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Vicarious Experience: A Neglected Source of Career Identity Among Indigenous Hospitality Graduates in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates measures of vicarious experience and examines the relationship between vicarious experience and the career identity of Ugandan hospitality graduates. Questionnaires were administered to indigenous hospitality graduates ($n = 248$). Phenomenological findings on the concept of vicarious experience were obtained from 10 respondents. The results showed that among indigenous hospitality graduates, vicarious experience comprises two factors: professional functional excellence and social welfare construction experiences. Both factors are significant predictors of career identity among Ugandan hospitality graduates. When hospitality graduates engage in observational learning, then their career identity is enhanced. The findings thus suggest observational learning (vicarious experience) as an alternative route to stimulating a particular form of career motivation (career identity). Therefore, hotel managers who wish to build career identity may foster an atmosphere in which vicarious experiences are appreciated and valued by all.

Introduction

The concept of career identity has seen a number of changes in focus. Reese and Miller (2006) stated that technological advancements and changes in the labor market along with the global economic transition are possible reasons for the complexity of career decision making . According to Briscoe, Hall, and Frautschy DeMuth (2006), the plethora of literature has mainly focused on the outcomes of career identity. For example, the expected elements from a career are not only meaning and function as an extension of identity but also financial security (Reese & Miller, 2006; Wuthnow & Hackett, 2003). Tarigan and Wimbarti (2011) have found career identity to accentuate adaptability, lower career stress, and lower anticipatory anxiety. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) emphasized the role of career identity beliefs and outcome expectations in shaping interests, actions, and performance.

The concept of career identity is routed in acculturation theory (Flores & Clark, 2004). The theory argues that people who adapt vocational behavior through interaction and definitely observing others tend to succeed in their careers compared to those who do not. According to Bandura (1977), the concept of career identity is used to describe beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments. Bandura's works play a pivotal role in the concept of career identity and are therefore held in high regard in this study. In their study of career identity, Willem, Buelens, and De Jonghe (2007) found that public sector employees attach less importance to career development opportunities and promises of financial rewards and perceive these promises as less fulfilled. Bandura (1986) argued that in general people who witness (vicarious experience) success are likely to increase their estimates of personal efficacy (career identity). He further stated that for vicarious experiences to positively affect the confidence of observers, observers must perceive a model's efforts as successful. Vicarious experience enables people to learn how to behave and to perform tasks without direct participation (Sullivan & Mahalik, 2000).

In contrast, in Uganda, there is evidence that the hospitality industry experiences problems in managing career identity (Uganda Hotel Owners Association, 2011). Ballout (2007) argued that many employees feel that despite employers' effort to provide learning experiences at work, limited attention has been given to the role of hospitality expatriates in the milieu of lived or vicarious experience with hospitality graduates. Y. W. Wang and Tsai (2014) argued that senior hospitality

students and industry managers in Taiwan lack confidence in their employability, particularly in areas of professional management skills. Similarly, Ugandan graduates seem to lack essential attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences in terms of professional roles. Ugandan hospitality graduates appear to lack career identity (Uganda Hotel Owners Association, 2011). Consequently, many Ugandan tourism stakeholders mention human resource incapacity as the sector's top constraint. In fact, the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index rates Uganda 114 and 115 (out of 139 countries) in education and training and in the availability of qualified labor, respectively (World Economic Forum, 2017). This has far-reaching negative effects not only for the hospitality industry but also for the country's economy. Hence, it is necessary to explore the concepts of vicarious experience and career identity.

Although it has been theoretically argued that (a) vicarious experience is a multidimensional construct and (b) a relationship exists between vicarious experience and career identity (Bandura, 1977), there is little or inadequate empirical evidence available to support this claim (Bartsch, Case, & Meerman, 2012). The goal of better understanding measures of vicarious experience and career identity provoked this study. We aim to provide a more specific and direct appreciation of the influence of vicarious experience on career identity. Moreover, we aim to contribute one explanation of what constitutes vicarious experience and how vicarious experience influences career identity.

From the discussion above, we gather that although there is substantial literature about career identity (Y.-F. Wang, 2013) and vicarious experience (Skogan, 2005) as independent constructs, there is little on which factors can be used to measure vicarious experience and the extent to which vicarious experience is related to career identity (Bartsch et al., 2012). The purpose of this article is twofold. First, we investigate measures of vicarious experience. Second, we examine the relationship between vicarious experience and career identity in the Ugandan hospitality industry context.

The study hence lends further credence to acculturation theory (Flores & Clark, 2004) by promoting observational learning (behavior through interaction) as an alternative route to stimulating a particular form of career motivation (career identity) among hospitality graduates. The study further clarifies the construct of vicarious experience as having two dimensions, namely, professional functional excellence construct and social welfare construction experience. The two dimensions positively and significantly predict career identity. The findings are important in that hotel managers can rely on providing avenues for vicarious experience to flourish in order to create changes in the career identity of their employees.

Literature Review

The Concept of Vicarious Experience

According to Skogan (2005), issues of vicarious experience have undergone extraordinary development for the past few decades, thus prompting academics and practitioners to consider the concept of vicarious experience a key determinant of the process of career identity for shareholders, managers, and workers in the hospitality industry. The development of vicarious experience has been principally guided by acculturation theory through the ideas and thoughts of a handful of influential practitioners (Abdullah, Ingram, & Welsh, 2009; Flores & Clark, 2004). These pioneers established the foundations of the way in which people who adapt vocational behavior through interaction and definitely observing others tend to succeed in their careers compared to those who do not. This is supported by Wunsch, Beausaert, Temelaar, and Gijselaers (2016), who argued that there is limited growth on cognitive performance measures while students are in school; however, performance increases after a period in the workplace, which implies that emotional intelligence and learning style play a role in the development of expertise in hospitality. According to Abdullah et al. (2009), immigrant hospitality experts are viewed as role models and as dominant and bring with them their own values and occupational wealth, which indigenous hospitality graduates may emulate from hospitality expatriates.

Furthermore, Bandura (1977) defined *vicarious experience* as what takes place when people observe the actions of others and then evaluate themselves. Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, and Ring (2005) proposed the classification of vicarious experience as (a) negative vicarious experience and (b) positive vicarious experience. According to Bartsch et al. (2012), vicarious experience is the observation of others (models) succeeding or failing. Bartsch et al. adopted the social model of vicarious experience but categorized them as (a) parent, (b) family member, and (c) friend. According to Bartsch et al., studies have shown that social models (a type of vicarious experience) can increase students' academic self-efficacy. However, Marsh (2003) categorized vicarious experience into three kinds: (a) navigation and exploration, (b) artifact manipulation (which occurs with or without the involvement of character), and (c) empathy.

Several other scholars (Boorstin, 1995; Marsh, 2003; McCarthy & Wright, 2004) have argued that vicarious experience manifests in several different dimensions.

First are those dimensions that come from navigation and exploration (e.g., transfer of spatial knowledge) and second are those dimensions that come from the manipulation of artifacts (mediated, simulated, or fantasy). These are identified as primary or fundamental vicarious experiences that can occur with or without the involvement of characters and share similarities with the concept of *telepresence*, the sense of acting vicariously in a remote or hazardous location (e.g., outer space, deep sea diving). Thus, from the discussion above, we can tell that vicarious experience is a variable that can be viewed as a mix of different dimensions.

Vicarious Experience and Career Identity

Although a number of authors (Bartsch et al., 2012; Boorstin, 1995; Marsh, 2003; Marsh et al., 2005; McCarthy & Wright, 2004; Rosenbaum et al., 2005) have come up with useful taxonomies of vicarious experience through reviews of the literature and empiricism, it can be observed from these researchers that there is no global acceptable understanding of what constitutes vicarious experience. For example, in their study, Marsh et al. (2005) showed that vicarious experience elements were navigation and exploration, artifact manipulation, and empathy. However, later Bartsch et al. (2012) adopted the social model of vicarious experience to include the parent, the family member, and the friend.

Clearly, it can be deduced that vicarious experience is still emerging, and contributions to the development of the concept should be welcome. In their study of the effectiveness of culinology competencies in preparing graduates for employment in the food product development industry, Cheng and Bosselman (2016) found that a gap existed between what employers and graduates perceived as the most important competency and that graduates are not fully prepared for employment in the food product development industry. Furthermore, Chuang, Goh, Stout, and Dellmann-Jenkins (2007) argued that hospitality students who believed that they have compatible competence skills and relevant work experiences were more committed to their career choices.Moreover, according to Flores and Clark (2004), there exists a cause-and-effect relationship among the dimensions of vicarious experience, which in turn influences career identity. Flores and Clark argued that one source of self-efficacy information is the vicarious experience that individuals undergo when they observe others performing tasks. By observing the successes and failures of others, people gather the information necessary to make judgments about their own capabilities. The models whom individuals observe exercise the greatest influence when they are perceived

to be similar to the observer, especially in situations in which the observer has little experience (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000).

According to the acculturation-based school of thought, changes take place within individuals as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people, groups, and social influences (Gibson, 2001). Based on this theory, Sullivan and Mahalik (2000), in their study of women in Japan, identified the reason why individuals picked a mathematics and technology career as opposed to other careers. It emerged that verbal persuasions and vicarious experiences were critical sources of the women's self-efficacy beliefs, and the women recalled these types of incidents to a greater extent than they recalled other performance accomplishments. This means that an effective and efficient use of the unique vicarious experiences within individuals is an important source of career identity. For example, Rosenbaum et al. (2005) found that vicarious experience influenced the attitudes of police among various racial and ethnic groups in a large metropolitan area among Hispanics as well as African Americans and Whites. From this debate we gather that different scholars have continued to link vicarious experience to a sense of self.

According to Dalton (1989), work roles play a vital part in the development of a sense of self or identity, and therefore any major change in the work role demands a reshaping of the self-concept. Not only do graduates and the industry have different views on what is important, but graduates have a variety of motivations for embarking on a hospitality career. Many are influenced by their parents' preferences (Wong & Liu, 2010) and their own perceptions of the industry, which come from leisure and work experiences. Many people have traditionally derived their identity from their job or the organization with which they work. London (1983, 1993), in his works on career motivation, suggested that individual characteristics and situational conditions are key predictors of individual career behaviors and decisions.

However, little information is given about leading (observed) variables and also the cause-and-effect relationship between leading elements and lagged (latent) elements. A seminal study by Foss and Slaney (1986) provided the cause-and-effect associations among the lagging variables but could have been more informative if the leading indicators had been confirmed. Moreover, this demonstration by role models, which could be considered a vicarious source of efficacy information, produced increases in career choice, called *career decision-making self-efficacy*, in a sample of college women in Japan. Japan is a first-class income economy, and it would be interesting to study this phenomenon in a

much lower income country like Uganda. Knowledge of relevant factors (observed variables) for appropriate vicarious experience in Uganda is relatively nonexistent. Although the foregoing discourse implies that vicarious experience is a multidimensional construct, its development is very much incipient, and it is important to ascertain those individual dimensions of vicarious experience corresponding to a certain confirmed factor structure of observed variables. This should help to clear up the ambiguity relating to what factors are responsible for the vicarious experience among Ugandan hospitality graduates. For these reasons, we put forward the following hypotheses with respect to Ugandan hospitality graduates:

H1: Professional functional excellence is positively related to career identity.

H2: Social welfare excellence is positively related to career identity.

Methodology

This study adopted positivist and phenomenological approaches in which both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Torraco, 2002). The quantitative data were collected using self-administered questionnaires, whereas the qualitative data were collected using interviews. As for the qualitative data, in order to enhance the construct and internal validity of the study, as well as the external validity and reliability, we followed the guidelines by Yin (1994), which included preparation for data collection, distribution of the questionnaire, and conducting interviews. In doing so, we used multiple sources of data, created a case study database, and maintained a chain of evidence. The purpose of using a mixed approach was to provide a framework for the discovery of both observable and nonobservable social realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study we sought to make causal explanations and to generalize theories (Torraco, 2002) as well as to capture the multiplicity of perspectives of hospitality graduates and the meanings that these respondents attach to the concepts of vicarious experience and career identity. The mixed approach enabled us to understand the reality in the study because vicarious experience and career identity may be external to the hospitality graduates (and can therefore be quantified) or may be within their idea (and can therefore be qualified). The findings from the qualitative data enriched the findings of the quantitative data.

Sample

To obtain the sample, we used multistage random sampling. There were 950 indigenous hospitality graduates working in 130 hotels in Uganda (Uganda Hotel Owners Association, 2011). Using guidelines by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), we obtained a sample of 97 hotels. We used simple random sampling. Again following Krejcie and Morgan's guidelines for sampling, we obtained a sample size of 248 indigenous hospitality graduates. In terms of the adequacy of the sample size, all elements on the diagonal of the anti-image matrix of covariances and correlations were found to be greater than 0.5 (Field, 2000). Out of the total sample, 154 usable questionnaires were obtained. To ascertain whether the 154 responses were a representative sample of the population, we established the statistical power of this sample by conducting power analyses for sample size estimates. Using multiple regression/correlation analysis, we performed the significance test at a significance criterion (α) = .01 with an expected medium effect size (f^2) of 0.15 (Cohen, 1992). Results indicated that 97 participants were sufficient to detect large effect sizes (Cohen's $f^2 = 0.15$) for linear multiple regression analyses with two predictors at recommended power = .80 (Cohen, 1992). This implies that regardless of the 94 responses that were not obtained, the sample of 154 responses was representative enough to avoid any bias.

Measures and Questionnaire Development

For quantitative data collection, we used a self-administered questionnaire. To avoid the likely effects of response pattern biases, we incorporated negatively worded items into the questionnaire (Idaszak & Drasgow, 1997; Malhotra, 2004) to act as cognitive speed bumps. This required respondents to use a more restricted cognitive as opposed to mechanical processing. In this study, vicarious experience was measured using items from previous studies by Malhotra (2004). Sample questionnaire items included "I have continued to hunt for career relevant opportunities through expert and senior hospitality managers who have been my role models" and "Seeing the success of people with similar qualifications to mine has provided a positive guide for my hospitality occupational performance". Career identity was operationalized in terms of career insight and career resilience. Career identity was anchored on a 5-point scale (1 = *very much disagree*, 5 = *very much agree*) consisting of eight items. Career identity was measured using items adopted from London (1983, 1993). Examples of such items are "Career satisfaction is more important to me than satisfaction from other areas of life" and "Identifying

and defining myself in terms of my work, I am willing to give up something of value for my career".

In terms of qualitative data, our intention was to be interpretively aware but not to replicate findings as advocated by positivists (Weber, 2004). In line with this school of thought, we used a verification questionnaire to interview respondents in the same organizations 6 months after the collection of the quantitative data. We deemed 10 interviews sufficient based on the work of Mason (2010); it is more likely that saturation may be reached after 10 or more interviews. The basic questions included (a) "Provide practical examples to demonstrate how organizational practices and policies at your place of work have favored young employees to learn from older ones. How has this affected their perception towards career identity?" (b) "Was there an incident when one graduate was promoted? Was it due to being a graduate or having gained experience through observation?" (c) "Provide examples where Ugandan graduates have observed their elder employees at work, learnt what they do, and progressed in their career," and (d) "On the whole, does your organization have favorable policies that encourage employees to learn from observing others at work? If so, cite some policies or practices of employee assistance programs in your organization. How have they impacted on employee career identity?"

Ascertaining the Goodness of the Measure

The assumptions of reliability and validity were met. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the variables under study were established and all found to be above .7 as recommended by Roznowski and Hulin (1992). The Content Validity Index (CVI) for all variables were above 0.7 (Field, 2005).

Data Management and Factor Analysis

We checked and cleaned the data for completeness. The identified missing values were trivial and contributed negligibly to suppressing the standard deviation(Field, 2005; Little & Rubin, 2002; Mundfrom & Whitcomb, 1998). We used the mean imputation replacement technique to replace missing values (Field, 2005; Little & Rubin, 2002). We then carried out factor analysis (Field, 2005). The data met the assumptions of sampling adequacy (factorability principle) as indicated by the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity (Bartlett, 1954; Kaiser, 1974). There were sufficient inter-item correlations (>0.5) as revealed by Bartlett's test of sphericity, Sample=248; $\chi^2(21) = 354.83$, $p < .01$. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy exceeded .50 for both the overall test (.81) and each

individual variable. The assumptions of parametric data were tenable. The data did not have problems of normality or homogeneity of variance. The assumptions of multi-collinearity as postulated by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2007) were met.

Consistent with theory, all communalities for vicarious experience met the minimum cutoff point criteria (the variance in each item explained by the extracted factors was above .5). The communalities for the other items were as follows: seeking career opportunities (SVE1_1) = 0.70, career success of peers (SVE2_1) = 0.78, continuous learning (SVE3_1) = 0.57, self-appraisal (SVE5_1) = 0.77, role models (SVE6_1) = 0.60, and competence-building framework (SVE7_1) = 0.76. Communalities have implications for sample size: Field (2000) reported that as communalities decrease, the importance of sample size increases.

Common Method Variance

We capitalized on the works of Shalley, Gilson, and Blum (2009) and MacKenzie, Ahearne & Podsakoff (1998), who argued that there is reasonable construct validity evidence to justify that self-ratings have been shown in other research to correlate substantially ($r = .62$) with supervisor ratings, in addition to providing evidence of internal consistency reliability. Moreover, Shalley et al. stated that employees are best suited to self-reporting creativity because they are the ones who are aware of the subtle things they do in their jobs that make them creative. However, to address this, we further considered common method bias in the design of the study by engaging in methodological separation of measurement and protecting respondent anonymity (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In addition, based on the work of Richardson, Simmering, and Sturman (2009), we applied a post hoc statistical technique as a means of demonstrating that method bias was not a problem in the first place using a marker variable (Lindell & Whitney, 2001) psychological contract, which was completely unrelated to the study variables. We assumed non-congeneric common method variance (CMV) by partialing out the same amount of method variance at the construct level from all relationships in the data set. According to Richardson et al., if a correlation becomes nonsignificant after correction, bias is assumed to have been in effect. None of the hypothesized corrected correlations became nonsignificant. The resulting corrected correlations were closer approximations of true relationships than were the uncorrected correlations, which implies that common method variance present in this data set

Table 1. Correlations and descriptive statistics.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Professional Functional Excellence Experience	4.17	.67	—		
2. Social Welfare Construction Experience	3.86	.68	.46**	—	
3. Career Identity	3.18	.97	.29**	.15**	—

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

was not sufficient to bias results (Choi & Chen, 2007). Results can be seen in Table 1.

Results

The level of education of the hospitality graduates indicated that the majority of the graduates (72.1%) had attained a diploma. These graduates were followed by first degree holders, who constituted 24.7% of the total sample; the remaining 3.2% had a postgraduate degree. In addition, results revealed that most graduates (41.6%) had less than 3 years of experience, followed by relatively close percentages of those who had 4–6 years (29.9%) and 7–10 years (28.5%) of experience.

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

A summary of means and standard deviations is shown in Table 1. In comparison to the means, standard deviations ranged from .67 to .97, which implies that the means represented the data (Field, 2009).

Interview Results

The quantitative results indicated that most of the management positions (95%) were occupied by expatriate managers, mostly of Kenyan origin, whereas indigenous managers occupied 5% of management positions. This was supported by qualitative interview results. Respondents testified that some employers openly tell them "… Ugandan hotel graduates have a very poor attitude towards work compared to their Kenyan counterparts. Additionally, Ugandans have very strong social ties that tend to override the job requirements for the hospitality industry.…" (Interviewee 1). Another respondent noted the following:

> … Ugandans attach a lot of value to sociocultural events like burials and weddings. These events explain why Ugandan employees in the hospitality industry are usually late for work, absent or take unsolicited leaves. As a result, expatriate managers are not supportive of the local career employees. The foreign employees are

paid better salaries than their local counterparts.… (Interviewee 10)

Also, the interview results indicated that working conditions and financial rewards were not commensurate with employee workload. This explains why there is a high level of exodus in the industry, with employees switching jobs and in some cases changing professions. It is why in general Ugandan hospitality employees view the industry as synonymous with low salary rates, yet it is an industry of hard work with a lot of rules and regulations. For example, one of the informants during the interviews revealed the following:

> … The public image of the hospitality industry is distorted. The unhelpful image is also common among career advisers and the general public, who see a hospitality career as a last resort after all other alternatives have been considered. However, there are some enjoyable aspects of hospitality careers such as their dynamic nature, the opportunity to use one's creativity and interacting with international clientele which can be a satisfying experience.… (Interviewee 3)

Factor Analysis Results

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the results derived from the factor analysis revealed two factors for vicarious experience with corresponding high intercorrelations between the studied item scales measuring the underlying variables (factors). The first factor was interpreted as professional functional excellence experience (49.30%), whereas the second factor was social welfare construction experience (16.74%). Both factors explained 66.04% of the variance in the vicarious experience of indigenous hospitality graduates in Uganda (see Table 2).

Factor 1 consisted of the three professional functional excellence experience indicators of self-appraisal, role models, and competence-building framework (Factor1 = weight1 × self-appraisal + weight2 × role models + weight3 × competence-building framework). Factor 2 consisted of three observable variables of social welfare construction experience: seeking career opportunities, career success of peers, and continuous learning (Factor2 = weight1[2] × seeking career opportunities + weight2[2] × career success of peers+ weight3[2] × continuous learning; see details in Figure 1).
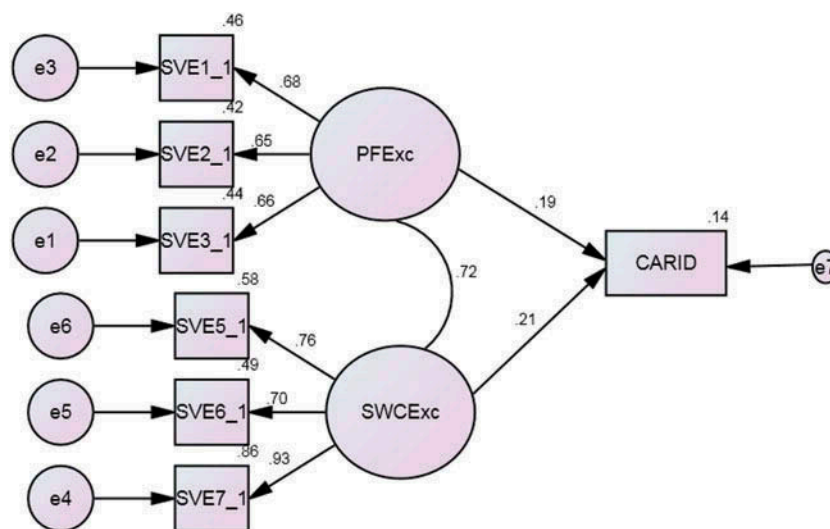
Professional Functional Excellence Experience

As revealed above, the first observed indicator to highly load on the professional functional excellence construct was experiential self-appraisal ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.78$;

Table 2. Rotated component matrix for vicarious experience.

Factor	Vicarious experience attribute	M	SD	Factor loading	Eigen value	Cumulative %	α
Factor 1: Professional Functional Excellence Experience	I regularly evaluate my occupational performance in comparison to senior and expatriate hospitality managers	3.93	.88	.859	2.74	39.14	.82
	I have developed a framework for competence building through working closely with expatriate and senior hospitality managers	3.99	.82	.820			
	I seek proficient models that possess the competences to which I aspire in hospitality management	3.97	.78	.770			
	I do monitor current issues about best managers and other stake holders in international hospitality operations and management	3.99	.80	.650			
Factor 2: Social Welfare Construction Experience	Seeing the success of people with similar qualifications to mine has provided a positive guide for my hospitality occupational performance	4.27	.83	.881	1.88	26.88	.72
	I have continued to hunt for career relevant opportunities through expert and senior hospitality managers who have been my role models	4.12	.85	.805			
	I do update myself with knowledge in order to match the performance of expatriate hospitality managers	4.02	.85	.556			

Note: Responses were on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Chi-square (CMIN)=16.276; Degrees of fredom (df)=12;
Probability (p)=0.179;
Chi-square-degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/df)=1.356;
Goodness of Fit Index(GFI)=0.970;
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index(AGFI)=0.929;
Normed Fit Index (NFI)=0.956;Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)=0.979;
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=0.988;
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=0.048

PF-Exc=Professional Functional Excellence Experience;
SWC-Exc=Social Welfare Construction Experience;
CARID:Career Identity;
SVE1_1:Seeking career opportunities;
SVE2_1:Career success of peer;
SVE3_1:Continuous learning;
SVE5_1:Experiential self-appraisal;
SVE6_1:Positive vicarious role models;
SVE7_1:Competence building framework

Figure 1. Structural equation model for vicarious experience. Sample=248; $\chi^2(12) = 16.276$, $p = .179$; χ^2/df ratio = 1.356; goodness-of-fit index = 0.970, adjusted goodness-of-fit index = 0.929, normed fit index = 0.956, Tucker–Lewis index = 0.979, comparative fit index = 0.988, root mean square error of approximation = 0.048. PFExc = professional functional excellence experience; SWCExc = social welfare construction experience; CARID = career identity; SVE1_1 = seeking career opportunities; SVE2_1 = career success of peers; SVE3_1 = continuous learning; SVE5_1 = experiential self-appraisal; SVE6_1 = positive vicarious role models; SVE7_1 = competence-building framework.

$r = .770$). This loading reveals that the indigenous hospitality graduates in Uganda are heavily involved in both objective and subjective evaluations of their work-related performance. These vicarious evaluations play a decisive role in determining future career-related decisions. In addition, evaluations result in wanted and unwanted career-related private thoughts, feelings, and sensations. People generally will pursue careers in which they derive pleasure and enjoyment (satisfaction) and avoid careers that result in displeasure and vexation (chagrin). The experiential self-appraisals relate to the rational modus operandi functioning in the order of reasons. When hospitality graduates internalize the outcome of their welfare (or ill-fare), they develop constructs for future career decisions. The outcome of the evaluation creates both experiential association and experiential avoidance. The results from interviews further confirmed this point and revealed that hospitality graduates spend enormous time, effort, and energy trying to manage and/or struggle with unwanted career-related evaluative outcomes. This struggle has led to an abandoning of valued hospitality career goals in favor of general business careers. This finding has both policy and managerial implications for addressing the issue of career-related experiential avoidance in the hospitality industry so as to create a fully engaged participant from moment to moment (work engagement issues). This study further provides evidence demonstrating that psychological and emotional career experiences of hospitality graduates in Uganda are associated with career psychopathology. However, there is a need to undertake more research to confirm this finding. Indigenous hospitality graduates in Uganda regularly evaluate their occupational performance against the performance of senior expatriate hospitality managers.

The second indicator was experience self-appraisals ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.88$; $r = .859$). This indicator reveals that information received by the indigenous hospitality graduates is compared against information obtained about the current requirements of the hospitality industry. The respondents revealed that they monitored current issues about the best managers and other stakeholders in international hospitality operations and management. The third indicator was positive vicarious role models ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.80$; $r = .650$). The indigenous hospitality graduates in Uganda seek proficient models who possess the competences to which they aspire in hospitality management. The fourth indicator was competence-building framework ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.82$; $r = .820$). Details are presented in Table 2.

Social Welfare Construction Experience

The first observed item loading on the second factor of social welfare construction experience was seeking career-related opportunities ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.85$; $r = .805$). Seeing the success of people with similar qualifications to the indigenous hospitality staff provides a positive guide for hospitality occupational performance. The second observed item was seeking career opportunities ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.83$; $r = .881$). Hospitality graduates continue to hunt for career-relevant opportunities through expert and senior hospitality managers who have been role models. The third observed item was continuous experiential learning ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.85$; $r = .556$). Hospitality graduates update themselves with knowledge in order to match the performance of expatriate hospitality managers. Concrete experiences provide a basis for developing knowledge and applying it in an active and reflective way. The respondents revealed that they used observations and reflections to create new career experiences. Similarly, the results from the confirmatory factor analysis and eventually structural equation modeling confirmed the presence of the professional functional excellence experience and social welfare construction experience dimensions (see Figure 1).

Hypothesis 2 sought to establish the relationship between vicarious experience and the career identity of the hospitality graduates. The structural equation model presented in Figure 1 was used to describe the connection between the latent and manifest variables of vicarious experience and their relationship with career identity. The model produced a χ^2/df ratio of 1.36, a root mean square error of approximation of .05, a Tucker–Lewis index of 0.98, and a comparative fit index of 0.99. This indicates acceptable model fit (Schermeller_Engel, Moosbrugger, & Muller, 2003).

Discussion

Arising from Hypothesis 2, and as observed in Table 3 (beta values of the hierarchical regression) and the path coefficients for the hypothesized structural equation model (see Figure 1), it is clear that there is a positive association between vicarious experience and career identity. For these students studying hospitality in Uganda, career identity improves when they observe expatriate managers doing their work (which is a vicarious experience). In other words, the study suggests that if hospitality graduates engage in observational learning, then their career identity is enhanced. This is because seeing the success of people with similar qualifications provides a positive guide for their individual occupational performance, and this eventually results in them identifying and defining themselves in terms of their work and willingness to give up anything else of value for their chosen career. This finding is in

Table 3. Hierarchical regression analysis results.

Variable in the Model	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.56	0.37	−0.07		
Age of Respondent	.06	.04	.02	.95	1.05
Position on First Appointment	.06	.06	.06	.93	1.07
Highest Education Level	.09	.11	.11	.98	1.2
Promotions After First Appointment	.02	.03	.03	.92	1.08
ProfFunExcellence		.29**	.18*	.69	1.46
SoWelCons			.20*	.68	1.48
R	.13	.32	.36		
R^2	.02	.10	.13		
Adjusted R^2	−.01	.07	.09		
ΔR^2	.02	.08	.03		
F Change	0.68	13.76	4.54		
Sig. F Change	.61	.00	.04		

Note: The dependent variable was career identity. VIF = variance inflation factor; ProfFunExcellence = professional functional excellence; SoWelCons = social welfare construction; Sig. = significance. *=sig<0.05; **=sig<0.01.

line with acculturation theory, which emphasizes that people who adapt vocational behavior through interaction and observing others tend to succeed in their careers compared to those who do not. These results are supported by earlier findings by Popper (2004), who pointed out that vicarious learning is based on observing role models, the way in which children learn from their parents. In a comparable manner, hospitality graduates can learn from their expert colleagues (Zakay & Scheinfeld, 1993). Seeing the success of people with similar qualifications to theirs provides a positive guide for career performance and identity development. Such learning is powerful because, like experiential learning, it takes place naturally outside a laboratory condition, which is usually the case when degree students are being taught in colleges and universities.

In their study, Harkison, Poulston, and Kim (2011) found that views of the value of a hospitality degree were surprisingly divergent, with industry placing considerably less emphasis on a degree than student respondents. Industry respondents perceived a degree as less important for new employees than experience. These responses suggest that students perceived experience to be of more value when seeking work, but once in a job, a degree would prove more valuable, not so much as a qualification but because of the learning it entailed. However, industry respondents believed that 3 years of experience was more valuable than vocational education of the same length (i.e., a degree). The above findings are in agreement with the current study, which emphasizes the value of work experience in enhancing career motivation and specifically identity.

This study confirms that for hospitality graduates to become highly involved in their work and put forth extra effort beyond what is normally expected, they have to update themselves with knowledge in order to match the performance of expatriate managers, their

role models. The study also reveals that when hospitality graduates engage in hunting for career-relevant opportunities through expert and senior hospitality managers who are their role models, then they are likely to identify more with their area of specialization than just as employees of a particular hospitality operation or organization.

Furthermore, this study suggests that the satisfaction hospitality graduates derive from their chosen career is more important than satisfaction from other areas of life; this is attributed to the development of competence-building frameworks through close work with expatriate and senior hospitality managers. The building of competence frameworks by hospitality graduates puts pressure on them to sacrifice even other social activities and responsibilities, including time with family, and instead prefer to work overtime for the sake of their career.

This study finds that monitoring contemporary issues and observing the best managers in international hospitality operations and management results in a need among hospitality graduates for career advancement and the associated rewards. By regularly evaluating their career performance and satisfaction in comparison with senior and expatriate hospitality managers, hospitality graduates increase their willingness to wait for promotion, pay increases, and other opportunities. In addition, when hospitality graduates seek proficient models who possess the competences to which they aspire in hospitality management, this makes them volunteer for extra assignments and usually report successful results.

Referring to Hypothesis 1, and as evidenced from the results in Table 2 (rotated component matrix for vicarious experience) and Figure 1 (observed variables for the two vicarious experience latent variables), vicarious learning is a multidimensional construct consisting of dimensions of professional functional excellence

experience and social welfare construction experience. Professional functional excellence and social welfare construction are significant predictors of the career identity of Ugandan hospitality graduates. This implies that when local graduates evaluate their career performance in comparison with expatriate hospitality managers and also observe the success of people who have similar qualifications as them, their career identity is enhanced. In addition, the findings suggest that building competence through working closely with expatriate hospitality managers and continuously hunting for career-relevant opportunities through these role models helps indigenous graduates to construct their own career identity. These findings are in agreement with social cognitive career theory and career self-efficacy theory, which emphasize the constructs of career self-efficacy, especially vicarious experience and the influence of related variables on the construction of self-efficacy beliefs and career choice. Earlier works by Super (1972) suggest that the vocational self-concept develops through physical and mental growth, observations of work, identification with working adults, and the general environment.

Theoretical Implications

First, the positive relationships between vicarious experience and career identity provide a chance to connect the research on hospitality graduates' professional development with the research on career and career motivation. Research on career motivation traditionally tends to examine this construct from a multidimensional perspective that is a combination of three domains, namely, career insight, career resilience, and career identity (London, 1983, 1993). Much of the research generated by the various scholars on the construct of career motivation is tied to omnibus measures of the construct. This study focused on career identity and linked it to a particular source of self-efficacy, the vicarious experience. Our findings suggest an alternative route to stimulating a particular form of career motivation (career identity), that is, by enhancing observational learning (vicarious experience) among hospitality graduates. Second, our findings clarify the construct of vicarious experience as having two dimensions, namely, professional functional excellence construct and social welfare construction experience. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis suggest that the professional functional excellence construct and social welfare construction experience are connected with each other rather than isolated from each other in describing graduates' vicarious experience.

Practical Implications

This research has demonstrated that although there are may be several ways of building career identity, vicarious experience is one of the key factors. The implication is that hotel managers can rely on providing avenues for vicarious experience to create changes in the career identity of their employees. Specifically, because it is a natural form of learning, hotel owners can adopt vicarious experience for planned learning of the graduate employees they hire. This can be through managers of hotels in this country organizing various kinds of workshops embracing in their training examples managers and leaders who are considered worthy of imitation as either facilitators or examples of success stories. Because vicarious learning is based on a psychological principle whereby figures who gain a positive reward are those worthy of identifying with, it is easy to see the possibilities inherent in this principle for career identity. Ugandan hospitality graduates can thus evaluate their career performance in comparison with senior and expatriate hospitality managers. In addition, vicarious learning models can be used more appropriately for senior ranks, who can learn from benchmark cases stretching over a broad range of possibilities. The hotel industry in this country can pursue this approach by observing successful leaders in action or by studying success stories of leaders ranging, for example, from current foreign and expert hospitality managers to historical figures who serve as models of success. As stated earlier, by monitoring the current issues of successful managers and other stakeholders, hospitality graduates can improve on their own career deficiencies. Also, hospitality supervisors can be provided with training in professional functional excellence and social welfare construction experiences to better understand vicarious experiences (e.g., professional functional excellence and social welfare construction experiences) so that they may carefully enact appropriate vicarious experience policies and regulations. In addition, the promotion of hospitality supervisors to senior managers in the workplace can be linked to whether they can successfully implement vicarious experience–based rules among hospitality graduates.

Policy Implications

At the national level, the government should design a policy that requires all hotel owners to provide a conducive environment for career identity to flourish. Such a policy should provide guidelines on how to create excellent opportunities for graduate students to acquire

career identity skills in their workplace. There is a need for a national career identity management policy that is geared toward promoting career identity management practices in the hotel industry in Uganda. Such a policy should guide the identification and elimination of barriers to career identity management. The career identity management policy should encourage all hotel owners to design and operationalize career identity management policies. In terms of human resource management, hotel owners can measure the level of career identity management based on professional functional excellence and social welfare construction experiences. For instance, they can design, execute, and evaluate career identity management programs that may have objectives such as promoting professional functional excellence and social welfare construction experiences. Such objectives can be used to determine the level of career identity. Furthermore, human resource managers should also seize the opportunity to assist with appraisal tools that make hotels excel in the promotion of career identity. Rather than the conventional and supposedly objective approach that has characterized performance appraisals to date, evaluation of supervisor performance requires immediate and precise measures that include organizational input in terms of professional functional excellence and social welfare construction experiences. Furthermore, at the hotel and restaurant level, policies that provide avenues for hospitality graduates' acquisition of career identity should be designed and operationalized. These career identity policies should consider vicarious experience a critical resource for hotels and restaurants and thus provide for an appreciation of professional functional excellence and social welfare construction experiences. Those managers wishing to build career identity could find value in the results of this study and foster an atmosphere in which vicarious experiences are appreciated and valued by all. They should also build career identity by designing appropriate vicarious experience systems that generate appreciation of professional functional excellence and social welfare experience coupled with specific vicarious experience strategic objectives to produce career identity. They could also carry out vicarious experience audits in a bid to determine their vicarious experience return on investment. This may help hotels and restaurants to measure the value addition of vicarious experience activities in the hotel or restaurant.

Conclusion

One of the objectives of this research was to investigate the multidimensionality of the concept of vicarious experience.

This study has proved that vicarious experience among hospitality graduates in Uganda is a multidimensional construct comprising a professional functional excellence construct and social welfare construction experience. The study also found a positive and significant relationship between vicarious experience dimensions and the career identity of indigenous hospitality managers in Uganda. Overall, these results have important implications for academics as well as stakeholders such as hotel owners and indigenous hotel graduates in Uganda. For academics, our results suggest that individual professional functional excellence construct and social welfare construction experience are important for career identity rather than tying studies to the omnibus measure of the vicarious experience construct. For Ugandan hotel owners, the results are important for management policy development (e.g., in terms of prescribing the right experiences their employees can emulate).

Limitations and Future Research

First, the hospitality sector context poses unique career challenges. Perhaps issues of career identity may be different in other sectors. Second, the data were cross-sectional, which means that the data cannot show whether today's hospitality graduates in Uganda will behave like experts years to come. Third, because the study was cross-sectional in design, inferences cannot be drawn regarding causality among the variables. This may limit the generalizability of our findings to other cultural contexts and occupations. The fourth limitation has to do with the methodology used to measure career identity and vicarious experience. Although we defined the constructs as precisely as possible by drawing from the relevant literature and having them validated by practitioners, the measures used may not have perfectly represented all of the dimensions of each variable. Future studies could use the same basic hypotheses and structural equation modeling construction but implement the study in terms of a longitudinal rather than a cross-sectional design.

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