

Exploring How Social Capital and Self-esteem Shape Career Success among Female Managers in Nigerian Organisations

Oforkansi Ejike, Ogbonna Kenneth Egwuatu and Ogbu Dennis Ekpe

Faculty of Business Administration, University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Nigeria

Correspondence: kenneth-e.ogbonna@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

This study investigated how career women's work performance relates to bridging and bonding social capital in patriarchal Nigerian society. Additionally, the impact of self-esteem on the connection between social capital and professional achievement was examined. A structured questionnaire was used to collect information from 488 Nigerian career women in managerial positions in both private and public sectors. Partial least squares structural equation modelling was utilised to test the presented hypotheses. The findings demonstrate a strong positive correlation between bridging social capital and both subjective and objective success. On the other hand, there is no discernible correlation between bonding social capital and either subjective or objective success. This study further reveals that self-esteem only partially mediates the relationship between bridging social capital and job success and that it only has a negligible intervening influence on this relationship. The results point to the necessity for firms to foster a welcoming workplace with a zero-tolerance attitude towards workplace discrimination against women. Because of this, women will be able to connect with co-workers of any gender or rank, build more bridging social capital, and succeed in their careers.

Keywords: Networking, social capital, self-worth, career opportunities, women workers

Introduction

Bridging social capital refers to relationships that transcend people and communities, such as work teams and professional associates, participation in social organisations, and promoting support across diverse social structures (Feld et al., 2021; Claridge, 2018; Murray et al., 2020). Some

scholars argue that this patriarchal issue may negatively affect how well Nigerian women perform at work because female managers also struggle to supervise their male co-workers (Adisa et al., 2020).

Since patriarchy is known to be context- and culture-specific in the literature, women have developed various strategies to combat it (Nwagbara, 2021). Because of this, scholars have recently started to focus more on the need to understand how career women use social capital to excel in their careers across national boundaries.

For instance, Gorska (2021) contends that women in Poland have used social capital to advance in their jobs. In a similar vein, Hassan, Mohd, and Mutalib (2017) reported that in Nigerian universities, female academics have leveraged social capital to further their careers. However, there is sparse evidence in the literature on the utilisation of social capital by professional women in patriarchal Nigerian organisations.

The concept of career success

Success in a career is described by Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic, and Kaiser (2013) in terms of occupational prestige and financial attainment one has accumulated as a result of one's work experience. Nonetheless, it is evident from the literature on careers that employees in the early, mid, and late stages of their careers are likely to have distinct definitions of both subjective and objective professional success (Wang et al., 2013; Spurk et al., 2016). Rank and status, promotions, and pay increases are frequently used as objective measures of career success since they are observable, verifiable, and instantly quantified by

an impartial third party (Stumpf, 2014). These success markers can be acquired through self-ratings (Spurk et al., 2016). According to studies, the subjective career success perspective is defined as the perception of professional satisfaction or happiness that results from employees' experience and subjective appraisal of the realisation of personally valued career-related objectives (Spurk et al., 2015; Jacobs et al., 2019).

Social capital

Social capital is defined as a resource that is created by social interaction with people rather than by individuals alone (Kawachi & Berkman, 2014). The authors note that social capital can be explained by the interchange of social support and information sharing within a social network, including the degree of trust that facilitates these exchanges. Social capital presupposes that social relationships can facilitate access to resources. In addition, people can make targeted investments in these social connections to acquire social capital, which can influence other types of capital. This attribute is exhibited more in singles who are able to transact with or through social capital.

Social capital consists of bonding and bridging social capital (Feld et al., 2021; Herrero, 2018). The social connections made by neighbours, friends, and other groups of people with similar qualities are what give rise to the bonding dimension. The social interactions between persons of different socioeconomic situations, such as those among co-workers, colleagues in

the workplace, and members of social organisations, are what generate the bridge dimension. On the other hand, linking social capital is the external and vertical relationships between individuals with varying degrees of control (Acquaah et al., 2014; Gershman, 2016; Simba & Ojong, 2018). In this instance, competent individuals promote connections between other people and efficient systems. Thus, bonding and bridging social capital refer to relationships between comparable individuals, while linking social capital creates connections between individuals who are different in many ways (Geys & Murdoch, 2010). The bonding and bridging social capital theory developed by Putnam (2000) serves as the foundation for this study's research on social capital at the personal level.

The link between bridging social capital and career success

Social capital has a strong impact on career advancement, reducing the costs of starting a business and motivating job seekers to make choices like entrepreneurship, business, or unemployment (Tang, 2022). Social capital in associations influences subjective career success, providing benefits and commitments at work (Karatekin, 2022). Peer and near-peer social capital help young adults build social capital, advancing towards education/career goals and fostering a commitment to paying it forward (Boat, Miranda & Syvertsen, 2022). Women benefit from social capital in their career planning

as it fosters strong relationships. Social capital, especially through networking and referral systems, improves career flexibility. Regular engagement with social capital strengthens connections, and younger employees gain more advantages from it (et al., 2023).

Social capital that is created within and outside of an organisation both positively and negatively affects professional achievement. Halbesleben et al. (2014) argue that social networks give employees the chance to talk with their bosses about promotions. In Malaysian public institutions, Mohd and Ismail (2012) discovered that social networks within organisations strongly influence managers' monthly pay and perceived success in their careers. Chen (2011) discovered, using a selection of 150 expert co-workers in the Taiwanese public relations industry, that social interactions significantly accounted for the variation. Considering what has been said, this research assumes that Nigerian women in careers have strong social networks that help people from different socioeconomic backgrounds interact both within and outside of the workplace in order to boost their chances of advancement in positions and achieve career success/happiness. As a result, it is assumed that:

Hypothesis 1a: In a patriarchal society, there would be a link between bridging social capital and the subjective job success of career women.

Hypothesis 1b: In a patriarchal culture, there would be a correlation between bridging social

capital and the objective job success of career women.

Bonding social capital and career success

Research suggests that strong relationships with family, neighbours, and friends may connect individuals to valuable job opportunities (Smith, 2016; Hellerstein et al., 2014). Neighbourhood ties can provide important information, but specialists with better access to knowledge-sharing networks benefit from more frequent advancements and higher job satisfaction. According to Oinas et al. (2020), who used questions on how frequently people meet with their parents and siblings as measures of the strength of their social bonds in Finland, those who meet with their parents and siblings have faster income development. This is especially true for people in the middle class. Bozionelos (2014) found that among Greek academics, career prospects are influenced by interpersonal connections between friends and blood relatives. The study discovered that women's networks, which are marked by intimacy, directly correlate with career happiness.

Additionally, Górska et al. (2021) looked at how job success among career women on boards of Polish companies relates to bonding social capital and discovered that, while career women build social capital to sway their promotions to top management positions in Polish companies, they often focus on the bonding social capital

component while largely ignoring the bridging social capital element. This study, in line with extant literature, believes that career-oriented women in Nigeria employ social capital to create ties that can influence promotions to higher levels and lead to career happiness at work. Therefore, the following hypotheses are established to test these assumptions:

Hypothesis 2a: In a patriarchal society, there would be an association between bonding social capital and the perceived professional advancement of women.

Hypothesis 2b: In a patriarchal culture, there would be a correlation between bonding social capital and job success among career women.

Self-esteem as a mediator in the link between career success and social capital

The organization-based self-esteem theory (Pierce et al., 1989), with regard to the acceptance of Nigerian career women in social networks, is related to their confidence and how that confidence contributes to their professional success. The confidence of workers has been recognised as a significant "mediating mechanism" in the relationship between the type of social relationships that employees have within firms and career outcomes (Ferris et al., 2015). According to the theory of organization-based self-esteem, employees' self-esteem will rise when they "verify" their relationships within an organisation and believe they are deserving and valuable members of that organisation (Bowling

et al., 2010; Ferris et al., 2015). This increased self-esteem results in career satisfaction and a commitment to work harder to advance in one's career.

Self-esteem is how one perceives and values themselves. According to Savickas (2013), self-esteem can be seen as adaptivity, the ability to adjust to career changes with readiness and enthusiasm. Park et al. (2018) found that individuals with high self-esteem can effectively plan their future, set realistic goals, and actively work towards achieving them. Individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to underestimate their abilities and fail to respond effectively in challenging situations. According to the person-environment fit hypothesis, self-esteem can influence the career development of young adults and impact their satisfaction and compatibility with their environment (Jiang & Jiang, 2015; Van Vianen, 2018). Positive associations between self-esteem and life fulfilment have consistently been found in various studies across different stages of development, cultures, and genders (Arslan, 2019; Butkovic et al., 2020). Besides, Kuster et al. (2013) found that self-esteem has a significant impact on life and career outcomes, including working conditions. Other research suggests that low self-esteem is a risk factor for depression in adults (Orth & Robins, 2013; Marshall et al., 2014). With this in mind, the current study makes the assumption that career-oriented women in Nigeria who believe they are

welcomed and treated fairly in bridging and bonding social situations and connections have a great sense of self-esteem, which in turn predicts the success of their careers. Consequently, the following postulations are put forth:

Hypothesis 3a: In a patriarchal society, women's subjective career success and bridging social capital are mediated by self-esteem.

Hypothesis 3b: In a patriarchal milieu, women's objective career performance and bridging social capital are related through self-esteem.

Hypothesis 4a: In a patriarchal society, women's subjective career success and bonding social capital are related to self-esteem.

Hypothesis 4b: In a patriarchal society, women's objective career success and bonding social capital are linked through self-esteem.

Methodology

This study obtained information on Nigerian career women in both private and public sectors who are in management roles using a cross-sectional survey design. The approach allowed for the collection of first-hand information on the interpersonal connections and professional successes of professional Nigerian women in patriarchal workplace settings. Although this study was not primarily concerned with the sectoral variations in how career-oriented Nigerian women leverage social capital to advance their careers, the survey, however, involved career women from both fields to ensure a representative sample. According to the

National Bureau of Statistics (2018) report, there are 1,314 managerial-level Nigerian career women in Nigeria's Federal Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). Accordingly, the sample size was determined with the use of Yamane (1969) method as follows:

$$N = n / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

Where 1 = a constant, N = the population, n = the sample size, and e (considered to be 0.05) = the error margin. A sample size of 307 was obtained by the calculation. To counteract a potentially high percentage of unreturned copies of the questionnaire due to the respondents' hectic schedules and limited accessibility, an additional 20% (61) of the samples were added to the total, bringing the total to 368. The proportion of managerial-level career women in the private sector was not based on 2018 data from the National Bureau of Statistics. Consequently, 140 respondents from the sector were chosen using the purposive sample method, bringing the total sample size to 508 respondents. The respondents are managers in quoted companies whose shares are traded on the exchange floor of the Nigerian Stock Exchange. Smart Partial Least Square (PLS) 3.0 was used for the analyses. Even though the default bootstrapping of the PLS only uses 500 samples, the work of Ramayah et al. (2018) informed the increase in the bootstrapping value to 5000. H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b, H3a, H3b, H4a,

and H4b are all included in the study. There were eight proxies used to quantify both bonding social capital and bridging social capital. The dependent variable, which is career success, has both objective and subjective operationalisations (Spurk et al., 2016; Heslin, 2005). Two items were used to assess the objective career success perspective, while four were used to assess the subjective career success dimension. In H3a, H3b, H4a, and H4b, self-esteem, which was assessed using nine items, is the mediating variable.

Measures

Career success: This construct was measured with Greenhaus et al.'s (1990) career satisfaction questionnaire using a five-point rating scale. Spurk et al. (2015) used the scale to obtain a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90. **Self-esteem:** The study adopted Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem scale for measuring self-worth globally. **Social capital:** Wang et al.'s (2014) personal social capital scale (PSCS) was adopted for the study. The scholars derived the PSCS-16 from the original 42-item PSCS version developed by Chen et al. (2009). The PSCS yielded an overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90, while the bonding and bridging social capital subscales yielded alpha coefficients of 0.90 and 0.92, respectively.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Loading	AVE	Compose Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Constructs	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.5	≥ 0.8	> 0.7
Bridging Social Capital (BSC)		0.988	0.998	0.891
BSC1	0.909			
BSC2	0.915			
BSC3	0.908			
BSC4	0.918			
BSC5	0.918			
BSC6	0.983			
BSC7	0.984			
BSC8	0.977			
Bonding Social Capital (BONSC)		0.707	0.950	0.877
BONSC1	0.867			
BONSC2	0.814			
BONSC3	0.865			
BONSC4	0.931			
BONSC5	0.867			
BONSC6	0.870			
BONSC7	0.826			
BONSC8	0.609			
Self-Esteem		0.789	0.974	0.896
SE1	0.819			
SE2	0.829			
SE3	0.923			
SE4	0.867			
SE5	0.886			
SE6	0.932			
SE7	0.920			
SE8	0.920			
SE9	0.905			
SE10	0.854			

Career Success (Subjective and Objective)	0.717	0.924	0.875
SUBCS1	0.939		
SUBCS2	0.824		
SUBCS3	0.486		
OBCS4	0.947		
OBCS5	0.939		

The Measurement Model

Both the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha techniques were used to examine the reliability of the instrument (see Table above). Bridging social capital, bonding social capital, self-esteem, subjective career success, and objective career success yielded composite reliability values of 0.998, 0.950, 0.974, 0.924, and 0.912, respectively. Also, the Cronbach's alpha values for the aforementioned variables are 0.891, 0.877, 0.896, 0.875, and 0.814 in the same order. Each of these values obtained in each construct is well above the recommended threshold of 0.70 for composite reliability and 0.70 for Cronbach's alpha, indicating internal consistency in the instrument (Henseler et al., 2012).

An assessment of the convergent validity of the instrument was carried out, and the result indicated that each item on the scale strongly correlates with other items as a single construct (see Table above). The average variance extracted estimate (AVE) was used to validate the

constructs. The AVE coefficients values of 0.988, 0.707, 0.789, 0.717, and 0.712 for bridging social capital, bonding social capital, self-esteem, subjective career success, and objective career success, respectively, exceed the 0.5 thresholds, and the cross-loading of the constructs (Hair et al., 2016). With the outcomes, the convergent validity requirement is met (Memon & Rahman, 2014). Common method bias (CMB) was checked with variance inflation factor (VIF). While a VIF value of 1 indicates a complete absence of collinearity, most scholars recommended a VIF value of <10 as the threshold (James et al., 2017). However, a more conservative threshold of between 2.5 and 5 is also recommended (Kock, 2015). As the result indicates, all the VIF values for each item in the measurement of all the variables are well below the conservative threshold of <5 (see Table above).

Results

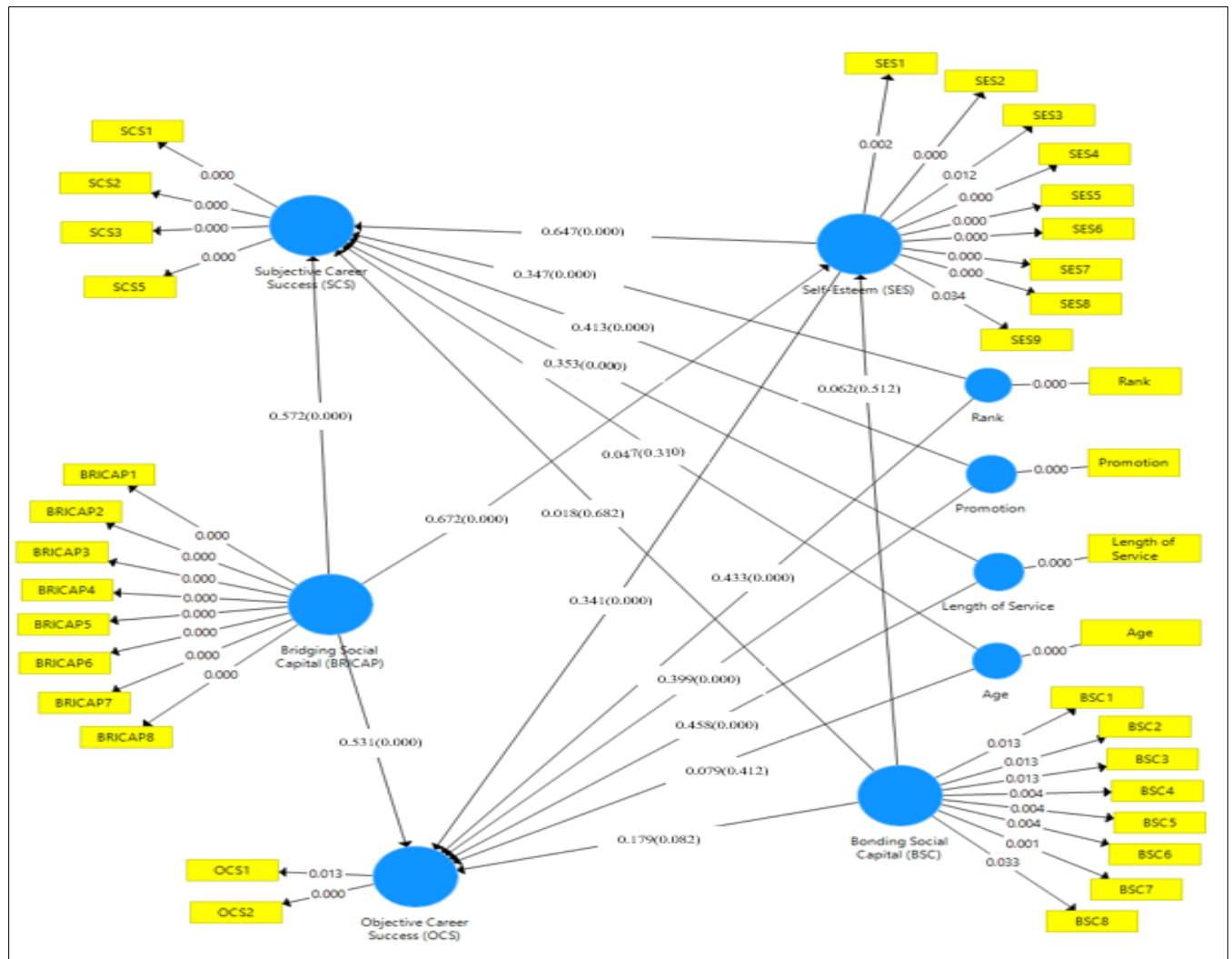
The H1a results show a significant direct relationship (= 0.572, T-value = 5.248 > 1.96, P-

value = 0.000 0.05, and $R^2 = 0.327$) among Nigerian career women in the relationship between bridging social capital and subjective career success. Also validated (see Figure 1) was the hypothesised direct relationship among career-minded Nigerian women in H1b in the connection between bridging social capital and objective career performance.

However, H2a results indicate that among Nigerian career women, bonding social capital did not substantially predict subjective career success ($\beta=0.018$, T-value = 0.4091.96, P-value = 0.682 >0.05, and $R^2 = 0.003$). The same is true for H2b results, which show that bonding social capital has a negligible impact on objective career success ($\beta = 0.179$, T-value = 0.4861.96, P-value = 0.417 > 0.05, and $R^2 = 0.032$), with bonding social capital accounting for just 0.03% of the variation in women's objective career success.

In H3a, it was discovered that self-esteem played a partial intervening effect in the relationship between bridging social capital and subjective professional success ($\beta = 0.397$, T-value = 3.364 >

1.96, P-value = 0.000 0.05). The relationship between bridging social capital and objective job success was also shown to be partially mediated by self-esteem in H3b ($\beta = 0.401$, T-value = 3.580 > 1.96, P-value = 0.021 0.05). This shows that when a mediating variable is included, a partial mediation occurs when the predictor-to-indicator pathway coefficient value weakens but remains significant. As opposed to predictions, the links between the two aspects of career success and bonding social capital among Nigerian career women as assessed in H4a and H4b are not mediated by self-esteem ($\beta=0.064$, T-value=0.542<1.96 P-value =0.722 >0.05), and ($\beta=0.077$, T-value=0.616<1.96 P-value =0.710>0.05) respectively. It is notable that the demographic traits of the respondents served as the control variables. The findings show that all factors, apart from age, significantly affect how social capital and both aspects of job success are related (see Figure 1).



Model for women's career success, self-esteem, and social capital

Discussion of the findings

The findings confirm that bridging social capital has a favourable connection with job performance and supported hypotheses H1a and H1b. The results of H1a and H1b support earlier research that found a strong relationship between job performance and social capital (Wolff & Moser, 2010; Halbesleben et al., 2014). The findings refuted hypotheses 2a and 2b, showing a negligible correlation between social capital and

aspects of professional achievement. This shows that Nigerian working women who restrict their social interactions to those with family, friends, and neighbours may not be able to exploit these connections to meaningfully affect their ability to succeed in the workplace. The findings are at odds with earlier research from some non-African nations, including the Republic of Korea, Poland, Greece, and Finland, which found that close relationships with family and friends are

important for professional success (Chang et al., 2021; Bozionelos, 2014; Górska et al., 2021; Oinas et al., 2020). For instance, Polish career women reportedly ignore bridging social capital in favour of using bonding social capital to succeed in their careers, according to Gorska et al. (2021).

According to the results of H3a and H3b, self-esteem only partially mediates the link between bridging social capital and job success. The results partially corroborate earlier research (Bowling et al., 2010; Ferris et al., 2015), which asserts that when employees "verify" their relationships in an organisation and believe they are worthy and valuable people in an organisation, their sense of worth will rise. This, in turn, leads to having a fulfilling career and wanting to put in more effort to advance in their careers.

Furthermore, the minor relationship between bonding social capital and both categories of occupational success among Nigerian career women did not show any evidence of a mediating role for self-esteem, as indicated in H4a and H4b. These findings are in stark contrast to earlier research from other regions that suggested that career success is a function of one's self-esteem and the supportive cues one picks up from other people in one's connections in the workplace (Gardner & Pierce, 2016). The data from H2a and H2b, which demonstrate that career women in Nigeria do not considerably rely on their connections to family, friends, and neighbours to

advance their careers, support this conclusion. This shows that Nigerian career women don't require self-esteem or strong social bonds to succeed in their careers.

Conclusion

This study investigated how, in Nigerian culture, career success and social capital are related, as well as the role that self-esteem plays in mediating the relationship. The study shows that among career-minded Nigerian women in a patriarchal society, bridging social capital has a substantial positive association with career performance; on the contrary, bonding social capital has no substantial positive association with career performance. In reaction to calls in the literature for career studies that are country- and context-specific, this study has shown that self-esteem fairly influences the relationship between bridging social capital and career success, whereas bonding social capital does not correlate significantly with career success among Nigerian career women. Furthermore, in contribution to the under-examined underlying mechanisms through which social capital relates to career success in the Middle East and some African countries, this study found a limited mediating effect of self-esteem in the negligible relationship between bonding social capital and career success. By expanding knowledge of the relationship between the two different variables in the context of Nigerian patriarchy, this study adds fresh insights to the literature on social capital and career concepts.

Theoretical and practical implications of the Study

This study discusses the relationship between social capital and career success. It suggests that bridging social capital is more beneficial for career advancement compared to bonding social capital, which is important for basic survival. This aligns with Putnam's (2000) social capital hypothesis and studies by Chang et al. (2021), Gorska et al. (2021) and Smith (2016), which showed that social capital is important for career success among women in some non-African countries. Even though research has analytically demonstrated that career women in some non-African countries primarily use bonding social capital to achieve career success (Chang et al., 2021; Gorska et al., 2021; & Smith, 2016), this study offers empirical evidence that Nigerian career women significantly use bridging social capital to achieve career success, regardless of their level of self-esteem. Therefore, managers should focus on strengthening intra-organizational social capital in order to prevent low job satisfaction (Li et al., 2021), employee turnover intention (Zhang et al., 2022), organisational commitment and degenerate behaviours (Li et al., 2021; Mao et al., 2018) caused by feelings of being ignored or excluded in workplace relationships.

This study improves the literature by suggesting that Nigerian career women's use of bonding social capital for career success is unimportant. These theoretical contributions fill the gap in

country-specific career research, leading to the development of relevant career development theories that consider the unique characteristics of each region, particularly in Africa and non-western climates.

This study highlights a shift in focus from patriarchy and work-life balance for Nigerian career women to exploring the neglected relationship between social capital and career success in African society. In summary, the study found that the impact of bridging social capital on career success for Nigerian career women is only partially related to self-esteem. On the other hand, the impact of bonding social capital on career success completely invalidates the self-esteem hypothesis.

To address the negative effects of a lack of bridging social connections, organisations should create an inclusive work environment, conduct periodic reviews of relationship behaviours, and provide coaching and training programs for women. (Nwagbara, 2021; Adisa et al., 2020); and conduct social training for male workers to address workplace patriarchal discrimination against women (Adisa et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021). Policymakers like the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, along with the National Council of Women Societies, should launch edification campaigns to educate Nigerian men on the need to abandon patriarchal behaviours and treat women with respect in social and work settings.

Study limitations and suggestions for future research.

This study explores how social capital relates to career success among Nigerian career women in a patriarchal setting. The focus is not on the sectoral distinction within the association between social capital factors and career outcomes, despite collecting data from both state and private sectors. The information collected from the two sectors was combined into a single analysis, which limits the generalisations of the results in the two sectors since organisational culture may be diverse between them. Future investigation may focus on sectoral differences in the affiliation between the two factors among career women in a patriarchal African setting. Additionally, this study relied on self-reporting for all factors, which could introduce bias. For instance, participants may have exaggerated or underplayed their career success. A longitudinal plan using secondary information like advancement and compensation history can eliminate this challenge. Additionally, this study only focused on individual-level analysis of social capital, providing insight into how Nigerian career women use social connections to overcome patriarchal barriers. Further research is needed on community-level analysis of social capital to understand how connecting social capital benefits African social orders. Future studies should also take into consideration and examine elements that are relevant to employees' career growth, such as an organisation's

reputation and culture, and if managers are aware of the influence these factors can have on their decisions.

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