CAREER SHOCKS AND EMPLOYEES' EMPLOYEES' WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR: EVIDENCE FROM THE NATIONAL POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Career shocks have increasingly emerged as important career-related events capable of influencing employees' attitudes and workplace outcomes. However, despite growing scholarly attention to career shocks globally, limited empirical evidence exists regarding their relationship with employees' employees' workplace behaviour within the Nigerian context. This study examined the relationship between positive and negative career shocks and employees' employees' workplace behaviour among staff of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the extent to which positive career shocks and negative career shocks relate to employees' employees' workplace behaviour. A correlational survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 124 employees of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria, as a result, the study adopted the enumeration sample using the entire population as the sample size for the study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, however, 89 valid responses were retrieved and subsequently used for both descriptive and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis. The findings revealed that positive career shocks had a significant positive relationship with employees' employees' workplace behaviour ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, negative career shocks also showed a significant relationship with employees' employees' workplace behaviour ($p < 0.05$). The study concluded that career shocks, whether positive or negative, significantly shape employees' workplace behavioural responses within organisations. It recommended that organisations establish supportive career management systems, counselling mechanisms, and adaptive workplace policies to help employees effectively manage career-related disruptions and maintain positive employees' workplace behaviour.

Keywords: Career Shocks, Positive Career Shock, Negative Career Shock, Employees' workplace behaviour, Employees, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary workplace is characterized by rapid and continuous change driven by technological innovation, globalisation, economic uncertainty, demographic shifts, evolving organisational structures, and the increasing adoption of artificial intelligence. To remain competitive and responsive to environmental demands, organisations frequently engage in restructuring, downsizing, mergers, digital transformation initiatives, and other forms of organisational change. While these changes are often necessary for organisational survival and growth, they have also increased career uncertainty and instability among employees. Consequently, employees are increasingly required to adapt to changing job roles, evolving skill requirements, and unpredictable career trajectories. Scholars have noted that workplace changes significantly influence employees' attitudes and behaviours, as individuals respond to pressures and uncertainties within their immediate work environment (Donnelly & Quirin, 2006; Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021).

Against this backdrop of increasing workplace uncertainty, the concept of career shocks has emerged as an important area of career research. Career shocks refer to disruptive, extraordinary, or unexpected events that occur largely outside an individual's control and trigger deliberate reflection regarding career-related decisions and actions. Although earlier studies acknowledged career disruptions, the concept gained prominence through the work of Seibert, Kraimer, Holtom, and Pierotti (2013) and was further developed by Akkermans, Seibert, and Mol (2018), who defined career shocks as events that significantly influence an individual's career development and decision-making process. These events may originate from organisational, economic, social, or personal circumstances and have the potential to alter employees' career paths either temporarily or permanently.

Career shocks can be classified into positive and negative dimensions depending on the nature and consequences of the event. Positive career shocks include events such as promotions, salary increases, recognition, developmental opportunities, or desirable job assignments that enhance employees' career prospects. Conversely, negative career shocks may involve organisational restructuring, layoffs, unexpected career setbacks, denied opportunities, or job loss, which may hinder career progression (Akkermans et al., 2018). The experience of career shocks varies considerably among individuals because people differ in their perceptions, coping mechanisms, career aspirations, and available resources. Consequently, the same event may be interpreted as a positive opportunity by one employee and as a negative disruption by another. Regardless of their nature, career shocks stimulate reflection and often compel employees to reassess their career goals, expectations, and future decisions (Mansur & Felix, 2021).

The behavioural implications of career shocks within organisations are substantial. Positive career shocks can serve as motivational stimuli that enhance employee engagement, commitment, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and overall work performance. In contrast, negative career shocks may function as stressors that generate anxiety, dissatisfaction, withdrawal behaviours, reduced productivity, turnover intentions, and other adverse workplace outcomes. Career shocks therefore influence not only employees' career decisions but also their day-to-day employees‘ workplace behaviours and reactions

toward organisational practices (Crawford et al., 2019; Donnelly & Quirin, 2006). Understanding these behavioural consequences has become increasingly important as organisations seek to maintain a productive and committed workforce amid ongoing environmental turbulence.

Despite growing scholarly interest in career shocks, several gaps remain in the literature. First, existing studies have predominantly focused on career decision-making, employability, career transitions, and career success, with relatively limited attention given to the behavioural outcomes of career shocks within organisational settings. Second, much of the empirical evidence originates from developed economies, creating a contextual gap regarding how career shocks affect employees in developing countries where labour market conditions, organisational practices, and economic realities differ significantly. Third, previous studies often examine either positive or negative career shocks independently, providing limited understanding of their simultaneous effects on employees‘ workplace behaviour.

Given these gaps, there is a need for further investigation into the relationship between career shocks and employee employees‘ workplace behaviour. Understanding how positive and negative career shocks influence employees' reactions, attitudes, and behaviours can provide valuable insights for organisations seeking to manage workforce stability, employee well-being, and organisational effectiveness. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between career shocks and employees‘ workplace behaviour at work, thereby contributing to the growing body of literature on contemporary career experiences and employees‘ workplace behavioural outcomes.

Consequently, the increasing occurrence of unexpected career-related events in contemporary workplaces has stimulated scholarly interest in understanding the effects of career shocks on employees' career outcomes and workplace experiences. Existing empirical studies have reported varying and sometimes inconsistent findings regarding the consequences of career shocks. For instance, Hirschi (2010) found that career shocks can positively influence subjective career success, while Greco et al. (2015) reported significant effects on career decision-making across different employee groups, including academics, young workers, and persons with disabilities. Other studies have suggested that career shocks may lead to both favourable and unfavourable career outcomes depending on the nature of the shock, individual characteristics, and contextual factors. These mixed findings create an empirical contradiction concerning the extent and direction of the influence of career shocks on employees' employees‘ workplace behaviour.

Beyond the inconsistency in findings, methodological concerns remain within the career shock literature. Although career shocks have gained considerable attention in recent years, there is limited consensus regarding their conceptualisation and measurement. Seibert et al. (2013) observed that the dimensions of career shocks have not been sufficiently explored. Subsequently, Seibert et al. (2016) proposed a measurement framework comprising positive and negative career shock dimensions; however, the scale remains relatively under-validated across different organisational and cultural contexts. Furthermore, much of the existing research has focused on career-related outcomes such as career success, employability, career

transitions, and career decision-making, with limited attention given to behavioural outcomes within the workplace. This methodological limitation restricts understanding of how career shocks influence employees' attitudes and behaviours toward their organisations.

Another important gap relates to context. Most empirical evidence on career shocks originates from developed economies characterized by relatively stable labour markets, stronger institutional support systems, and different organisational realities. Consequently, the applicability of existing findings to developing countries such as Nigeria remains uncertain. The Nigerian work environment is characterized by economic volatility, organisational restructuring, technological disruptions, job insecurity, and changing employment conditions, all of which may increase employees' exposure to career shocks and shape their behavioural responses differently from those reported in previous studies.

Given these empirical, methodological, and contextual gaps, there is a need for further investigation into the relationship between career shocks and employees' workplace behaviour within the Nigerian context. This study seeks to address prior weaknesses in the literature by examining both positive and negative dimensions of career shocks and their influence on employee employees' workplace behaviour. In doing so, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge by providing context-specific evidence from Nigeria and advancing understanding of the behavioural implications of career shocks in contemporary organisations.

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of the study is to examine the relationship between dimensions of career shocks and employees' employees' workplace behaviour and the specific objectives are to;

i. Find out the relationship between positive career shocks (PCSs) and employees' workplace behaviour.

ii. Investigate the correlations between negative career shocks (NCSs) and employees' workplace behaviour.

Research Questions

In line with the above objectives, the following questions will be answered;

i. What is the nature of relationship between positive career shocks (PCSs) and employees' workplace behaviour?

ii. To what extent does negative career shocks (NCSs) influence employees' workplace behaviour?

Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between positive career shocks (PCSs) and employees' workplace behaviour

H02: There is no significant relationship between negative career shocks (NCSs) and employees' workplace behaviour

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Concept of Career Shocks

The increasing uncertainty characterizing modern workplaces has stimulated scholarly interest in understanding the unexpected events that influence employees' career trajectories. Such events are commonly referred to as career shocks. The concept originates from the broader notion of "shock," which Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, and Eberly (2008) describe as a jarring event that interrupts an individual's routine and prompts reconsideration of existing decisions or plans. Shocks may occur at the individual, organisational, or societal level and can produce either positive or negative consequences.

Building on this foundation, Seibert, Kraimer, Holtom, and Pierotti (2013) introduced the concept of career shocks to explain unexpected events capable of altering career-related decisions and behaviours. However, the most widely accepted definition was provided by Akkermans, Seibert, and Mol (2018), who defined career shocks as extraordinary and disruptive events that are largely outside an individual's control and that trigger deliberate reflection regarding one's career. Unlike planned career transitions, career shocks occur unexpectedly and often compel individuals to reassess their career goals, aspirations, and future decisions.

A key characteristic of career shocks is that they vary in intensity, frequency, duration, predictability, and valence. Intensity refers to the magnitude of the shock's impact, frequency concerns how often the event occurs, duration reflects the length of its effects, and valence describes whether the event is perceived as positive or negative (Akkermans et al., 2018). Recent studies have demonstrated that technological disruption, digital transformation, organisational restructuring, economic crises, and global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have increased employees' exposure to career shocks (Akkermans et al., 2020; Ali & Mehreen, 2022).

Career shocks have become particularly relevant in contemporary workplaces because careers are increasingly boundaryless, dynamic, and less predictable than in previous generations. Consequently, understanding how employees respond to career shocks has become an important area of inquiry within human resource management and organisational behaviour literature.

Dimensions of Career Shocks

Positive Career Shocks

Positive career shocks refer to unexpected events that create favourable career outcomes and stimulate positive behavioural responses. These events may include promotions, recognition, salary increases, awards, developmental opportunities, successful project assignments, and accelerated career advancement (Seibert et al., 2013).

Positive career shocks often enhance employees' psychological resources, including self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and motivation. Drawing from the Conservation of Resources Theory, such positive events provide employees with additional resources that encourage

greater commitment and engagement at work. Studies have shown that employees experiencing positive career shocks are more likely to demonstrate innovative behaviour, organisational citizenship behaviour, creativity, and proactive career management (Blokker et al., 2019; Ali & Mehreen, 2022).

Recent evidence suggests that younger employees and highly employable workers often benefit most from positive career shocks because they possess the flexibility and adaptability required to capitalize on emerging opportunities (Rummel et al., 2019; Akkermans et al., 2021).

Negative Career Shocks

Negative career shocks refer to unexpected events that hinder career progression or threaten employees' career stability. Examples include layoffs, organisational restructuring, denied promotions, involuntary transfers, loss of key supervisors, workplace conflict, economic downturns, and job insecurity (Seibert et al., 2013).

Negative career shocks often generate uncertainty, stress, frustration, and emotional exhaustion. Research indicates that such shocks can undermine career confidence and reduce employees' attachment to their organisations (Hussain & Deery, 2018). During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, many employees experienced negative career shocks arising from downsizing, remote work transitions, and organisational instability, leading to increased turnover intentions and reduced psychological well-being (Akkermans et al., 2020).

Recent studies further suggest that the impact of negative career shocks depends on individual resilience, career adaptability, organisational support, and labour market opportunities (De Vos et al., 2021; Pak et al., 2022). Thus, negative career shocks do not always result in adverse outcomes; in some cases, they may stimulate learning, adaptation, and career redirection.

Workplace Behaviour Literature

Workplace behaviour refers to the observable actions, attitudes, and reactions of employees within organisational settings that influence organisational effectiveness and goal attainment. According to Robbins and Judge (2022), workplace behaviour encompasses all employee actions that affect individual and organisational performance.

Workplace behaviour may be positive or negative. Positive workplace behaviours include job engagement, organisational citizenship behaviour, innovation, cooperation, commitment, and proactive work behaviour. Negative workplace behaviours include absenteeism, withdrawal behaviour, counterproductive work behaviour, presenteeism, and turnover intention.

From an organisational behaviour perspective, employee behaviour is influenced by both internal factors (such as personality, motivation, and emotions) and external factors (such as leadership, organisational culture, work environment, and career experiences). Career shocks represent one of the external career-related factors capable of shaping employee behavioural outcomes.

Theoretical Justification between Career Shocks and Workplace Behaviour

The relationship between career shocks and workplace behaviour can be explained using the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory developed by Hobfoll (1989). COR Theory argues that individuals strive to acquire, preserve, and protect valued resources, including employment opportunities, career progression, social support, status, and psychological well-being. When employees experience positive career shocks such as promotions or recognition, they gain valuable resources that enhance motivation, commitment, and productive workplace behaviour.

Conversely, negative career shocks represent resource losses or threats to resources. Such losses generate stress and motivate employees to protect their remaining resources, often resulting in withdrawal behaviour, reduced engagement, absenteeism, or turnover intention. Thus, career shocks influence workplace behaviour through their effects on employees' perceived resource gains and losses.

The theory therefore provides a strong explanatory framework for understanding why positive career shocks are likely to produce favourable behavioural outcomes, whereas negative career shocks may generate adverse workplace reactions.

Relationship between Career Shocks and Workplace Behaviour

Existing empirical evidence suggests that career shocks significantly influence employee workplace behaviour. Akkermans et al. (2018) found that career shocks trigger career reflection and behavioural adjustments. Employees frequently respond to such events by reassessing career goals, seeking developmental opportunities, or considering alternative employment options.

Similarly, Kraimer et al. (2019) reported that career shocks influence career mobility decisions and job-search behaviour. Positive career shocks have been associated with higher organisational commitment, engagement, and innovation, while negative career shocks have been linked to withdrawal behaviours, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intentions.

More recent studies conducted between 2021 and 2025 indicate that the effects of career shocks extend beyond career outcomes to broader behavioural outcomes. De Vos et al. (2021) found that career shocks affect employees' adaptability and engagement levels. Pak et al. (2022) reported that negative career shocks significantly predict intentions to leave organisations. Likewise, Ali and Mehreen (2022) observed that positive career shocks encourage proactive work behaviour and creativity.

Despite these findings, the relationship remains complex because employees differ in resilience, employability, career adaptability, and organisational support systems.

Critical Debates in the Career Shock Literature

Several debates persist within the career shock literature such as.

First, scholars disagree regarding whether career shocks should be conceptualized primarily as objective events or subjective experiences. While some researchers emphasize the event itself, others argue that employees' perceptions determine the actual impact of a career shock.

Second, there is disagreement regarding the outcomes of negative career shocks. Some studies portray them as harmful events leading to stress and withdrawal, whereas others suggest they can facilitate learning, resilience, and career growth.

Third, concerns remain regarding measurement. Existing career shock scales have not been extensively validated across diverse cultural and organisational contexts, raising questions regarding their universal applicability.

Finally, most studies focus on career-related outcomes rather than workplace behavioural outcomes, limiting understanding of how career shocks affect employees' day-to-day actions within organisations.

Research Gaps

The review identifies several important gaps.

Existing studies report inconsistent findings regarding the consequences of career shocks. While some studies report positive outcomes such as career success and engagement, others report negative outcomes such as stress, turnover intention, and withdrawal behaviour.

Most studies focus on career outcomes including career satisfaction, employability, career adaptability, and career success, with limited attention given to workplace behaviour as an outcome variable.

The measurement of career shocks remains underdeveloped. Existing scales have received limited validation across different organisational and cultural contexts, particularly in developing economies.

Most empirical studies have been conducted in Europe, North America, and other developed economies. Consequently, evidence regarding career shocks within the Nigerian work environment remains scarce.

Limited studies have explicitly applied resource-based explanations such as Conservation of Resources Theory to explain the behavioural consequences of career shocks in workplace settings.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the influence of positive and negative career shocks on employee workplace behaviour within the Nigerian context. The study extends existing literature by focusing on behavioural outcomes rather than solely career outcomes and provides empirical evidence from a developing economy where career uncertainty and labour market instability are increasingly prevalent.

Theoretical framework

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

This study is anchored on the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, originally developed by Hobfoll (1989, 1998) and subsequently refined by Hobfoll and Freedy (2018). The theory is widely used in organisational behaviour, occupational psychology, and career studies to explain how individuals respond to events that threaten, deplete, or enhance valued resources.

The central assumption of COR Theory is that individuals are motivated to acquire, maintain, protect, and accumulate resources that they value. Resources may include tangible assets such as income, employment, promotion opportunities, and job security, as well as intangible assets such as social support, professional relationships, career prospects, self-esteem, psychological well-being, and status. According to Hobfoll (1998), stress occurs when individuals experience actual resource loss, perceive a threat of resource loss, or fail to obtain expected resources after investing significant effort. Consequently, individuals engage in behaviours aimed at conserving existing resources and acquiring new ones to prevent further losses.

A fundamental proposition of the theory is that resource loss has a stronger psychological impact than resource gain. As a result, individuals who perceive threats to their valued resources often adopt protective and coping behaviours designed to minimize further losses. Conversely, resource gains tend to stimulate positive attitudes and proactive behaviours because individuals feel more confident in investing their resources toward future opportunities (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007).

The theory provides a useful framework for understanding the relationship between career shocks and workplace behaviour. Career shocks, whether positive or negative, represent significant events capable of altering employees' resource conditions. Positive career shocks, such as promotions, salary increases, recognition, developmental opportunities, or career advancement, constitute resource gains. These gains enhance employees' confidence, motivation, optimism, and career prospects, thereby encouraging positive workplace behaviours such as organisational commitment, engagement, innovation, organisational citizenship behaviour, and proactive career management.

In contrast, negative career shocks, including layoffs, denied promotions, organisational restructuring, job insecurity, loss of a supervisor, or career stagnation, represent actual or threatened resource losses. Such events may undermine employees' sense of security, reduce perceived career opportunities, and create psychological stress. In response, employees may engage in resource-conservation behaviours such as withdrawal, reduced effort, absenteeism, decreased engagement, increased turnover intentions, or reluctance to invest additional energy in organisational activities (Zacher, 2014).

Furthermore, COR Theory suggests that employees who experience career shocks will actively seek strategies to preserve and replenish their resources. These strategies may include developing new workplace relationships, seeking mentoring and coaching support, participating in career development programmes, acquiring new skills, pursuing alternative career opportunities, and engaging in behaviours that enhance employability. Such coping mechanisms reflect employees' attempts to protect existing resources while simultaneously creating opportunities for future resource acquisition.

The relevance of COR Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how career shocks influence employees' workplace behaviour through perceived resource gains and losses. Positive career shocks are expected to generate favourable behavioural outcomes because they increase employees' resource reservoirs. Conversely, negative career shocks are expected to produce unfavourable behavioural outcomes because they threaten or deplete valued resources.

Thus, the theory provides a logical explanation for variations in employee behaviour following career-related events.

The assumptions of COR Theory directly support the hypotheses of this study. Specifically, the theory predicts that:

i. Positive career shocks will significantly influence employee workplace behaviour because resource gains motivate employees to demonstrate greater commitment, engagement, innovation, and other positive workplace behaviours.

ii. Negative career shocks will significantly influence employee workplace behaviour because perceived resource losses generate stress and trigger protective behaviours such as withdrawal, reduced commitment, absenteeism, and turnover intentions.

Accordingly, Conservation of Resources Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between career shocks and employee workplace behaviour within the Nigerian work environment. The theory offers a comprehensive explanation of why employees react differently to positive and negative career events and how such reactions ultimately shape workplace behaviour.

Empirical Review

Several literature on the subject have diverse outcomes on the relationship of these studies, such studies that were examined are as follows:

Blokker *et al*. (2019) in their study reported that positive career shocks were correlated positively with the perceived employability of young employees. The study concludes that when young people experience positive career shocks, it serves as a motivational tool for career progression.

Rummel *et al*. (2019) in their study of workplace experience where it was reported and established that one of the factors that affects entrepreneurialism in new graduates is the issue of career shocks.

Nery-Kjerfve and Wang (2019), trying to weigh which of the shock is more affecting to employees' behaviour using multiple case studies to drive home their points identified that localisation in the sense that when someone try to adjust in line with the local conditions in which the person find himself was a significant negative shock and is more pressing than the positive.

Nair and Chatterjee (2020) also reported on the relationship between examinations and career prospects. They found out that competitive examinations drive an inner emotion in MBA students who are having dreams of early careers in minds and this then affect their anxiety level in starting new employment.

In another study by Feng *et al*. (2020) about negative career shocks it was presented that for employees who are faced with negative shocks would do all things to consider new possible opportunities in their career because as humans it is naturally our nature to want to avoid such conditions.

A study by Slay *et al*. (2004) also concluded that career shocks are push factors that drive individual to take a review of the career progression. The report then find out that when such review is done by the mid-life career person critical decisions on their career movements is taken.

A study of how workplace shock affects turnover intentions by Holtom *et al*. (2005) reported that over 64% of individuals who took the decisions to leave their jobs was as a result of the unpleasant, unexpected and disappointed events that they suffer in their workplace in the form of shock.

Lastly, Seibert *et al*. (2013) reported a positive relationship between career shocks and stronger intentions to pursue higher education and on the other hand negative shocks were related to lower intentions.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey research design. The design is considered appropriate because the study in on the relationship between two co-related variables to find out how the occurrence of one would force an action on the other. The study environment was the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria (NPMCN), where primary data was collected form the employees in the college with the aid of an adapted questionnaires.

The information collected for the study was done through the use of an adapted 10-item scale developed on career shock by Seibert *et al.*, (2016). This instrument has a coefficient alpha was 0.87. the dependent variable was evaluated using a 5-item scale that was developed by Schaufeli, (1996), with scores ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) with a Cronbach's alpha reported of 0.88. Along with these dimension questions the instrument also contained questions on demographic characteristics such as o age, gender, marital status, work status and working years in the establishment.

The population in this study comprised staff in NPMCN, Lagos State, Nigeria. The available records from the Administrative Department, of the college show that the existing population is 124 employees which comprised senior staff members were about 75% this include the executive staff members of the college which are college president, registrar and deputy registrar, managers and the Head of the department. The remaining 25% were in the category of junior staff. The study adopts the enumeration method of sample size, hence, the entire 124 employees were considered for the sample of the study. Furthermore, the study adopts the convenience approach in meeting the respondents,

Table 1: Analysis of the Population

Categories	Population of Staff
Management staff	8
Senior Staff	72
Junior Staff	44
Total	124

Source: Admin Record NPMCN (2024)

The earlier stated hypotheses in the study were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation with the aid of (SPSS) software for the analysis. The return rate analysis of the administered research instrument shows that from the ninety-five copies of the instrument administered to the participants ninety-three (93) were received back but only eighty-nine (89) were the ones properly filled. The 89 responses were then used for the study analysis.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between positive career shock and employees' workplace behaviour.

Table 4.5.1: Correlation between Positive Career Shock and Employees' Workplace Behaviour

Variables	***Positive Career Shock***	***Employees' Workplace Behaviour***
Positive Career Shock	1	.665**
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000
N	89	89
Employees' Workplace Behaviour	.665**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-
N	89	89

Note: $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between positive career shock and employees' workplace behaviour ($r = .665$, $p < .001$, $N = 89$). Since the probability value is less than the 0.01 significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Using Cohen's (1988) guidelines for interpreting correlation coefficients, an r-value of .665 represents a strong positive relationship between the variables. This suggests that employees who experience favourable career-related events such as promotions, recognition, developmental opportunities, or career advancement are more likely to exhibit positive workplace behaviours.

To determine the practical significance of the relationship, the coefficient of determination (r^2) was computed: $r^2 = (.665)^2 = .442$

This indicates that approximately 44.2% of the variation in employees' workplace behaviour is associated with positive career shocks. This represents a substantial effect size and

demonstrates that positive career shocks are not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful in explaining employee workplace behaviour.

Based on Fisher's z-transformation, the approximate 95% confidence interval for the correlation coefficient ranges from 0.53 to 0.77, indicating that the true population correlation is likely to fall within this interval. The relatively narrow confidence interval further strengthens confidence in the observed relationship. Therefore, the findings suggest that positive career shocks constitute an important factor influencing workplace behaviour among employees.

Hypothesis Two

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between negative career shock and employees' workplace behaviour.

Table 4.5.2: Correlation between Negative Career Shock and Employees' Workplace Behaviour

Variables	***Negative Career Shock***	***Employees' Workplace Behaviour***
Negative Career Shock	1	.897**
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000
N	89	89
Employees' Workplace Behaviour	.897**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-
N	89	89

Note: $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

The Pearson correlation analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between negative career shock and employees' workplace behaviour ($r = .897$, $p < .001$, $N = 89$). Since the p-value is less than the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected.

According to Cohen's (1988) classification, an r-value of .897 represents a very strong relationship between the variables. The magnitude of this correlation suggests that negative career shocks are strongly associated with variations in employees' workplace behaviour.

The coefficient of determination was calculated as:

$r^2 = (.897)^2 = .805$

This implies that approximately 80.5% of the variance in employees' workplace behaviour is associated with negative career shocks. Such a large effect size indicates that negative career shocks may constitute one of the most influential factors affecting employee behavioural outcomes within the study context.

The approximate 95% confidence interval for the correlation coefficient ranges from 0.84 to 0.93, indicating a highly stable and robust relationship.

However, the interpretation of this positive correlation requires caution. A positive correlation simply indicates that the two variables move in the same direction. Therefore, if higher scores on the workplace behaviour scale represent undesirable workplace behaviours such as withdrawal, absenteeism, reduced engagement, or turnover intentions, then the result suggests that increased exposure to negative career shocks is associated with increased negative workplace behaviours. Conversely, if higher scores indicate desirable workplace behaviours, the finding would require further theoretical explanation because it would contradict much of the existing literature and the assumptions of Conservation of Resources Theory. Consequently, the interpretation should be based on the coding direction of the workplace behaviour measure used in this study.

The findings indicate that both positive and negative career shocks are significantly associated with employees' workplace behaviour. However, the relationship between negative career shocks and workplace behaviour ($r = .897$) is substantially stronger than that of positive career shocks ($r = .665$). This suggests that employees may be more sensitive to career-related losses and threats than to career-related gains, a finding that aligns with the propositions of Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which argues that resource losses exert stronger effects on individuals than equivalent resource gains.

The present analysis utilized bivariate Pearson correlation and did not statistically control for demographic characteristics such as age, gender, educational qualification, organisational tenure, or job level. Consequently, the reported relationships represent zero-order correlations. Future studies may employ multiple regression analysis or structural equation modelling to examine whether the observed relationships remain significant after controlling for relevant demographic and organisational factors.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the relationship between career shocks and employees' workplace behaviour, focusing specifically on the effects of positive career shocks and negative career shocks. The findings revealed that both dimensions of career shock are significantly associated with employees' workplace behaviour. However, the magnitude of the relationships differed considerably, with negative career shock exhibiting a substantially stronger relationship ($r = .897$, $p < .001$) than positive career shock ($r = .665$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that unexpected career-related events constitute important antecedents of employee behaviour within contemporary organisations.

The significant positive relationship between positive career shock and workplace behaviour indicates that favourable and unexpected career events such as promotions, recognition, developmental opportunities, salary increases, and enhanced job responsibilities are associated with changes in employee workplace behaviour. From the perspective of Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, 1998), positive career shocks represent resource gains that strengthen employees' psychological and professional resource reservoirs. Such resource gains enhance employees' confidence, motivation, career optimism, and perceived organisational support, thereby encouraging greater investment in work-related activities. Employees who experience positive career shocks are therefore more likely to

demonstrate positive workplace behaviours such as organisational commitment, engagement, initiative, cooperation, and innovative performance.

This finding supports previous studies that identified positive career events as important drivers of employee motivation and proactive behaviour. For instance, Blokker et al. (2019) found that favourable career experiences increase career confidence and encourage proactive career management. Similarly, Ali and Mehreen (2022) reported that positive career-related experiences stimulate creativity, innovation, and constructive workplace behaviours. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that positive career shocks are not only relevant to career outcomes but are also significantly associated with broader workplace behavioural outcomes within the Nigerian context.

The study further revealed that negative career shock possesses a remarkably strong relationship with employees' workplace behaviour. This finding suggests that employees are highly sensitive to adverse career events such as organisational restructuring, denied promotions, career stagnation, job insecurity, involuntary transfers, or the loss of important workplace relationships. While positive career events influence behaviour, the findings indicate that negative career experiences exert a much greater behavioural impact.

This result is particularly consistent with the central propositions of Conservation of Resources Theory. According to Hobfoll (1998), resource losses are psychologically more powerful than resource gains. Individuals tend to react more strongly to threats of resource loss because such losses create uncertainty, stress, and concerns about future resource availability. Negative career shocks threaten important career resources, including job security, advancement opportunities, organisational status, professional networks, and psychological well-being. Consequently, employees experiencing negative career shocks may adopt behavioural responses aimed at protecting remaining resources or minimizing further losses.

The interpretation of this finding, however, depends on the operationalisation of workplace behaviour in the study. If higher workplace behaviour scores reflect positive behaviours such as commitment, engagement, and organisational citizenship behaviour, then the positive correlation between negative career shocks and workplace behaviour may indicate that employees respond to adverse career events by increasing effort, adaptability, or resilience in an attempt to safeguard their careers. Such a finding would suggest a coping mechanism whereby employees intensify positive workplace behaviours when confronted with career uncertainty.

Conversely, if higher workplace behaviour scores reflect negative behaviours such as absenteeism, withdrawal behaviour, reduced productivity, or turnover intentions, then the findings indicate that negative career shocks contribute directly to undesirable workplace outcomes. This latter interpretation is more consistent with most existing literature and with the assumptions of COR Theory, which predicts that resource threats and losses are likely to produce stress-related behavioural reactions.

The exceptionally strong correlation observed between negative career shock and workplace behaviour ($r = .897$) also warrants critical consideration. In behavioural research, correlations

of this magnitude are relatively uncommon because employee behaviour is typically influenced by multiple organisational, psychological, and environmental factors. The finding may indicate that career shocks constitute a particularly salient workplace experience within the study context. It may also reflect the economic uncertainty, labour market volatility, and organisational restructuring commonly experienced within developing economies such as Nigeria, where career disruptions can have far-reaching consequences for employees' livelihoods and future opportunities.

The findings generally align with contemporary empirical evidence. Akkermans et al. (2018) argued that career shocks trigger career reflection and behavioural adjustment processes. Similarly, De Vos et al. (2021) found that career shocks significantly influence employee adaptability and career-related behaviours. Pak et al. (2022) reported that negative career events increase employees' intentions to leave organisations, while Zhou et al. (2023) demonstrated that unexpected career disruptions affect employee psychological states and workplace responses. The current study contributes to this growing body of literature by providing evidence that career shocks influence workplace behaviour in a developing-country context where empirical studies remain limited.

Beyond their theoretical implications, the findings also have important practical significance. Organisations should recognize that employees' behavioural responses are shaped not only by formal human resource policies but also by unexpected career-related events. Positive career shocks should be strategically leveraged through recognition programmes, developmental opportunities, succession planning, and career advancement initiatives to encourage desirable workplace behaviours. At the same time, organisations should proactively manage negative career shocks by providing career counselling, mentoring, communication support, employee assistance programmes, and career development interventions. Such initiatives may reduce the adverse behavioural consequences associated with resource loss and uncertainty.

Overall, the findings reinforce the argument that career shocks are significant determinants of workplace behaviour. More importantly, the stronger influence of negative career shocks supports the fundamental proposition of Conservation of Resources Theory that individuals respond more intensely to resource loss than to resource gain. The study therefore contributes both theoretically and empirically to understanding how unexpected career events shape employee behaviour within contemporary organisations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the relationship between career shocks and employees' workplace behaviour within the Nigerian work environment. The findings revealed that both positive and negative career shocks are significantly associated with workplace behaviour. However, negative career shocks demonstrated a substantially stronger relationship with employees' workplace behaviour than positive career shocks, suggesting that employees are more sensitive to career-related losses, disruptions, and uncertainties than to career-related gains and opportunities.

The findings provide empirical support for the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which posits that individuals seek to acquire, protect, and preserve valued resources, and that resource losses exert a stronger influence on behaviour than equivalent resource gains. Positive career shocks, such as promotions, recognition, and career advancement opportunities, appear to enhance employees' psychological and professional resources, thereby encouraging constructive workplace behaviours. In contrast, negative career shocks, including organisational restructuring, denied opportunities, job insecurity, and career disruptions, may threaten employees' valued resources and consequently influence behavioural responses within the workplace.

The study therefore concludes that career shocks constitute an important determinant of workplace behaviour in contemporary organisations. The findings further suggest that organisations cannot effectively manage employee behaviour without considering the influence of unexpected career-related events. Consequently, career shocks should be recognized as a strategic human resource management concern requiring deliberate organisational attention and intervention.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Implement structured change management practices. Organisations should carefully plan and communicate organisational changes, restructuring exercises, technological transformations, and workforce adjustments to reduce uncertainty and minimize the adverse effects of negative career shocks on employees.

ii. Strengthen career development systems. Organisations should establish transparent promotion systems, career planning initiatives, mentoring programmes, and succession management practices that increase employees' access to positive career experiences and opportunities for advancement.

iii. Provide career support mechanisms. Human resource departments should introduce career counselling services, coaching programmes, employee assistance initiatives, and psychological support systems to help employees cope effectively with career disruptions and uncertainty.

iv. Enhance employee resilience and adaptability.: rganisations should invest in continuous learning, skills development, career adaptability training, and resilience-building programmes that enable employees to respond constructively to career shocks and changing workplace conditions.

v. Improve organisational communication.: Managers should maintain regular, honest, and transparent communication regarding organisational changes that may affect employees' career prospects. Timely information can reduce anxiety and strengthen employee trust during periods of uncertainty.

vi. Promote employee career security policies.: Organisations and policymakers should develop workplace policies that support career development, employability enhancement, and fair treatment during restructuring and workforce transitions.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged.

i. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between career shocks and workplace behaviour.

ii. The study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias, social desirability bias, and common method variance.

iii. The sample size and geographical coverage may limit the generalizability of the findings to all sectors and organisations within Nigeria.

iv. The study focused primarily on the direct relationship between career shocks and workplace behaviour and did not examine potential mediating or moderating variables such as resilience, organisational support, career adaptability, or psychological capital.

v. Workplace behaviour was examined as a broad construct, which may conceal differences among specific behavioural outcomes such as organisational commitment, engagement, absenteeism, turnover intention, and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the limitations and findings of this study, future research should consider the following directions:

i. Future studies should employ longitudinal research designs to better understand how career shocks influence workplace behaviour over time.

ii. Researchers should investigate the mediating and moderating roles of variables such as career adaptability, resilience, psychological capital, emotional intelligence, and organisational support in the relationship between career shocks and workplace behaviour.

iii. Future studies should examine specific dimensions of workplace behaviour separately, including employee engagement, organisational commitment, innovative work behaviour, turnover intention, absenteeism, and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the growing career shock literature by extending the examination of career shocks beyond traditional career outcomes to workplace behavioural outcomes. It provides empirical evidence from the Nigerian context, where research on career shocks remains limited, and demonstrates that both positive and negative career shocks significantly influence employee workplace behaviour. Furthermore, the study provides support for the application of Conservation of Resources Theory in explaining employees' behavioural responses to career-related events and highlights the stronger behavioural influence of negative career shocks relative to positive career shocks.

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