

## Knowledge of Job Insecurity Climate and Future Work Self: Moderating Roles of Personality Variables

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### Abstract

The study examined the relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self of young people. The study also explored the moderating effects of career adaptability, career optimism, and proactive personality in this relationship. A two-wave time lagged data were collected from undergraduate students ( $N = 531$ ) of banking and finance from universities in Southeastern Nigeria. Results of the Structural Equation Modeling showed that knowledge of job insecurity climate related negatively to future work self. Career adaptability and career optimism were related positively to future work self. Proactive personality was not significantly related to future work self. The results also indicated that career adaptability and proactive personality moderated the relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self, but career optimism did not have any moderating effect. These findings imply that perception of insecure work environment is important for career transition of young people.

**Keywords:** knowledge of job insecurity climate, career adaptability, career optimism, proactive personality, future work self, young people.

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## Introduction

There may be no worse nightmare than young people undergoing training to achieve a successful career to realize that the jobs they are being prepared for is indeed precarious. Given such circumstances, especially in societies with economic instability illustrated by precariousness of employment and labor relations, which is intensified by huge layoffs (Medina et al., 2022) makes it pertinent for young people to find a way to manage such complex condition that pervades the society. Some of the ways through which these young people can proactively manage their future careers include discovering alternatives, setting specific objectives, acquiring relevant skills, and building up experiences that will widen their chances of getting employment (Hall, 2002). Managing career requires people to make efforts to adequately prepare from school-to-work transition (Hall, 2002), and ensure that their career aspiration is realized. It may be on this note that Strauss et al. (2012) developed the concept of “future work self”, which they defined as “representations of the self in the future that encapsulate individually significant hopes and aspirations in relation to work” (p. 581). Our study is based on the social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994) and the social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). While the SCCT emphasizes that career development is embedded in self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals; the social information processing theory posits that individuals form opinion from information they receive from the social environment, which can restrict them from making career advancement.

Young people undergo different professional training to acquire specific skills to seamlessly transit from school to a desired career. Considering individual investments to thrive in their desired career, it may be difficult for them to abandon their potential career paths to a different one; yet some conditions can compel young people to attempt dumping their age-long anticipated career paths. One of such conditions is when these young people have knowledge of job insecurity climate about their dream organizations. For example, the banking sector in Nigeria often seen as an example of modern organizations is reported to be one of the fastest-growing sub-sectors within the Nigerian economy (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020), yet these banks have a record for mass employment terminations, making uncertainties in the industry more persistent than ever (Oludimu, 2017). Given the precariousness of banking job in Nigeria, the young people receiving specific training to work in the sector may be discouraged due to a belief that their chances of establishing a successful and stable career in such job is not guaranteed. In Nigeria, the young people are most affected by the spate of unemployment and underemployment that pervade the Nigerian society. The sad reality before young people in Nigeria, particularly university graduates is that the general unemployment rate stands at 33.3% (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021). Of this proportion of unemployed people, 40.1% have first degree certificates, 27.8% have their master’s degree certificates, and 16.9% have their doctorate degree certificates (NBS, 2021). Such staggering rates of graduate unemployment makes it extremely necessary for young people to be wary of the careers they wish to undertake.

Job insecurity has been defined as “a perceived threat to the continuity and stability of employment” (Shoss, 2017, p. 1914). Most definitions of job insecurity entail subjective job insecurity (De Witte & Näswall, 2003) as used in the current study. Although earlier studies on job insecurity made significant contributions to the body of knowledge (e.g., Lübke, 2021; Ugwu et al., 2022), these studies were limited to individual level of analysis. However, Kozlowski and Klein (2000) made a strong case about a need to investigate the social context that involves relational dynamics among several individuals that cannot be understood in terms of single

individuals. Based on this, Sora et al. (2009) introduced the job insecurity climate construct as “a set of shared perceptions of powerlessness to maintain the continuity of threatened jobs in an organization” (p. 130). Climate entails a description of an experience people have in a workgroup situation (Hsieh & Kao, 2022). It is only recently that studies began to focus on a multilevel approach to the study of job insecurity, where perceptions of job insecurity are shared among individuals within an organization (Hsieh & Kao, 2022; Låstad et al., 2018).

Significant research gaps still exist despite support for individual and shared perception of job insecurity among individuals working in the same organization. For example, to the best of our knowledge, so far, no research has accounted for how knowledge of job insecurity climate defined as shared awareness of uncertainties surrounding jobs in organizations by individuals outside those organizations could disrupt career aspirations of young people. As knowledge of job insecurity climate threatens to disrupt individuals’ career hopes and aspirations, two issues that need to be fully addressed in the job insecurity climate literature remain. First is to examine whether these young people possess adaptive qualities to handle challenges in their career transitions and how these abilities would mitigate the potential negative effects knowledge of job insecurity climate pose to future work self of these young people. Although people are agentic beings who are actively driven to choose and pursue important goals in their life domains, including career (Freund & Baltes, 2014), but there comes a time in people’s life when they face obstacles that are beyond their control, which block them from achieving their career goals. At the same time, if these individuals possess certain abilities such as career adaptability (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), career optimism (Rottinghaus et al., 2005), and proactive personality (Brown et al. 2006), they can pursue their desired career paths regardless of their knowledge of job insecurity climate.

Given the less predictability of careers, individuals must be prepared to adapt to changing circumstances (Kanfer et al., 2001). Career adaptability is defined as “the self-regulation strength or capacities that a person may draw upon to solve the unfamiliar, complex and ill-defined problems presented by developmental vocational tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas” (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 662). Career adaptability has been conceptualized as a psychological resource that supports self-regulation approaches that may help individuals to cope with potential threats to individual’s career aspiration. Related to career adaptability in ensuring that individuals adapt to changing career environment, is career optimism. Career optimism is described as the positive expectations about one’s impending career growth (Rottinghaus et al., 2005) as well as the confidence in one’s ability to surmount and adjust well to changing work environment (Carver et al., 2010). In addition to career adaptability and career optimism, proactive personality defined as “one who is relatively unconstrained by situational forces and who affects environmental change” (Bateman & Crant, 1993, p. 105) has been related to career decisions. Proactive personality has proved to be better related to personal career development (Major et al., 2006) compared to the Big Five model. Earlier studies have indicated that proactive personality can enhance students’ career decision self-efficacy (Preston & Salim, 2019) and career success (Seibert et al., 1999), and can decrease their career decision-making difficulties (He et al., 2021).

However, Shoss (2017) revealed that the literature has largely taken a slow approach toward moderators of job insecurity-outcome relationships. It is also based on this that we chose to undertake this study to broaden our understanding of the moderators of knowledge of job insecurity climate and individuals’ future work self. We, therefore, aim to take the job insecurity climate research steps further by primarily considering the impact of knowledge of job insecurity climate on the career hopes and aspirations of young people.

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*Theoretical background and development of hypotheses*

Our study is based on a blend of the social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994) and the social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). The SCCT is modeled from Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which postulates a mutual relationship between people and the environment. The SCCT posits that career success is a function of a combination of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals. In SCCT, career interests are regulated by self-efficacy and an outcome expectation, which means that the individuals' interest is likely to endure in certain activities, particularly when they experience personal ability and positive results. More importantly, success or failure to make career transition (goal achievement) is also determined by whether the environment supports or opposes individuals' efforts. In our context, knowledge of job insecurity climate is an example of an environmental factor that is capable of obstructing individuals' school-to-work transition.

It is argued from the social information processing theory perspective that events in the social environment are important in determining individuals' career transition. For instance, rumors about organizational changes, uncertainties and poor organizational communication are likely to contribute to the emergence of knowledge of job insecurity climate in a workplace (Jiang & Probst, 2014). When organizational changes dominate circular discussions, employees might gravitate toward paying more attention to negative signs in organizations. When this rumor or discussions of organizational change go *viral*, it could give rise to perceptions of job insecurity among individuals outside the organizations. Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) identified individuals' immediate social environment as one key source of information. Accordingly, this social environment provides important cues that inform individuals on constructing and interpreting events.

Although previous studies argued that perceived job insecurity arises from a relative lack of power (Dixon et al., 2013), and that employees who possess knowledge, skills, and abilities which are essential to the operations of the company are supposed to experience less job insecurity (Green et al., 2000), but the situation in Nigeria is such that country-level features including labour legislation, which are expected to influence decision making and protect bank workers against terminations are absent. Therefore, these banks spontaneously terminate appointments whenever they are deemed necessary, creating heightened job insecurity climate that may inhibit future work self of young people. In the long run, this information might shape individuals' attitudes and opinions and what their response would be. Therefore, using the social information processing theory as a theoretical framework, we propose that knowledge of job insecurity climate will be related to future work self and that career adaptability, career optimism, and proactive behavior will play moderating roles in this relationship.

*Knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self*

Despite progress made on job insecurity research at both individual and group levels (e.g., Jiang & Probst, 2016; Låstad et al., 2018; Sora et al., 2013; Ugwu et al., 2015; Ugwu et al., 2021; Ugwu et al., 2023); there are still more to be learned. For example, in their proposal to researchers to cover for job insecurity research in a rapidly changing workplace, Lee et al. (2018) called for a change of the job insecurity lens to extend our understanding of whether and how job insecurity climate might constitute a higher-level phenomenon. Although Låstad et al. (2018) made a significant contribution to job insecurity research by establishing that workgroup is an essential social context for job insecurity climate perceptions, they failed to look beyond the organizational context in their approach. Låstad et al. (2018) called for more thorough investigations into job

insecurity to unravel the individual and multilevel sources of the variance in job insecurity. We aim to answer these calls by examining the impact of knowledge of job insecurity climate on the future work self of university undergraduates. Future work self is important because it provides the momentum for future behavior in the world of work (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and essential to individuals' motivation (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). Future work self provides the needed spark for individuals to pursue worthy future career paths, thus inspiring individuals to be involved in a range of proactive career behaviors (Strauss et al., 2012).

Given that job insecurity perceptions occur in a social context (broader environment), it is conceivable that job insecurity perceptions and the associated worries are no longer a secret. In other words, the social climate is not made up of a combination of a group of individuals' perceptions about themselves or within workgroups only; it can also reflect individuals' perceptions of their social surroundings (Parker et al., 2003), it could therefore be perceived as a climate by the third party – those outside the organization. Accordingly, the reality is that those employees whose jobs are threatened are within the social groups that are exposed to the media (Oludimu, 2017). They also take part in conversations about job insecurity in their organizations, and as a result, individual members of the social group become aware of these job uncertainties. Having such knowledge could disrupt the future career plan of individuals who are desirous of making career entry into such organizations because observed or felt emotion may translate into formation of an opinion (Izard, 2009), which may gravitate into negative action against the career aspirations of these individuals.

The conceptualization of job insecurity climate is relatively new (Sora et al., 2009); thus, studies on the construct are still in their infancy. The few studies that focused on the construct have found negative effects similar to individual job insecurity perceptions. For instance, Sora et al. (2013) found a positive association between job insecurity climate and lower levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work involvement, and organizational trust. In a more recent study, Låstad et al. (2018) found that those with a high perception of job insecurity climate reported lower levels of negative self-rated health and higher job burnout. Therefore, it is theoretically coherent to reason that if job insecurity climate could be related to numerous negative work behaviors and outcomes, knowledge of job insecurity climate by third party could also be related negatively to future work self. Based on the arguments above, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 1:* Knowledge of job insecurity climate is related negatively to future work self of young people.

#### *Career adaptability as a moderator*

Career adaptability is a set of individual resources that extend and benefit one's sustainable development in their lifelong careers (Lan & Chen, 2020). Different scholars have held diverse views about career adaptability. In this paper, we defined career adaptability in the words of Rottinghaus et al. (2005) as the "capacity to cope with and capitalize on the change in the future, level of comfort with new work responsibilities, and ability to recover when unforeseen events alter career plans" (p. 11). Career adaptability helps individuals to cope with their transition from school to work and record substantial success in mastering vocational or life transitions (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2016) is related to career planning, proactive skills development, career networking (e.g., Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015), career exploration (e.g., Li, Guan et al., 2015), and career competencies (e.g., Dumulescu et al., 2015). As a personal resource, career adaptability may enable individuals to manage the unforeseen events in the environment by responding with appropriate behavior (Rossier, 2015). Career adaptability is linked to numerous positive career-related variables such as confidence in finding solutions to problems and job search behavior (e.g.,

Rottinghaus et al., 2005). Furthermore, career adaptability has coping capability in that when individuals are faced with difficult career development-related problems, these individuals turn to career adaptability for solution (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). However, there is a lack of evidence that previous studies have investigated the moderating role of career adaptability on the relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self of young people. In consideration of the arguments above and theoretical ideas, we speculate that:

*Hypothesis 2:* Career adaptability is positively related to future work self.

*Hypothesis 3:* Career adaptability moderates the negative relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self in such a way that the relationship is weaker when career adaptability is high than when it is low.

#### *Career optimism as a moderator*

Optimism can stimulate people's determination to pursue career goals (Brown & Marshall, 2001), making it extremely important in work contexts. Optimists can accomplish career goals because they are confident about their capabilities to deal with tough challenges (Bowlby, 1988). Optimists succeed because they are endowed with adaptive resources such as flexibility, belief in the sunny side of life, and have disposition to view career difficulties as challenges rather than hindrances (Delle & Searle, 2020). Studies reported that career optimism is positively related to various outcomes, including career planning (e.g., Rottinghaus et al., 2005), objective and subjective career success (e.g., Spurk et al., 2015), career goal engagement (e.g., Haratsis et al., 2015), job career adaptability (e.g., Tolentino et al., 2014), individual performance to pursue opportunities (e.g., Lent & Brown, 2019). Moreover, it has been observed across studies that career optimism has been very decisive in an individual's choice of career (Young et al., 2018). Nguyen et al. (2016) argued that optimism is a personal resource that can assist employees to succeed regardless of workplace challenges. Despite various demonstrations of the relevance of career optimism in the literature, knowledge gap still exists. For example, in their systematic review, Eva et al. (2020) reported that only one study has investigated the moderating role of career optimism on relationships between other variables (Kim et al., 2014). This is surprising given the adaptive nature of career optimism. More studies are therefore needed to further understand how career optimism enhances career aspiration. As far as we know, studies have not linked career optimism to future work self. More so, career optimism has not been demonstrated to mitigate the relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self. Given the evidence above, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 4:* Career optimism will be related positively to future work self.

*Hypothesis 5:* Career optimism will moderate the negative relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self in such a way that the relationship will be weaker when career optimism is high than when it is low.

#### *Proactive personality as a moderator*

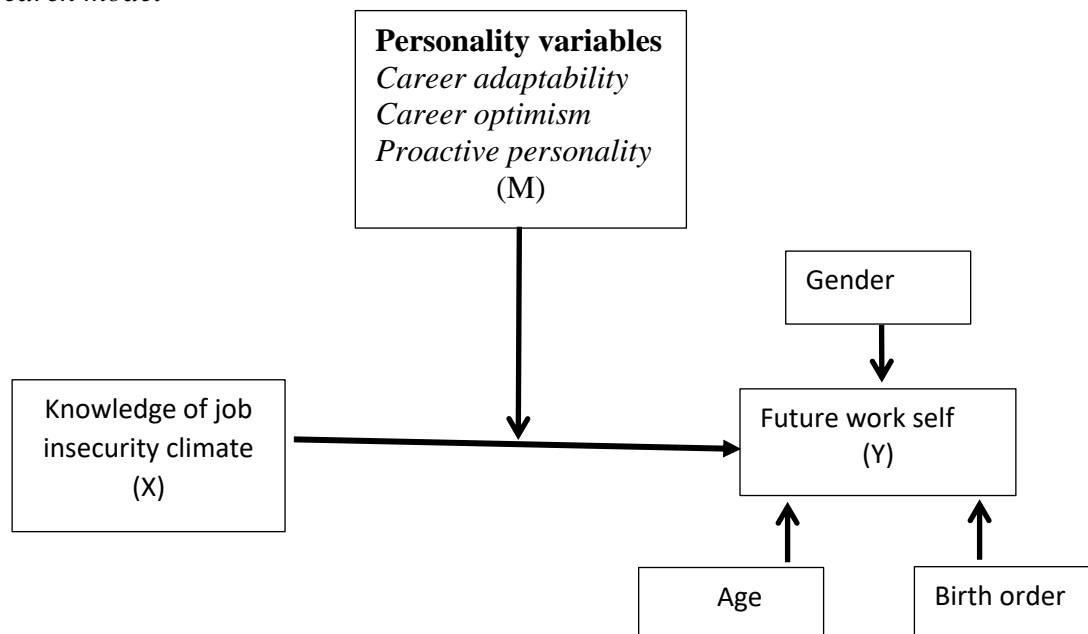
Proactive personality, which is relatively new in the field of management, has for the past twenty years witnessed a surge of research interest (Sun et al., 2021). This could be due to an increase in uncertainty and business competition that characterizes modern organizations and the need for employees to take initiative (Griffin et al., 2007). Proactive individuals, rather than passively wait for a chance to decide their fate, actively adapt to all the aspects of the environment in which they are and are motivated to explore various options to find solutions to handling

unexpected challenges to make their current circumstances better (Parker et al., 2010). Studies have revealed that high proactive individuals engage more in productive behaviors such as learning, creating rewarding work situation, and identifying opportunities to grow (Chen et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2017). Cai et al. (2015) found that proactive personality positively predicted future work self. Proactive individuals are skillful at developing and maintaining positive mutual transaction in the work environment (Li et al., 2010). They cope with difficulties, emphasize agency (Bateman & Crant, 1993), and are composed when facing uncertainty (Ohly & Schmitt, 2017). It has been reported that proactive individuals commit more resources in trying to develop their careers and are more likely to achieve better career goals (e.g., Fuller & Marler, 2009). Thus, we argue that individuals with proactive personality would be less affected by the knowledge of job insecurity climate than their counterparts who do not possess this trait. We, therefore, hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 6:* Proactive personality will be related positively to future work self.

*Hypothesis 7:* Proactive personality will moderate the negative relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self in such a way that the relationship will be weaker when proactive personality is high than when it is low.

Figure 1.  
*Research model*



## Method

### Participants and procedure

Data were collected from universities in the Southeastern region of Nigeria during the first and second semesters of 2020/2021 academic session. Participants comprised of undergraduate students of banking and finance that are in their sophomore, penultimate, and final year in the university with their ages ranging from 17 to 27 years with a mean age of ( $M = 21.90$ ,  $SD = 4.81$ ). Our choice of this course of study is that this category of students has a goal to work in financial

institutions such as banks when they are through with schooling as was also indicated by the participants; yet banking job is perceived as being constantly insecure (Oludimu, 2017). Participants for the study gave their consent to participate before completing the questionnaires. Data for the study were collected at two-point of measurements with a two-month interval between the waves. Prior to commencement of the study, the participants were assigned unique code numbers, which they provided in the two waves. Subsequently, at Time 1, demographic data of participants as well as data on the independent – knowledge of job insecurity climate and moderating variables – career adaptability, career optimism, and proactive personality were collected. At Time 2, only the participants that responded at Time 1 were contacted and presented with the survey for the dependent variable – future work self. The administration of the surveys took place in large classrooms. Out of 829 initially contacted participants, 677 (81.7%) responses were received at Time 1. Of 677 participants sampled at Time 2, only 561 (82.9%) responses were received. The attrition rate of the participants from Time 1 to Time 2 was 67.7%. We then used the unique code numbers to match the data from the two-point of measurements and found that 531 responses only were usable for data analysis.

Time lags are often chosen based on the stability of the constructs under investigation and to give enough time for the anticipated effects to unfold (Dormann & Griffin, 2015; Uhlig et al., 2023). Personality variables (career adaptability, career optimism, and proactive personality) are relatively stable constructs (Allemand et al., 2013) that are expected to serve as resources that can initiate changes in the relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self. Thus, we chose a time lag of 2 months in line with the recommendation of Jordan and Troth (2020) that “if too short, the separation might be ineffective; if too long, intervening factors could affect the criterion” (p. 8-9); and also of Dormann and Griffin (2015) that “panel studies with shorter time lags than usually applied could reveal important information about the unfolding of psychological processes over time, and about the optimal time lag for the process under study” (p. 22). Taris and Kompier (2014) also recommended that smaller measurement intervals or inclusion of multiple waves have greater power to detect an effect and lead to more accurate estimates of population parameters.

## Measures

All the scales for the study utilized a 5-point Likert-type response format that ranged from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree.

*Knowledge of job insecurity climate.* A four-item scale De Witte (2000) was modified and used to assess knowledge of job insecurity climate. Changes were made to the items to reflect perceptions of job insecurity climate. Sample item is: “It is common knowledge that employees in organizations that I desire feel insecure about the future of their job”. Higher scores indicate high knowledge about job insecurity. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of 0.82 of the scale was found for the current study.

*Career adapt-ability.* Career adaptability was measure with the 11-item Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (Rottinghaus et al., 2005). Sample item is: “I am good at adapting to new work settings”. Higher scores indicate higher career adaptability of the individual. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of 0.87 of the scale was found for the current study.

We used the 11-item subscale of the Career Futures Inventory (Rottinghaus et al., 2005) to measure career optimism. Sample item is: “Thinking about my career inspires me”. Higher scores



in the scale indicate higher career optimism of the individual. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.79 of the scale was found for the current study.

*Proactive personality.* We assessed proactive personality with the scale developed by Bateman and Crant (1993). Sample item is: "No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen". Higher scores indicate higher proactive personality. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.86 of the scale was found for the current study.

*Future work self.* We measured future work self with the 5 items developed by Strauss et al. (2012). We followed similar procedure proposed by Strauss et al. (2012) to ask participants to visualize a mental picture of the future work they intend to perform after school which they are being currently trained for. The participants were asked to keep the mental images of the job in mind and then indicate their levels of agreement with the items that include: "The mental picture of this future is very clear". A Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.82 of the scale was found for the current study.

#### *Control variables*

We collected data for gender, age, because there is evidence that they are significantly related to future career aspiration (e.g., Ugwu & Ugwu, 2012). We also controlled for birth order because previous studies (e.g., Black et al., 2005; Grinberg, 2015) indicated that higher birth order has a significant and large effect on education and occupational choice. However, gender was measured as a categorical variable whereas age and birth order were measured as continuous variables.

#### *Strategy for analysis*

The correlation analysis was performed using SPSS 25. The model was tested for goodness-of-fit and the regression estimate done using AMOS 25. The research model was tested on the incremental and parsimonious indices (Goodness of Fit, GFI; Normed Fit Index, NFI; Tucker Lewis index, TLI; Comparative Fit index, CFI) should all be above .90; while Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) should be below .08. We found that chi square = 76.47, df= 25, CMIN/DF= 3.06, P= .001, GFI=.98, TLI = .98, CFI= .99, and RMSEA=.062. All the indices are therefore considered satisfactory and good for the study.

## **Results**

We did not include descriptive analysis for normality check for our measures because it has been variously reported that with large sample sizes (>30 or 40), the violation of the normality assumptions should not create any danger on the results even when the data are not normally distributed (Elliott & Woodward, 2007; Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012; Jordan & Troth, 2020; Pallant, 2007). Altman and Bland (1995) succinctly stated that distribution of the data can be ignored if the sample is in hundreds.

*Participants' description*

The socio-demographic result presented in Table 1 showed the sample description of the study.

Table 1.

Demographic variables

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Males	230	43.3
	Females	301	56.7
Birth order	1 <sup>st</sup>	177	33.0
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	146	27.5
	4 <sup>th</sup>	30	5.6
	5 <sup>th</sup>	128	24.1
	6 <sup>st</sup>	2	.4
	Last Born	50	9.4
Ethnic group	Igbo	405	76.3
	Yoruba	62	11.7
	Others	64	12.1

Table 2 depicted the correlations between the demographics (age, gender, and birth order) and study variables (Knowledge of job insecurity climate, career adaptability, career optimism, proactive personality, and future work self). Age was positively related to future work self ( $r = .46, p < .01$ ). Gender (females) was related to future work self than males. Birth order was positively related to future work self ( $r = .21, p < .01$ ), meaning that the younger (the lower in the order of birth) the more likely they have future work self. Career adaptability was positively related to future work self ( $r = .86, p < .01$ ). Career optimism was positively related to future work self ( $r = .85, p < .01$ ). Proactive personality was positively related to future work self ( $r = .87, p < .01$ ). Knowledge of job insecurity climate was negatively related to future work self ( $r = -.71, p < .01$ ).

Table 2.

Descriptive and Correlation Matrix among Variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender	-	-	1							
2 Age	21.90	4.81	.16**	1						
3 Birth Order	-	-	-.07	-.14**	1					
4 KJIC	12.36	5.79	.33**	.17**	-.03	1				
5 CA	33.83	13.85	.47**	.25**	-.01	.66**	1			
6 COPT	31.03	12.67	.44**	.26**	-.03	.66**	.93**	1		
7 PP	33.73	13.79	.45**	.24**	-.03	.71**	.93**	.91**	1	
8 FWS	15.02	5.83	.46**	.21**	-.02	.71**	.86**	.85**	.87**	1

Note: \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ ; gender (dummy coded '0' for males, '1' for female); KJIC=knowledge of job insecurity climate; CA=career adaptability; COPT=career optimism; PP=proactive personality; FWS= future work self.

Results of the regression estimate for the test of future work self as shown in Table 3 depicted that gender (female) was a significant predictor of future work self ( $\beta = .06, t = 2.62, p < .01$ ), which indicated that female students were more likely to consider future work self than males. Age and birth order were not significant predictors of future work self. Career adaptability was a significant positive predictor of future work self ( $\beta = .38, t = 4.36, p < .01$ ). Career optimism was a significant positive predictor of future work self ( $\beta = .17, t = 2.09, p < .01$ ). Proactive personality was not a significant predictor of future work self. Knowledge of job insecurity climate was a significant negative predictor of future work self ( $\beta = -.27, t = -5.02, p < .01$ ).

Table 3.  
Standardised regression estimates for variables predicting future work self

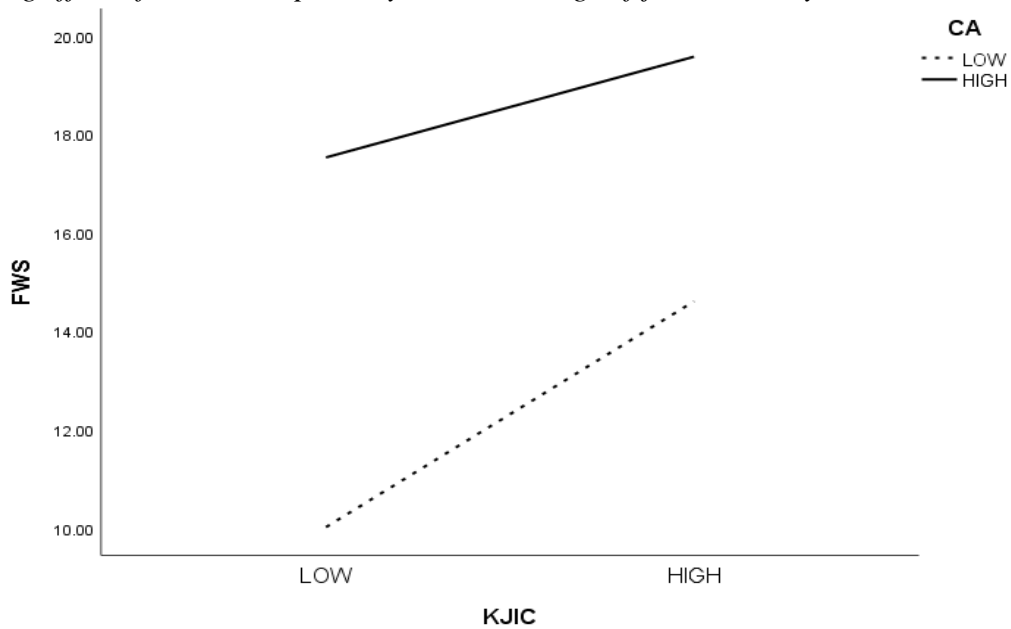
Variables	Estimate	S.E.	t	P
FWS <--- Gender	.06	.23	2.56*	.010
FWS <--- Age	-.02	.02	-.73	.463
FWS <--- Birth Order	.00	.07	.13	.896
FWS <--- KJIC	.35	.03	11.18**	**
FWS <--- CA	.19	.03	3.27**	.001
FWS <--- COPT	.24	.02	5.17**	***
FWS <--- PP	.33	.02	7.05**	***
FWS <--- KJICxCA	-.12	.00	-5.05**	***
FWS <--- KJICxCOPT	.01	.01	.59	.558
FWS <--- KJICxPP	.06	.01	2.64**	.008

Note: \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ ; gender (dummy coded '0' for males, '1' for female); KJIC=knowledge of job insecurity climate; CA=career adaptability; COPT=career optimism; PP=proactive personality; FWS= future work self.

The interaction term of knowledge of job insecurity climate and career adaptability was a significant negative predictor of future work self ( $\beta = -.16, t = -2.06, p < .05$ ) (see figure 2). The interaction term of knowledge of job insecurity climate and career optimism was not a significant predictor of future work self. While the interaction term of knowledge of job insecurity climate and proactive personality was a significant negative predictor of future work self ( $\beta = -.08, t = 2.55, p < .05$ ) (see figure 3).

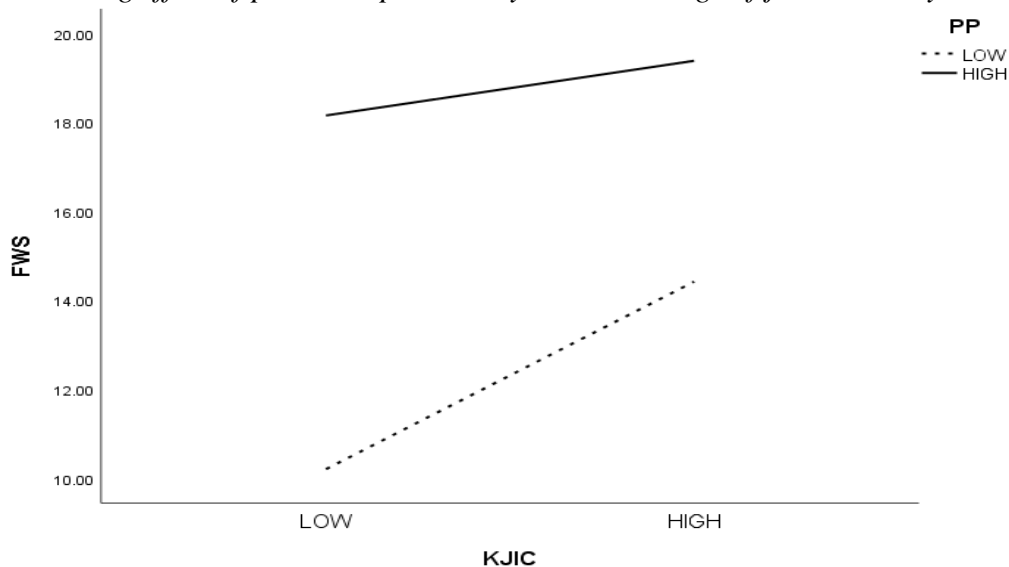
The moderation result showed (figure 2) that with high career adaptability and low knowledge of job insecurity climate the students tend to have higher future work self than those with low career adaptability and low knowledge of job insecurity climate. While students with low career adaptability and higher knowledge of job insecurity climate tend to have lower future work self than those with high career adaptability and higher knowledge of job insecurity climate.

Figure 2.  
Moderating effect of career adaptability and knowledge of job insecurity climate



The moderation result showed (figure 3) that with high proactive personality and low knowledge of job insecurity climate the students tend to have higher future work self than those with low proactive personality and low knowledge of job insecurity climate. While students with low proactive personality and higher knowledge of job insecurity climate tend to have lower future work self than those with high proactive personality and higher knowledge of job insecurity climate.

Figure 3.  
Moderating effect of proactive personality and knowledge of job insecurity climate



## Discussion

The study explored how knowledge of job insecurity climate could derail smooth transition from school to the desired career of young people. The study also investigated whether personality variables (career adaptability, career optimism, and proactive personality) play moderating roles in the relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the results of the study showed that knowledge of job insecurity climate was related negatively to future work self of young people. This finding can be explained with the social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). The social information processing theory explains that how individuals assess information about changes and uncertainties in organizations tend to shape how these individuals outside of the workplace would behave towards those organizations (Jiang & Probst, 2014). More so, the social environment plays a big role in the success or failure to make career transition, in that if the environment is not enabling, individuals may get frustrated to invest efforts to achieve career-related goals. In our study, knowledge of job insecurity climate by the third party is an example of environmental factor that is capable of obstructing individuals' career aspiration. As a result, young people in our study are discouraged from engaging in their future career plan due to their knowledge of job insecurity climate in such organizations (Izard, 2009). This finding appears to agree with earlier studies that reported negative influence of job insecurity climate and several job behaviors and outcomes including lower job satisfaction, work involvement, and higher job burnout (e.g., Hsieh & Kao, 2022; Låstad et al., 2018; Sora et al., 2013).

Results of the present study also indicated that career adaptability was positively related to future work self, which supports Hypothesis 2. This finding could be understood from the SCCT perspective, which holds that individuals' career success or failure depends on their self-efficacy beliefs, expected outcome of their effort, and goals. SCCT provides that individuals' interest is likely to endure in certain activities, particularly when the individuals trust in their personal ability to pull through. Because career adaptability is reported to be inversely related to work stress (Yu et al. 2019) and positively with happiness, it therefore suggests that it serves as a connection through which people locate their ideal work (Johnston et al., 2013). This finding agrees with several previous studies that linked career adaptability to positive career-related behaviors (e.g., Li et al., 2015; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015). This finding is equally consistent with earlier studies that found a positive relationship between career adaptability, higher employability, career satisfaction, and life satisfaction (Blokker et al., 2019).

The results further showed that career adaptability moderated the relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self. Specifically, career adaptability buffered the negative relationship between knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self. This finding was possible because, career adaptability is a personal resource with coping capabilities that enabled individuals to manage unexpected events in their environment by responding with appropriate behavior (Rossier, 2015). This finding is consistent with earlier studies that showed that career adaptability assists individuals to manage their transition from school to work and achieve considerable success in mastering vocational transitions (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2016), and increase individuals' chances of coping with difficulty and accordingly finding a good job (Koen et al., 2012).

Consistent with Hypothesis 4 of a significant and positive relationship between career optimism and future work self was supported. Because optimists are confident about their capabilities to deal with tough challenges (Bowlby, 1988), they can accomplish career goals. This may explain why career optimism was related positively to future work self in the present study.

This finding strengthens the applicability of the SCCT in that when individuals are confident that they have the resources to ‘weather the storm’ such as knowledge, skills, and abilities, these individuals are encouraged to stay positive and pursue their career aspiration despite their perception of job insecurity climate in their dream organization. This finding aligns with previous studies, which revealed that optimism affects individual performance to pursue opportunities (Lent & Brown, 2019). The finding of the current study equally seems to agree with earlier studies that positively related career optimism to career planning (Rottinghaus et al., 2005), objective and subjective career success (Spurk et al., 2015), and career goal engagement (Haratsis et al., 2015). Results of the current study failed to support our Hypothesis 5, which proposed that career optimism moderates the relationship between Knowledge of job insecurity climate and future work self.

Inconsistent with our Hypothesis 6, proactive personality was not significantly and positively related to future work self. This finding is surprising given that previous studies indicated that proactive personality is reputable in predicting numerous organizational outcomes such as additional variance in job performance, task performance, OCB-O (Young et al., 2018), employee engagement (Major et al., 2006), job performance (Thomas et al., 2010), and career success (Wang et al., 2017). However, the current economic and political instability in Nigeria and incessant industrial actions by university academics that often lead to shutdown of academic activities in Nigerian universities may be sources that frustrate the energy that may be needed for exploration of the proactive self to grow the future work self. Based on such context, it may be plausible for proactive personality not to be significantly related to future work self. The moderation tests further indicated that individuals with high proactive personality and low knowledge of job insecurity climate reported higher future work self than those with low proactive personality and low knowledge of job insecurity climate. This finding supports earlier studies that found that proactive individuals cope with difficulty, are calm when confronted with uncertainties, and are naturally motivated to reduce those uncertainties (Ohly & Schmitt, 2017). Because proactives are high in adaptability they are likely to effectively deal with stressful situations (Hung et al., 2015). The current study extended the adaptability of proactive personality in the vocational psychology literature.

#### *Implications of the study*

The findings of the present study have various implications for theory and practice. First, the study is a departure from the usual individual level and interpersonal centered approach to the study of job insecurity to contribute to the literature on multilevel, that is, perceptions of job insecurity climate by individuals outside the organization. Therefore, the current findings bring something that is completely different in the job insecurity literature by focusing on perceptions of job insecurity climate by young people – university undergraduates who are yet to make job entry.

On practical grounds, the findings of the current study suggest that structural factors such as labor legislation that would protect employees are put in place. This would reduce perceptions of job insecurity climate, restore confidence on the young people and encourage them to strive to achieve their career aspirations. The management of organizations should find a way to make the job of their employees appear more secure such as enacting clear policies that will strengthen their contracts with that of employees. This will reduce public perception of the unsafe climate around these organizations, which makes the young people hesitant to consider the organizations as their career destination. It is also recommended that the management of these organizations engage in

workshops across various universities and sponsor advertorials to educate and convince these prospective employees that the real job situation in these organizations is not as bad as people are made to believe. This can help to change opinions that these students might have formed about the dangers of job insecurity that are often associated with some of these organizations. Inclusion of emotional intelligence training in the students' curriculum is important due to its positive association with higher levels of career adaptability (Parmentier et al., 2022).

*Limitations of the study and suggestions for future studies*

As common to every study, the current study has its noteworthy shortcomings. First, the data for the study were collected from single source. This practice has been identified to have implications for common method variance (CMV; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Although we promised and adhered to anonymity of the responses of the participants, this might have reduced but not eliminated this threat. Future studies are urged to collect data from multiple sources such as from colleagues, parents, and probably the students' lecturers. Another limitation bothers on the homogeneity of our participants – students in banking and finance only. This is likely to hinder the extent to which our results can be generalized. Future studies are encouraged to use a more diverse sample – students undergoing training in other professional courses which organizations that they desire to work for are also under scrutiny of job precariousness. Doing this would enhance the chances of drawing inference from their findings. In conclusion, therefore, despite the identified shortcomings of the present investigation, it represents one of the earliest efforts to shift from the usual individual and/or interpersonal centered approach to the study of job insecurity perceptions to exploring knowledge of job insecurity by third party, referred to as knowledge of job insecurity climate of young people that are outside the organization. Consequently, our study makes notable contributions to the literature in this regard. Since successful career entry is important, especially to young people, knowledge of job security climate and future work self are big issues that requires continuous investigation.

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