CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND EMPLOYEES' FRUSTRATIONS IN CORPORATE ORGANIZATION: THE STRATEGIC BALANCE OF HUMAN ENERGY AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Adamu Saliu Lawani
Executive Director, Zenith Bank Plc.
Email: adamulawani@yahoo.com

Abstract

The complexity of contemporary workplace sometimes results into employees' frustration, and without strategic organizational practices to mitigate such frustration, career success and organizational productivity might be hindered. This study adopted a survey design to examine perceived employees' frustrations in relations to career aspirations. Organizational practices aimed at managing human energy and time across organizations were also explored. A quantitative instrument containing 32-item questionnaire was used for data collection. The study's sample size comprised of 118 employees randomly selected from three economic cluster in Nigeria across agriculture, industry and service sectors. The findings showed that employees experienced very little frustration level while a fairly good workplace culture was reported also. However, the findings showed break time, work flexibility and team bonding as most commonly engaged workplace strategies for human energy and time management to enhance healthy work environment against employees' frustrations. The study recommendeds that organizations should adopt more contemporary strategies to retain vibrant, high level employees especially in a tech-driven workplace.

Keywords: Career aspirations, corporate organization, employees' frustration, human energy, time management,

Introduction

Modern workplace is marked by pressure on employees to scale performance, which breeds some complexity demands such as handling multiple tasks and working longer hours. These sometimes create crises especially when employees' expectations are unmet leading to frustration. Absence of practices that sustain employees' energy with effective management of time on the job might hinder not only individual's career aspirations but also organizational overall growth. This may further deepen employees' work and life imbalance encountered. Claessens, Eerde, Rutte and Roe (2007) reported gap on time management in workplace. Hence, this study empirically looks into how organizations manage employees' time to enhance human energy for creative and higher organizational productivity. Without structured workplace practices as culture, employees' frustrations may continue to result into energy depletion, loss of focus, and ultimately low productivity.

Nigeria's Corporate Organization Landscape

Corporate organizations are business entities with separate personality from its owners, duly licensed to operate in Nigeria under the

Companies and Allied Matters (CAMA) Act 2020. Such organizations may be either private or public with distinct characteristics and structures (Salami & Umoru, 2023; Ezeribe & Oguntade, 2024). The non-profit organizations are incorporated trustees (IT) with charitable works for social development (Ezeribe & Oguntade, 2024). Generally, companies adopt rules and practices to enhance its productivity. Meanwhile, Salami and Umoru (2023) pointed that challenges are caused by neglect of operational governing rules while Ezeribe and Oguntade (2024) cited company's structure making workplace overwhelming and challenging for employees to function effectively. Moreover, contemporary business environment is rated unstable, poorly inclusive and fast paced with rapid changing information technology; putting high demand on employees (The Nigeria Economic Summit Group, 2022; Claessens et al., 2024).

Organization's practices including its values, traditions, and beliefs are the unseen force that determined workplace culture and identity which influence employees' behaviours (Howard, Murray & Tolisano, 2023). Wijayanti and Tirtoprojo (2023) posit that organization's culture that enables employees' shared knowledge will build trust in management and process, resulting in high productivity, safe and healthy environment. Howard et al. (2023) therefore, suggest toxic workplace change its culture to reduce employees' turnover and high attrition; because employees aspire to work in an environment with strong values and culture.

Conservation of Resources Theory

Theory of Conservation of Resources (COR) was proposed by Stevan Hobfoll, an American psychologist, in 1989 (Hongyu, 2024). The COR explained that individuals acquire, maintain and conserve resources valuable to them as coping mechanism for life and work stress. A perceived loss of resources create negative emotions or frustrations. The COR is relevant to understanding employees' behavioral response to stress (Holmgreen, Tirone, Gerhart & Hobfoll, 2017; Bon & Shire, 2022; Durrah et al., 2023; Gonzalez-Gomez & Hudson, 2024). The theory emphasized resources and their impacts on an individual (Bon & Shire, 2022; p.237). Stress comes from perceived threat or actual loss of valued resources (Holmgreen, et al., 2017; Bon & Shire, 2022; p.237; Hongyu, 2024). The valued resources are essential to individual in attainment of set-goals (Gonzalez-Gomez & Hudson, 2024). Any threat to or actual loss of resources makes set goals unreachable resulting into frustration. Meanwhile, when resources are maintained, an individual have rest and able to conserve energy. In COR, loss of resources is more important than gains. Four kinds of resources identified include objects, conditions, energies and personal characteristics (Bon & Shire, 2022; p. 237).

Employees' Frustration and Effects

Employees' frustration (EF) also termed occupational frustration (Durrah, et al., 2023) is the internal anxiety (tension) experienced by workers from daily routine in an unhealthy work environment (Karamchandani, 2020; Gonzalez-Gomez & Hudson, 2024). Frustration often neglected is a valid employee's response to appraisal of work-situation engaged with (Gonzalez-Gomez & Hudson, 2024). Therefore, frustration is negative expression of emotions based on individual's ideas, perception, and experiences (Andalib, Darun & Azizan, 2013; Gonzalez-Gomez & Hudson, 2024). Frustration may come from either an event which is temporal or a continuous process with feeling of being blocked from something beneficiary (Andalib & Azizan, 2013; p.18). Durrah et al.

(2023) described EF as a disease that affects attitude to work and organization's progress. The effects range from low productivity, committing errors, conflicts, burnout, high attrition, aggression, disengagement, and job dissatisfaction (Andalib et al., 2013; Karamchandani, 2020; Durrah et al., 2023; Gonzalez-Gomez & Hudson, 2024). Despite being a negative emotion, González-Gómez & Hudson (2024) stated that extent of EF determines nature of its impact. Where EF is either low or moderate, the result may likely enhance worker's ability to generate ideas in solving problems. A consistently, high EF will produce negative impacts such as aggression or less engagement at work.

Employees' Career Aspiration

Career aspirations (CA) are ideal work-related goals that reflect employee's expectations, interest, self-concept and perceived opportunities in workplace (Lindsay, et al., 2021; Nirmala, 2023; Reddy, et al., 2024). According to Nirmala (2023), CA is futuristic in nature with systematic pathway to achieve set goals. The expectations influence employees' social mobility, career success, job satisfaction, motivation and commitment to organizational goals (Lindsay et al., 2021; Nirmala, 2023; Reddy et al., 2024). Hence, frustrations arises when aspirations seem under threat (Durrah et al., 2023). Traditionally, employees' aspirations include good salary and promotions on career ladder. However, contemporary employees, mostly youths, have varied CA. Employees now leverage skills, continuous learning, technology-driven environment, flexibility; and personal values aligned with innovative culture. The aspirations are to enhance social interaction and work-life balance. Therefore, Reddy et al. (2024) suggested that organizations should align workplace practices with employees CA as a dynamic way to minimize frustrations and improve job satisfaction.

Adaptive Coping Strategy: Energy and Time Management

Roberts, Earnhardt and Herron (2017) described human resources as the most significant power for organizational success while Onyemelukwe, Ferreira and Ramos (2023; pp. 1-2) said it is a valuable resources for productivity. Human energy refers to mental alertness capacity in employees with enthusiasm to work rather than physical energy. Owolabi (2018) observed crisis of human energy as majority of employees globally are not enthusiastic about their future. Workplace stress, complexity and rapid change in organizations are leading causes of human energy crisis. The crisis results into mental exhaustion, loss of focus, depersonalization, depression, health challenges, and lack of accomplishment (Bundtzen & Hinrichs, 2021; Onyemelukwe et al., 2023; pp. 2-4). Human energy can be optimized by influencing tasks and processes for seamless efficiency. Energetic workforce is where employees highly motivate each other promoting productivity (Roberts et al., 2017; p.1). Organizations that have strategies to manage human energy are human-centric, aiming to achieve Industry 5.0. Onyemelukwe et al. (2023; p. 2) identified 5.0 goal as employees being valued, and treated well for reasons beyond productivity to enhance survival, and happiness. Employees' energy is boosted lively, feel strong, strengthened, and enthusiastic. Four basic steps to manage human energy include: i) cultivating organizational culture that reinforces human energy; ii) adopt leadership model for a thriving workplace, iii) implementing organizational-level strategies; and iv) promoting work-related protective measures.

Time management (TM) is viewed as time structure (Claessens, Eerde, Rutte, & Roe,

2007). TM includes techniques that increase available time to pursue activities (King, et al., 1986). According to Strongman and Burt (2000) and Sabelis (2001), TM is also how individuals perceive structured and purposive use of their time; and practices that maximize intellectual productivity (Britton & Tesser, 1991). Hall and Hursch (1982) explained that procedures can be designed for individuals while Eilam and Aharon (2003) stated that TM can be self-regulated strategies. Therefore, Claessens et al. (2007) summed TM as behaviors aimed at achieving effective use of time while performing goal-oriented activities. These comprise of time awareness, planning and monitoring for feedback. In organizations, TM enhances employees' productive, job performance. The focus of TM has shifted from managers to employees as major target because TM positively correlate with employees' perceived control of time, increased job satisfaction and reduced stress. Despite training increasing skills in time management it may not translate directly into better job performance (Claessens et al., 2007). From the afore-mentioned, effective time and energy management are essential to career success; However many organizations struggle to provide balanced approach to align work-life demands of employees. Andalib and Azizan (2013) suggested establishing causes of employees' frustration at workplace, and how to manage work relationships to minimize frustration. This study therefore, explored extent of frustration at workplace and how organizations enhance human energy through time management.

Purpose of the Study

This paper seeks to:

i) find out extent of employees' frustrations in corporate organizations;

examine employees' perception of career success in relation to organizations sectors; identify how organizations' culture influences employees career goals; and determine the most common strategies for work-relationship organizations adopt for human energy and time management across corporate sectors in Nigeria.

Research Questions

➢ To what extent are employees' frustrated in corporate organizations?

➢ How do employees perceive career success in relation to organization's sector?

➢ How do organizations' culture influence employees' career goals?

➢ What strategic work-relationships do organizations adopt most for human energy and time management across corporate sectors in Nigeria?

Method

This study engaged an exploratory, descriptive design using self-reporting instrument. The study was intended for Lagos metropolitan city comprising workers across different sectors. A quantitative method approach was engaged in data collection using a 32 item-questionnaire adapted for the study. The instrument has content validity reflecting key variables of the study.

Lagos State was targeted as area of study being an economic powerhouse with industrial and business hub among other States in Nigeria. Though a coastal State, Lagos is accessible through extensive transport infrastructure of seaports, airport and inland roads. The location, growing population with government active, infrastructural development projects encouraged industries to thrive in Lagos State (Ministry of Economic Planning & Budget, 2023; pp. 1-3).

A sample size of 118 employees selected randomly from industry clusters through multistage sampling technique, formed respondents in this study. Data was administered through Google form sent virtually using emails and WhatsApp platforms to contacts in selected organizations. The form link was sent out for a space of two weeks and result collated thereafter. The data was analyzed through frequency and percentage inferences being an exploratory study. Findings were reported through tables and text narration.

Results and Findings

Table 1a: *Demographic data of Study's Respondents*

	Age Group	Organization Location	Organization's Sector
	20-30 = 23 (19.5%)		
		Lagos: 92 (78%)	Agriculture = 2 (1.7%)
Male: 48 40.7%	31-40 = 33 (28.0%)		
	41-50 = 33 (28.0%)	Other States: 26 (22%)	Service = 99 (83.9%)
Female: 70 59.3%	51-60 = 29 (4.6%)		
			Industry = 17 (14.4%)
	61-70 = 0 (0%)		
Total: 118	**118 (100%)**	**118 (100%)**	**118 (100%)**

Tables 1a indicates preponderance of females at 59.3% (70) in this study. The study comprised of four age groups from 20 to 60 years; however, ages 51-60 were least represented with 4.6%. Most respondents were from Lagos State with 78% (92). The study most participants were also from service sector with 83.9% (99) while agricultural sector has least number with 1.7% (2). Table 1b covered twenty job areas, however, legal practice, automobile sales, accounting firm and waste management recorded 0%. Respondents from Education with 42.4% were the highest in the study.

Table 1b: *Employees' Type of Industry*

Industry Type:	%	Industry Type	%
1.Defence	1 (0.8%)	11. Accounting Firm	0 (0%)
2 Automobile Sales	0 (0%)	12.Advertising/Public Relations	1 (0.8%)
3.Consumer Industries	3 (2.5%)	13. Legal Practice	0 (0%)
4.Waste Management	0 (0%)	14. Banking & Credit	1. (0.8%)
5.Insurance	2 (1.7%)	15. Health Care	6 (5.1%)
6.Information Technology	8 (6.8%)	16.Telecoms & media	9 (7.6%)
7.Education	**50 (42.4%)**	17.Agriculture: Food	1 (0.8%)
8.Hospitality & Leisure	2 (1.7%)	18. Non-Profit Organization	3 (2.5%)
9.Government/ Civil Servant	**20 (16.9%)**	19. Transport & Logistics	4 (3.4%)
10.Property/ Real Estate	4 (3.4%)	20.Construction& Engineering	3 (2.5%)

Management

Research Question 1: To what extent are employees' frustrated across corporate organizations?

Table 2: *Extent of Employees' frustrations in Corporate Organization*

S/N	Statements: Common Workplace Frustrations	Great Extent 4	Somewhat 3	Very Little 2	Not at All 1
1	I struggle to achieve work-life balance	20	43	37	18
2	Lack of flexible schedule due to long work hours	30	27	37	24
3	I am frustrated by my team lead/supervisor	09	33	31	45
4	Office holds too many meetings	16	29	43	30
5	Workplace culture is unsupportive of my growth	21	35	33	29
6	My workplace valued degree certificate than skills/potentials	33	29	29	27
7	Lack of job security	29	36	23	30
8	Inadequate appreciation for my contributions	24	43	22	29
9	My workplace is boring with no fun periods	16	42	34	26
10	I encounter discriminatory/unfair practices	17	36	19	46
	Total: 118 x 10 = 1,180	**215**	**353**	**308**	**304**
	Remarks: VERY LITTLE	**18.22%**	**29.91%**	**26.10%**	**25.76%**

Table 2 showed that a 18.2% (215) employees to a great extent experienced frustration at workplace while 29.9% (355) reported a somewhat experience of frustration. 26.1% (308) employees agreed to a very little level of frustration while 25.8% (304) reported no experience of workplace frustration. The aggregate of Great Extent and Somewhat responses equal **48.1% (568)** respectively. Table 2 indicated a **Very little** level of employees' frustration at the workplace.

Research Question 2: How do employees perceive workplace expectations in relation to work-life balance?

Table 3: *Workplace Expectations for work-life Balance*

S/N	Statements: My Preferred Workplace Expectation	Little Importance	Average Importance	Very Important	Absolutely Important
11	Workplace/roles incorporated with fun	27	44	33	14
12	Further professional learning/schooling	11	34	35	38
13	Increased work flexibility	11	36	47	24
14	Financial stability	15	23	29	51
15	Opportunities to build new skills	12	23	28	55
	Total: 118x5= 590	**76**	**160**	**172**	**182**
	Remarks: VERY IMPORTANT	**12.9%**	**27.1%**	**29.1%**	**30.9%**

Table 3 showed that 12.9% (76) employees considered of the selected expectations of little importance while 27.1% (160) viewed the expectations as averagely important. Meanwhile, 30.9% (182) and 29.1% (172) employees affirmed the selected expectations are of absolute importance and very important respectively. The aggregate of Table 3 showed that a 29.1% and 30.9% (172+182= **354; 60%)** resulted into 60%. Hence, Table 3 findings indicated a **Very Important** level of selected expectation for the employees.

Research Question 3: What is the quality rate of workplace practices on employees' expectations for organizational culture?

Table 4: *Quality of Workplace Culture*

S/N	Statements: Organizational culture	Good	Fair	Poor
16	I enjoy supportive leadership at work	65	42	11
17	There are clear workplace goals	72	35	11
18	I'm encouraged to participate in decision-making	56	38	24
19	There is close rapport with my co-workers	78	33	07
20	There are lots of workplace social activities	68	30	20
21	I have Opportunity to continuous professional learning	59	37	22
22	Recognition of employee's contributions	49	52	17
	Total: 118x 7= 826	**447**	**267**	**112**
	Remarks: Fairly good/ Slightly Above Average	**54.1%**	**32.3%**	**13.6%**

Table 4 showed that 54.1% employees rated the organizational practices as good, while 32.3% (267) perceived the practices as fair. However, 13.6% (112) employees reported the workplace culture to be poor. Table 4 showed that 54.1% is a slightly above average score. It is a somewhat positive practice. Hence, Table 4 findings indicated a **fairly good** workplace culture.

Research Question 4: What are the most common strategic work-relationships organizations adopt for human energy and time management in Nigeria?

Table 5: *Strategic work-relationships for human energy and time management*

S/N	Strategic Work-relationships My organization practices	Tick Applicable Options	Percentage %	Rank
23	Task or Office switching	33	28%	6TH
24	Create to-do list	46	39%	4TH
25	Book Reading & learning session	34	28.8%	5TH
26	Rest/ break time	72	61%	1ST
27	Game Sessions/Fun Day	21	17.8%	9TH
28	Workplace flexibility	57	48.3%	2ND
29	Workplace Family/Buddy	22	18.6%	8TH
30	Workplace Meetings with Perks	27	22.9%	7TH
31	Outside trip bonding	18	15.3%	10TH
32	**Team bonding/Interaction**	**53**	**44.9%**	**3RD**

Table 5 showed the ranking of contemporary strategies to promote workplace relationship. Employees ranked rest/break time 1st position with 61% score as the most common practice. Also, workplace flexibility came 2nd with 48.3% and team bonding interaction was ranked 3rd with 44.9%. Table 5 showed outside trip bonding ranked 10th indicating a least practiced strategy in corporate organizations in Nigeria.

Discussion

Employees' frustration is a sign of unhealthy, toxic work environment. The study's finding showed very little level of employees' frustration (EF) against the workplace. This result implies employees have little anxiety from their daily routine as opined by Durrah, et al. (2023). Similarly, the organizations are healthy work environment opposing internally tensed workplace described by Karamchandani (2020) and Gonzalez-Gomez & Hudson (2024). It could therefore, be inferred that employees have positive emotions (Andalib, Darun & Azizan, 2013; Gonzalez-Gomez & Hudson, 2024). The positive emotion suggest no major hindrance to employees' benefits which according to Andalib and Azizan (2013; p.18), is a critical cause of EF. Furthermore, little frustration indicates employees' attitude to work will minimize errors, conflicts, burnout, disengagement, and job dissatisfaction. This outcome disagreed with Karamchandani, (2020); Durrah et al. (2023); and Gonzalez-Gomez and Hudson (2024) outcome of frustrated employees in a workplace. However, in agreement with González-Gómez and Hudson (2024) impact of frustration, the study's result of very little or low extent of EF might enhance workers to generate ideas and capacity to solve problems, resulting in high productivity for the organizations.

The employees' expectations that will retain them in a workplace considered very important including financial stability, workplace flexibility, fun environment with development of skills and continuous professional growth. These vision are considered ideal work-related goals by Lindsay et al. (2021); Nirmala (2023); and Reddy et al. (2024). These goals reflect employee's areas of interest, and individual's self-concept supporting Lindsay et al. (2021), Nirmala, (2023); and Reddy et al., (2024) that aspiration are critical to employees' social mobility, job satisfaction, and motivation. Any threat to identified very important expectations, according to Durrah et al. (2023), may result into EF. The employees equally

desired both traditional (finance) and contemporary needs (innovative workplace culture) as Reddy et al. (2024) call for dynamic work-life balance to promote job satisfaction. The study's findings showed a fairly good culture indicating non-toxic, healthy workplace. The result was opposed to Salami and Umoru (2023) suggesting no neglect of governing rules and at well-structured organization as opined by Ezeribe & Oguntade (2024). The employees seemed not overwhelm by challenges and may be productivity. Similarly, study's findings of good culture that workplace culture may influence employees' behaviors and performance to be productive (Howard et al., 2023; Wijayanti & Tirtoprojo, 2023).

The enhancement of human energy according to Onyemelukwe et al. (2023) required effective time management using diverse workplace-relationship strategies. Employees ranked rest/break time, workplace flexibility and team bonding interaction as most commonly engaged strategies. Human resources being the most significant power for organizational success as Roberts et al. (2017) stated the organizations promote employees' mental alertness but used break time more. The activities implied effective engagement of time to boost employees' happiness confirming Owolabi (2018) position on human energy crisis of less workplace happiness. The inadequate strategies showed no optimization of human energy hence leading to energy depletion, loss of focus, and health challenges (Bundtzen & Hinrichs, 2021; Onyemelukwe et al., 2023; pp. 2-4). Employees' time are not effectively structured (Claessens et al., 2007) due to inadequate variety of techniques, similarly no increase time for other activities (King et al., 1986) and limited practices may not maximize employees' mental productivity (Britton & Tesser, 1991). Therefore, as suggested by Eilam

and Aharon (2003) employees will require self-regulation strategies to manage their time and boost human energy.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

The study's findings showed employees frustration to be little with a fairly good workplace culture reported. The employees' expectations however reflected very important value attached to the expectation as critical resources to their goals. The inadequate work-relationship strategies thus indicate lack of activities to boost employees' happiness. A little loss of resources then will lead to high frustrations and energy depletion.

The study concludes that organizations are yet to be human-centric in promoting Industry 5.0. goal. Although employees frustration is little it seemed the treatment is aimed at productivity and not employees' happiness which is 5.0 goal. There is therefore need to shift energy and time management truly to employees' needs.

The study recommends that human energy should be boosted with organizations cultivating culture that reinforces human energy. In addition, employees should have self-designed strategies to ensure positive work-relationship activities such as planning outside trips together and having work buddy.

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