulties and challenges in their career development (Guan et al., 2015). Our study supports this assertion. Specifically, work social support enhances career adaptability. This requires a supportive work environment in the organization. Such an environment should promote coworker and supervisor support. To do this, management needs to arrange specific training programs for supervisory and nonsupervisory frontline employees to highlight the importance of social support in the workplace. Both coworkers and supervisors should provide support to employees who seek guidance on career development. Promoting camaraderie and support arising from coworkers and supervisors through training programs may enable employees to deal with their current and future work/career-related problems. In addition, work social support can be promoted via social networking technology among supervisory and nonsupervisory employees. When employees are able to manage their problems and find that the supportive work environment responds to their career goals, emotional reactions such as intent to stay ensue (Wei, 2012).

Third, employees are also in need of various effective career management practices. That is, providing frontline employees with instrumental and emotional support may not be enough to foster career satisfaction and reduce turnover intentions. Establishing and maintaining an environment where there are effective career management practices such as training, empowerment, rewards, teamwork, and career opportunities will enable management to boost career satisfaction and reduce turnover intentions. Therefore, the presence of such a work environment will motivate employees to perform at elevated levels and decrease their interest in career exploration and attractive employment alternatives. Otherwise, employees high in career adaptability will be willing to seek these employment alternatives. Worse, lack of effective career management practices such as rewards and career opportunities may result in adverse health outcomes among employees (cf. Clarke & Hill, 2012).

Fourth, despite good intentions of management, some employees may still be interested in leaving the organization. This may be due to the fact that their expectations concerning career advancement

opportunities and development are not met. Unfortunately, these employees are likely to be costly for the organization, because they may hinder effective and efficient service delivery and complaint handling processes and may generate an undesirable demonstration effect among current employees who try to handle their career-related problems through career adaptability and job resources. Under these circumstances, offering adequate but attractive career advancement opportunities seems to be a potential remedy.

Fifth, management should survey their employees annually to determine how frontline employees evaluate the organizational policies and procedures on career management and to figure out whether frontline employees are satisfied with their careers. This is important, because it has been shown that career-oriented individuals share knowledge that contributes to long-term performance of the organization (Chalkiti, 2012). In closing, the results of this study are likely to enable managers to capitalize on strengths on career management and avoid weaknesses in career management by fostering employee participation.

Limitations and future research directions

The current study is not without limitations. First, this study gathered data from frontline hotel employees at three points in time, 2 weeks apart to control the potential threat of common method bias. Though this data collection seems to provide evidence about causality, it is not enough. With this realization, using longitudinal data in future studies would be useful for making firm inferences about causality. Second, this study used career satisfaction and turnover intentions as the two organizationally valued job outcomes. Frontline employees in the hospitality industry play a crucial role in service delivery and complaint handling processes (Karatepe, 2011, 2012). For example, they are expected to deliver quality services to customers and deal with a number of customer requests and problems. While doing so, they have to show organizationally desired emotion (Karatepe, 2011). Therefore, in future studies testing the potential impact of career adaptability on service recovery performance, creative performance, and extra-role performance would be beneficial. Third, little is known about the antecedents (e.g., personality variables) and consequences (e.g., job performance) of career adaptability in the extant literature (Li et al., 2015; Ohme & Zacher, 2015). Future research linking personality variables such as job resourcefulness and customer orientation to attitudinal and performance outcomes through career adaptability will make a potential contribution to existing research on career adaptability.

Fourth, data were collected via the representatives assigned by human resource managers in each hotel, since management of hotels did not allow the researcher to directly contact frontline employees. Therefore, these representatives were instructed to distribute the questionnaires to a broad range of frontline employees by paying attention to anonymity and confidentiality. However, this data collection might have produced selection bias. Such a limitation is apparent in hospitality-related empirical studies (e.g., Karatepe, 2013). To minimize this potential problem, gathering data directly from employees would be a remedy. Lastly, using time-lagged designs, coupled with multiple sources of data gathered from cross-national samples (e.g., Nigeria, China, the United States), will enhance the understanding about the antecedents and outcomes of career adaptability.

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