
**SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EMPLOYEES' CREATIVITY IN THE
NIGERIAN BANKING INDUSTRY**

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian banking sector faces unprecedented challenges amid the rapid emergence of Fintech companies revolutionizing financial services. This study investigates the role of social capital in fostering employees' creativity within this dynamic landscape. Grounded in Social Capital Theory and Resource-Based View Theory, the study explores how structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of social capital influence measure of employees' creativitiesuch as expertise or domain-relevant skills, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation in the Nigerian banking industry. Through a cross-sectional survey of 307 randomly selected employees from 20 purposively drawn banks in Rivers State, Nigeria, data was collected and analyzed using statistical methods including the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The findings revealed that Structural social capital, characterized by well-established channels for information sharing and strong professional relationships, positively influences employees' creativity. Similarly, content or communication capital, reflecting shared understanding and alignment with organizational values, and relationalcapital, fostering camaraderie and trust, contribute significantly to employees' creativity. Based on these findings, recommendations are provided for bank management to prioritize initiatives that strengthen social capital, promote collaboration, provide training, recognize creativity, and foster diversity and inclusion to drive innovation and maintain competitiveness in the banking sector.

Keywords: Cognitive capital, Employees' creativity, Relational social capital, Social capital, Structural social capital

CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

The Nigerian banking sector is currently undergoing a significant transformation, largely driven by the rapid rise of Fintech companies. These entities are pioneering innovative financial products and services

that resonate notably with a tech-savvy demographic. This has created a formidable challenge for traditional banks, which are now compelled to adapt to this disruptive landscape (Kola-Oyeneyin, *et. al.*, 2020; Pwc, 2020). In this context, innovation and creativity have emerged as pivotal drivers for fostering growth and sustaining competitiveness within the industry. Harnessing social capital, characterized by the network of relationships and the quality of interactions between employees within the banking industry, holds promise as a strategic approach to effectively address these challenges (Bina & Olori, 2019; Fu, *et. al.*, 2022)

As traditional banking models are being disrupted by agile Fintech organizations that leverage technology to offer innovative financial services, streamlined customer experiences, and personalized solutions, established commercial banks are increasingly compelled to embrace digital transformation initiatives, enhance operational efficiencies, and deliver more customer-centric services (Roy & Basu, 2021; Kola-Oyeneyin, *et. al.*, 2020). However, competing solely on technological prowess is no longer sufficient to maintain relevance in a landscape characterized by rapid innovation and shifting consumer behaviors (Fu, *et. al.*, 2022; Gilbert, 2022). More so, a strong social capital, characterized by trust, reciprocity, shared norms, and a sense of belonging, can create a powerful force for innovation within the Nigerian banking context (Bina & Olori, 2019). In this context, social capital refers to the network of relationships and the quality of interactions between employees within the bank.

According to Fu, *et. al.* (2022), employees' creativity is crucial for innovation and maintaining competitiveness in the rapidly evolving banking industry. Studies have however shown that the banking sector is often assumed to be an inappropriate setting for employees' creativity as it is a tightly supervised and controlled segment of the economy (Fu, *et. al.*, 2022; Smith, 2023; Yip & Bocken, 2018). This lack of creativity can hinder the ability of banks to innovate and adapt to changing market dynamics. However, in a previous study, Bina and Olori (2019) narrows in on social capital as a powerful force for innovation within the observably rigid banking sector.

Against this backdrop, this study aims to explore the relationship between social capital and employees' creativity in the Nigerian banking industry. The importance of conducting this study lies in its potential to provide insights into how social capital can be leveraged to foster a culture of creativity among employees, thereby driving innovation and maintaining competitiveness in a rapidly evolving sector. Previous studies (Sözbilir, 2018; Uz Kurt, *et. al.*, 2013; Yu, *et. al.*, 2019) have examined this relationship

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in several contexts. However, despite the growing academic interest in the relationship between social capital and employees' creativity, the case of the Nigerian banking industry appears to be an understudied area. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by exploring the relationship between social capital and employees' creativity in the Nigerian banking industry. The findings may have practical implications for policymakers in the banking industry, bank managers, and employees who can use the findings to improve their understanding of the role of social capital in fostering employees' creativity.

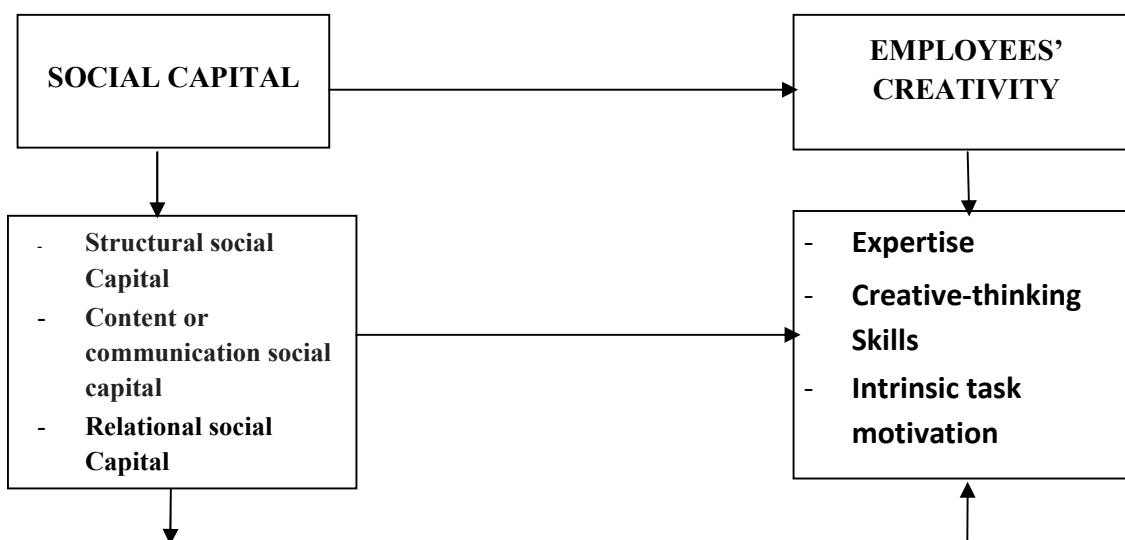
Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between social capital and employees' creativity in the Nigerian banking industry. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Identify the relationship between Relational social capital and Employees' creativity.
2. Examine the relationship between Structural social social capital and Employees' creativity.
3. Ascertain the relationship between Content or communication social capital and Employees' creativity.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 below presents the conceptual framework guiding this study.



Source: Conceptualized by the Researcher

Figure. 1: Conceptual Framework for Analysing the Hypothesised Relationship between Social Capital and Employees' Creativity in the Nigerian Banking Industry

As shown in Figure 1, the independent variable in this study is social capital. The dimensions of social capital adopted for this study are based on the earlier studies of Tsai, and Ghoshal, (1998); Nahapiet, and Ghoshal, (1998); and Hazleton, and Kennan, (2000). They include structural social capital, content or communication social capital, and relational social capital. On the other hand, the dependent variable in this study is employees' creativity. The measures of employees' creativity adopted for this study are based on the Componential Theory of Individual Creativity by Amabile (1988, 1996, 1997:42). The Componential Theory of Individual Creativity includes three major facets or components of individual (or small team) creativity, each of which is necessary for creativity in any given domain: expertise or domain-relevant skills and knowledge, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation (Amabile, 1997, 1983, 1983b).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Foundations

Social Capital Theory

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are rooted in two pivotal concepts: Social Capital Theory and Resource-Based View Theory. Social Capital Theory is a sociological concept that explores the value and benefits of social networks and relationships (Lin, 2017). It suggests that social networks are akin to capital assets, similar to physical or human capital, which can be harnessed to attain desired social and economic outcomes (Gannon & Roberts, 2018). Social Capital Theory provides a lens through which we can examine the intricate relationships and networks within organizations and their impact on the employees' creativity and innovation (Bina & Olori, 2019).

At its core, Social Capital Theory posits that social networks and relationships within an organization constitute a form of capital that can be leveraged to access resources such as information, support, and opportunities (Gannon & Roberts, 2018). In the context of the Nigerian banking industry, this theory

offers valuable insights into how the quality and strength of social connections among employees and with external stakeholders can influence the generation and implementation of innovative ideas. Within Nigerian banks, strong internal networks fostered by social capital facilitate the exchange of knowledge and insights relevant to the unique challenges and opportunities in the industry. These networks enable employees to tap into a wealth of expertise and diverse perspectives, stimulating creativity and innovation (Bina & Olori, 2019).

Furthermore, Social Capital Theory emphasizes the importance of trust, reciprocity, and norms of cooperation in fostering social connections. In the context of Nigerian banks, a culture of trust and openness nurtured by social capital encourages employees to freely share ideas, experiment with new approaches, and take calculated risks. This culture of psychological safety empowers individuals to challenge conventional thinking, explore alternative solutions, and drive creativity within the organization (Bina & Olori, 2019; Edmondson, 2018). Overall, Social Capital Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the role of social connections and relationships in shaping employees' creativity and innovation within the Nigerian banking industry. By recognizing the significance of social capital and investing in the cultivation of strong internal and external networks, banks can create an environment conducive to creativity, driving sustainable growth and competitive advantage in an evolving market landscape (Azeem, *et. al.*, 2021; Gannon & Roberts, 2018).

Resource-Based View Theory

Conversely, Resource-Based View Theory offers a lens through which organizations can be examined based on the strategic resources they possess. It posits that the unique combination of tangible and intangible assets within a firm can provide a sustainable competitive advantage. When these resources are rare, valuable, inimitable, and non-substitutable, they become a source of enduring strength for the organization (Coates & McDermott, 2002; Musebe, 2012). The resource-based view (RBV) is a well-established research stream within strategy research, with its origins linked to Edith Penrose's work in 1959, who gave valuable insights into the process of resource acquisition, utilization, and expansion for gaining competitive advantage (Seriki, 2020).

At the heart of Resource-Based Theory lies the notion of viewing a firm not merely as a collection of discrete business units or functions, but rather as a cohesive entity composed of interconnected resources.

Penrose's pioneering model emphasized the critical importance of effective resource management in shaping firms' strategic behavior and ability to achieve their objectives. By conceptualizing firms as bundles of resources, RBT provides a lens through which to analyze how organizations leverage their unique capabilities to gain and sustain competitive advantage. A cornerstone concept within RBT is the VRIN criteria (Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, Non-substitutable), which delineates the attributes of resources that confer enduring competitive advantage (Pitelis, 2004; Utami & Alamanos, 2022).

The Resource-Based Theory emphasizes the strategic importance of effective resource management in achieving organizational goals. In the context of the study, this entails the strategic allocation of resources to support and nurture a culture of creativity and innovation within Nigerian banks. By investing in initiatives that promote collaboration, knowledge sharing, and experimentation, banks can enhance their creative capabilities and position themselves for long-term success in a competitive market landscape (Coates & McDermott, 2002; Seriki, 2020). The Resource-Based Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how social culture and social capital within Nigerian banks contribute to employees' creativity and organizational innovation. By recognizing the strategic value of these intangible resources and leveraging them effectively, banks can cultivate a competitive advantage that transcends technological advancements and market fluctuations, ensuring their relevance and sustainability in the dynamic banking industry (Claridge, 2018; Utami & Alamanos, 2022).

Social Capital

The term "social capital" finds its origins in Lyda Hanifan's discourse in 1916 and gained widespread currency from the late 1990s onward (Allan & Phillipson, 2017). Defined as "the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively," social capital underscores the effective functioning of social groups through interpersonal ties, shared identity, understanding, norms, values, and cooperative behaviors (Allan & Phillipson, 2017).

Eminent scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam have significantly shaped the trajectory of Social Capital Theory (Claridge, 2018). Bourdieu's seminal work introduced the concept in 1972, distinguishing it from other forms of capital and elucidating its multifaceted nature. Coleman's rational-choice framework and Putnam's democratic perspective further enriched the discourse, offering diverse lenses through which to examine social capital (Claridge, 2018). Despite its prominence, social

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capital remains a subject of contention among economists, with skepticism regarding its analytical utility cutting across theoretical paradigms (Gannon & Roberts, 2018). Critics contend that the concept has suffered from conceptual dilution, transitioning from a rigorous sociological construct to a commonplace term with diminished precision and theoretical clarity (Gannon & Roberts, 2018).

The multi-dimensional nature of social capital necessitates a comprehensive understanding of its components. Firstly, structural social capital pertains to the network of relationships between employees within the banking sector. This dimension can be measured through network density, representing the extent of connections within teams or departments, and the number of contacts, indicating the average level of accessibility and collaboration among employees (Kwon & Adler, 2014). Secondly, relational capital emphasizes the quality of relationships, trust, and reciprocity among employees. Measures of relational capital may include the strength of ties, reflecting the closeness and supportiveness of interpersonal connections, and the level of trust, indicating the willingness of employees to share ideas and information with one another (Ganguly, *et. al.*, 2019; Muniady, *et. al.*, 2015). Lastly, content or communication capital refers to the shared knowledge, information, and ideas circulating within the organizational network. This dimension can be assessed through indicators such as knowledge sharing frequency, depicting the extent of knowledge exchange among employees, and idea diversity, reflecting the variety of perspectives and approaches present within teams (Muniady, *et. al.*, 2015).

In the context of the Nigerian banking industry, social capital emerges as a potent resource for nurturing employees' creativity (Oussi & Chtourou, 2020). The rich tapestry of relationships, trust, and shared understanding inherent in social capital fosters an environment conducive to knowledge exchange and collaboration, thereby stimulating a culture of innovation among banking professionals (Bhatti *et al.*, 2020). For instance, the structural dimension of social capital, characterized by interconnections among employees, facilitates the flow of ideas and information, engendering novel insights and innovative solutions (Bhatti *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, the cognitive dimension, encompassing shared knowledge and understanding, augments problem-solving capabilities, propelling creativity within the banking sector (Bhatti *et al.*, 2020). By fortifying social capital, banks can cultivate an ecosystem that nurtures innovation, ensuring their resilience and competitiveness in an ever-evolving landscape (Bina & Olori, 2019). The dimensions of social capital used in this study are structural social capital, content or communication social capital, and relational social capital.

Structural Social Capital: This dimension of social capital is concerned with having access to other actors, which could either be individual or corporate. Hazleton and Kennan (2000) proposed four aspects of structural social capital as follows: knowledge of the appropriate network channels to use in effective communication (availability); timing (organizations that can communicate more quickly are likely to possess organizational advantage); A frame of reference (which indicates the network processes that provide information); an appropriate social organization (ability of networks or organizations formed for one purpose to be utilized for other purposes).

Content or Communication Social Capital: The quest to build social capital depends on robust communication which is described as a visible condition which is essential for formation and utilization of social capital. Hazleton and Kennan (2000) opined that four principal functions of communication provide social capital: information exchange, behaviour regulation, problem identification and conflict management. Information exchange describes the ability to gather, organize, interpret, store and carefully disseminate information to all relevant components. Problem identification explains the quest by organisations to have the ability to exchange information aimed at identifying problems and finding the much needed or appropriate solutions. This process can only be successful in a sufficiently social environment. An environment without a social capacity creates inflexibility and inability to adjust to change. Behaviour regulation describes the process that shapes the behaviour of various actors in relation to organizational goals and objectives. Conflict management makes it possible for conflict to be understood as a valuable and normal activity that must be managed as a regular and ongoing process.

Relational Social Capital: The relational social capital deals with expectations and obligations as the fulcrum upon which social capital lies. Hazleton and Kennan (2000) provides three relational conditions as trust, identification and the degree of social system closure. Trust being the primary relational feature of social capital as described in Coleman's model (Colman, 1988). Identification describes how actors view themselves in a social system as regards how they are connected with other actors.

The degree of social closure permits effective sanctions to be put in place in a defined social system and it leads to the emergence of observable norms.

Employees' creativity

Employees' creativity refers to the generation of novel and useful ideas by employees in a work context. It is a critical driver of innovation and organizational success in today's rapidly changing business environment (Nasir, *et. al.*, 2022; Yang, *et. al.*, 2016). Creativity can be explained as the capacity of individuals to conceive fresh and valuable ideas within the workplace milieu. Thus, at its core, employees' creativity entails the generation of novel and practical concepts that propel innovation, foster adaptability, and fuel growth amidst the ever-evolving business landscape (Nasir, *et. al.*, 2022).

The significance of employees' creativity cannot be overstated, as it serves as a catalyst for pioneering endeavors, whether in the form of groundbreaking products, streamlined processes, or inventive problem-solving strategies (Lee & Yang, 2016). Moreover, a culture that nurtures and celebrates employees' creativity cultivates an environment of continuous learning and adaptation, essential for organizational resilience and long-term viability (Lasrado, 2019). In addition, diverse factors intersect to shape the landscape of employees' creativity, ranging from individual attributes like cognitive style and personality traits to task complexities and organizational climates. Recognizing and leveraging these influences enables organizations to foster a fertile ground for creative ideation and realization (Lee & Yang, 2016).

Fostering employees' creativity necessitates a multifaceted approach, wherein organizations champion a supportive ecosystem that values diversity of thought, embraces calculated risk-taking, and acknowledges and rewards innovative endeavors. This entails providing employees with challenging yet meaningful tasks, autonomy to explore uncharted territories, and access to requisite resources to fuel their creative pursuits. Additionally, fostering a culture of collaboration, open communication, and experimentation further catalyzes the creative potential of employees, nurturing a collective ethos of ingenuity and forward-thinking (Yang, *et. al.*, 2016).

However, managing employees' creativity presents its own set of challenges. Not all creative ideas are feasible or aligned with organizational objectives, and the implementation of novel concepts may disrupt established processes and routines. Hence, organizations must strike a delicate balance between encouraging innovation and maintaining operational efficiency and control, navigating the fine line between exploration and exploitation (Singha, 2024). Measuring employees' creativity poses another

complex conundrum, given its subjective and multifaceted nature. While traditional approaches like supervisor ratings, peer evaluations, and self-reports offer insights into individual creative prowess, assessing the tangible outcomes of creative endeavors – such as the introduction of new products or process enhancements – provides a more holistic gauge of organizational creativity (Fu, *et. al.*, 2022; Yu, *et. al.*, 2019).

In context of current study, employees' creativity serves as a pivotal aspect of organizational innovation within the banking sector. Employees' creativity encompasses the generation of novel and practical ideas by bank employees, ranging from innovative financial products to streamlined operational processes and strategic solutions to industry challenges. Within this framework, employees' creativity is not only a means to drive competitive advantage but also a manifestation of the organization's ability to adapt and thrive in the dynamic Nigerian banking landscape. It represents the culmination of individual ingenuity, nurtured within a supportive organizational environment characterized by robust social capital, where relationships, trust, and knowledge exchange foster a culture of innovation and collaboration among banking professionals. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms through which social capital influences employees' creativity is essential for enhancing organizational effectiveness, fostering innovation, and maintaining competitiveness in the Nigerian banking industry. The measures of employee creativity used for this current study are expertise, creative thinking skills and intrinsic task motivation.

Expertise: Expertise, according to Amabile, (1997:42) is the foundation for all creative work. It can be viewed as the set of cognitive pathways that may be followed for solving a given problem or doing a given task- the problem solver's network of possible wanderings (Newell & Simon, 1972:82). The expertise component of creativity includes memory for factual knowledge, technical proficiency, and special talent in the target work domain.

Creative-Thinking Skills: Creative thinking skill is essentially "that something extra" needed in addition to expertise for creative performance which is also referred to as creativity-relevant skills (Amabile, 1983) and creativity-relevant processes (Amabile, 1996). Creative-thinking skills includes: ability to apply techniques for the development of new pathways cognitively, cognitive style favourable to taking new perspectives on the problem, and a working style that is conducive to the persistent, energetic pursuit of their work (Amabile, 1997:43). Even though creative thinking could be enhanced through learning and techniques to improve intellectual independence and cognitive flexibility (Amabile, 1997:43), the skill depends on personality characteristics that are related to independence, tolerance for ambiguity self-discipline, orientation towards risk-taking, perseverance in the face of frustration, and a relative lack of concern for social approval (Baron as cited in Amabile, 1997).

Intrinsic Task Motivation: Amabile, (1997) defined intrinsic motivation as the motivation to work on something like a task due to the fact that it is interesting, exciting, involving, challenging or satisfying. By implication, people will more creative when they are intrinsically motivated primarily, rather than extrinsically motivated by reward/promise of reward, peer competition, expected evaluation, surveillance, or dictate from superiors (Amabile, 1983; 1996; 1997).

Empirical Review

The Relationship between Social Capital and Employees' creativity

The empirical study conducted by Sözbilir (2018) investigates the interaction between social capital, organizational creativity, and efficiency in organizations, specifically focusing on the Turkish Employment Agency. By administering a questionnaire to 131 managers, the study gathers data on perceptions of social capital, organizational creativity, and efficiency. The findings reveal that social capital exerts a significant influence on both organizational creativity and efficiency, highlighting the interconnectedness of these constructs within the organizational context. This study aligns closely with the current study on "Social Capital and Employees' creativity in the Nigerian Banking Industry," as it underscores the importance of social capital in fostering creativity and efficiency within organizations, albeit within a different industry and cultural context.

Similarly, Han *et al.* (2014) delve into the relationship between social capital and team creativity, particularly focusing on the role of human capital diversity in shaping team social capital for creativity. Through an empirical study involving 36 teams of MBA students, the authors find that team-level human capital diversity influences the formation of social capital, which, in turn, enhances team creativity. While this study focuses on team-level dynamics rather than individual employees' creativity, it resonates with the current study's emphasis on the role of social capital in fostering creativity within organizational contexts.

Contrasting with the focus on organizational creativity, Liu (2018) examines the relationship between social capital, organizational learning, and knowledge transfer in the cultural and creative industries. By analyzing data from 432 Taiwanese cultural and creative firms, the study reveals that social capital influences organizational learning, which, in turn, facilitates knowledge transfer. Although this study

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explores creativity indirectly through knowledge transfer, it offers insights into the mechanisms through which social capital influences organizational effectiveness, which can be pertinent to understanding its impact on employees' creativity in the banking industry.

Furthermore, Jia *et. al.* (2014) adopt a social-structural perspective to explore the relationship between employee-organization relationships (EORs) and team creativity. Through a study involving 1,807 employees in 229 teams across Chinese high-technology organizations, the authors find that mutual investment EORs, characterized by high levels of employee contributions and extensive inducements from employers, are associated with higher team creativity. This study highlights the importance of social structures and organizational relationships in fostering creativity, complementing the focus of the current study on social capital within the Nigerian banking industry.

Finally, Wu and Chen (2018) investigate the relationship between shared leadership, collective psychological capital, organizational commitment, and creativity in Taiwan's hotel industry. Through structural equation modeling and data from 52 hotels and 267 employees, the authors find that collective psychological capital partially mediates the relationship between shared leadership and organizational commitment and creativity. While this study explores collective psychological capital rather than social capital per se, it offers insights into the mechanisms through which shared leadership influences organizational outcomes, which can be relevant to understanding the impact of social capital on employees' creativity in the banking industry.

In summary, while each empirical study offers unique insights into the relationship between social capital and organizational outcomes, they collectively underscore the importance of social capital in fostering creativity and innovation within organizations. These studies provide valuable perspectives that can enrich the understanding of how social capital influences employees' creativity in the Nigerian banking industry, offering insights into potential mechanisms and contextual nuances that may shape this relationship.

RESEACH METHODS

Research Design: For this study, a descriptive research design was adopted, specifically employing the survey research design. Given its relevance to administrative sciences the cross-sectional survey method was utilized, which involves collecting standardized information from a representative sample.

Population of the Study: The population of this study comprises employees in selected commercial banks within Rivers State, Nigeria. Due to the dynamic nature of banking environments, the exact size of the population is unknown and subject to daily fluctuations.

Sampling and Sample Size Determination: Sampling involves selecting a portion of the population for study (Mujere, 2016), and for this research, random sampling was employed. The study utilized a non-probability sampling method called convenience sampling due to the nature of the target population, allowing for the selection of participants based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. Assuming a 95% confidence level ($Z = 1.96$), a margin of error of 5% ($E = 0.05$), and an estimated proportion of 0.5 to maximize sample size, the formula for an infinite population was applied. The formula yielded a sample size of approximately 385. Therefore, for this study, data was collected from a sample size of around 385 bank employees from selected commercial banks within Rivers State.

Data Collection Method and Research Instrument: Primary data collection was conducted, involving the direct gathering of statistical data from respondents. A structured questionnaire was administered to bank employees to gather relevant information. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: demographic questions, questions about the dimensions of social capital, and questions assessing employees' creativity. Respondents were asked to rate their responses on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Test of Validity and Reliability of the Instrument: Validity, ensuring that the instrument measures what it intends to measure, was ensured through expert review and feedback. Copies of the questionnaire were reviewed by selected experts in the field to ensure relevance and appropriateness. Reliability, indicating consistency and stability of measurement, was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results indicated satisfactory reliability for all variables, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.7, indicating high internal consistency.

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Operational Measures of Variables: The independent variable in this study is social capital. The dimensions of social capital adopted for this study are based on the earlier studies of Tsai, and Ghoshal, (1998); Nahapiet, and Ghoshal, (1998); and Hazleton, and Kennan, (2000). They include structural social capital, content or communication social capital, and relational social capital. The conceptual definitions of each of these dimensions of social capital were used to generate the items in the survey instrument. These dimensions of social capital were measured with three items each using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The response mode ranges from 1-5; where where 5 = strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= not sure/neutral, 2= disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree.

On the other hand, the dependent variable in this study is employees' creativity. The measures of employees' creativity adopted for this study are based on the Componential Theory of Individual Creativity by Amabile (1988, 1996, 1997:42). The Componential Theory of Individual Creativity includes three major facets or components of individual (or small team) creativity, each of which is necessary for creativity in any given domain: expertise or domain-relevant skills and knowledge, creative-thinking skill, and intrinsic task motivation (Amabile, 1997, 1983, 1983b). All the components of creativity were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The response mode ranges from 1 to 5; where 1 = strongly disagree; 2= agree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; and 5= strongly agree.

Table 1: Sample items for Employees' Creativity scale

| S/N | Items | Strongly disagree =1 | Disagree =2 | Not sure/ neither agree nor disagree=3 | Agree =4 | Strongly agree=5 |
|-----|--|----------------------|-------------|--|----------|------------------|
| 1 | Expertise or Domain-Relevant Skills and Knowledge. Adapted from Sawyer (1992) | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | |
| 3 | Creative-Thinking Skills Adapted from Tierney (1997). | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | |
| 5 | Intrinsic Task Motivation Adapted from Eisenberger and Rhoades (2001). | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | |

Method of Data Analysis: Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were utilized to organize and summarize numerical data, while inferential statistics, specifically Pearson Product Moment Correlation, was used to analyze the relationship between variables. The significance level was set at 0.05, with decisions based on whether the obtained significant value is less than the level of significance.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Sampling Distribution: In this study, a total of 385 copies of the questionnaire were distributed across 20 randomly selected banks within Rivers State, Nigeria, with questionnaires administered in each bank according to the size of the bank. A total of 307 valid copies of the questionnaire were collected, resulting in an effective return rate of 79.7%.

Demographic Characteristics: The demographic variables and frequencies of 307 respondents for the study are as follows. The first variable is gender, with 180 respondents (58.6%) identifying as male, 60 respondents (19.5%) identifying as female, and 67 respondents (21.8%) not specifying their gender. The second variable is age, with 35 respondents (11.4%) between 21-30 years old, 125 respondents (40.7%) between 31-40 years old, 8 respondents (2.6%) over 50 years old, and 139 respondents (45.3%) not specifying their age. The third variable is educational background, with 58 respondents (18.9%) having a B.Sc/HND degree, 17 respondents (5.5%) having an M.Sc degree, 4 respondents (1.3%) having a Ph.D. degree, and 228 respondents (74.3%) not specifying or having other educational backgrounds. The fourth variable is the number of years respondents have worked in the bank, with 41 respondents (13.4%) having worked for less than 1 year, 107 respondents (34.8%) having worked for 1-5 years, 27 respondents (8.8%) having worked for 6-10 years, 11 respondents (3.6%) having worked for 11-15 years, and 121 respondents (39.4%) not specifying their years of work. In this study, demographic analysis was used to collect and analyze data on the gender, age, educational background, and years of work in the bank of 307 respondents. The results of the analysis showed variations in gender distribution, age range, educational backgrounds, and tenure in the bank among the respondents.

Univariate Analyses

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Items of the Independent and Dependent Variables

N= 307

| ITEMS | MEAN | SD | RULE |
|---|---|-------|--------|
| SOCIAL CAPITAL | | | |
| Structural Social Capital: | | | |
| Established channels for sharing information and resources across departments. | 4.46 | .7218 | Accept |
| Strong professional relationships with colleagues across various levels of the bank. | 4.52 | .6535 | Accept |
| Clearly defined roles and responsibilities within team/department | 4.61 | .6975 | Accept |
| Contentor Communication Social Capital: | | | |
| There is a shared understanding of the bank's mission and objectives among employees. | 4.60 | .6279 | Accept |
| Employees use common language or terminology to communicate ideas and concepts | 4.11 | .7267 | Accept |
| Employees express their alignment with the organization's values | 4.41 | .6967 | Accept |
| Relational Social Capital: | | | |
| Camaraderie and mutual support among team members | 4.68 | .6521 | Accept |
| Established mechanisms for resolving conflicts and building trust within teams | 4.71 | .6491 | Accept |
| Fostered sense of belonging and identification among employees | 4.65 | .6545 | Accept |
| EMPLOYEES' CREATIVITY | | | |
| Expertise or Domain-Relevant Skills and Knowledge. Adapted from Sawyer (1992) | I am very clear as to the processes involved in the execution of my duties. | | |
| | | 4.42 | .7623 |
| | I am very certain about the procedures I need to use in executing various aspects of my job. | 4.38 | .6419 |
| Creative-Thinking Skills Adapted from Tierney (1997). | I am confident in my ability to generate new ideas concerning the work I do and in the overall best interest of the organisation. | 4.19 | .8160 |
| | I have confidence in my ability to do the right things in my work and to bring in new ideas. | 4.59 | .6385 |
| Intrinsic Task Motivation Adapted from Eisenberger and Rhoades (2001). | I find my present job to be interesting and enjoyable. | 4.48 | .7116 |
| Expertise or Domain-Relevant Skills and Knowledge. Adapted from Sawyer (1992) | My present job is rather unpleasant and boring. I wish I could be given another job. | 4.15 | .7102 |
| | | 4.09 | .7550 |

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics on various dimensions of social capital and employees' creativity within the banking sector in Nigeria. Accordingly, employees perceive a high level of structural social capital, as indicated by the mean scores for items such as established channels for sharing information and resources across departments (Mean = 4.46, SD = 0.7218), strong professional relationships across various levels of the bank (Mean = 4.52, SD = 0.6535), and clearly defined roles and

responsibilities within teams/departments (Mean = 4.61, SD = 0.6975). These findings suggest that employees believe there are effective communication channels, strong interpersonal relationships, and clear organizational structures that facilitate collaboration and information sharing within the bank.

Employees also perceive a high level of content or communication social capital, as indicated by the mean scores for items such as shared understanding of the bank's mission and objectives among employees (Mean = 4.60, SD = 0.6279), use of common language or terminology to communicate ideas and concepts (Mean = 4.11, SD = 0.7267), and expression of alignment with the organization's values (Mean = 4.41, SD = 0.6967). These findings suggest that employees share a common understanding of the organization's goals and values, which promotes coherence and shared purpose among staff members.

Employees perceive a strong sense of relational social capital, as indicated by the mean scores for items such as camaraderie and mutual support among team members (Mean = 4.68, SD = 0.6521), established mechanisms for resolving conflicts and building trust within teams (Mean = 4.71, SD = 0.6491), and a fostered sense of belonging and identification among employees (Mean = 4.65, SD = 0.6545). These findings suggest that employees feel supported by their colleagues and the organization, which enhances trust, collaboration, and a sense of belonging in the workplace.

Employees exhibit a high level of creative self-efficacy, as indicated by the mean score (Mean = 4.42, SD = 0.7623). Employees demonstrate strong problem-solving skills, as indicated by the mean score (Mean = 4.38, SD = 0.6419). Employees engage in frequent idea generation, as indicated by the mean score (Mean = 4.19, SD = 0.8160). Employees exhibit high levels of flexibility and adaptability, as indicated by the mean score (Mean = 4.59, SD = 0.6385). Employees effectively translate creative ideas into tangible outcomes or results, as indicated by the mean score (Mean = 4.48, SD = 0.7116). Employees contribute to fostering a culture of collaboration and creativity within the organization, as indicated by the mean score (Mean = 4.15, SD = 0.7102). Employees feel that their creative efforts are valued and appreciated by their colleagues and management, as indicated by the mean score (Mean = 4.09, SD = 0.7550).

This result reveals that employees actively engage in collaborative efforts to generate creative solutions and drive innovation across teams and departments, believing in their ability to generate innovative ideas and solutions. This proactive approach to problem-solving indicates that employees actively seek out innovative solutions when faced with challenges, contributing to the organization's adaptability in a

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dynamic environment. Their proactive stance extends to idea generation, fueling creativity and innovation within the organization. Additionally, employees demonstrate openness to trying new approaches and methods in their work, crucial for responding to changing market conditions and customer needs. Furthermore, their skills in executing innovative projects and initiatives drive tangible results for the organization, reinforced by the organization's recognition and reward of creative contributions, which motivates employees to continue pushing boundaries in their work.

The descriptive statistics indicate that employees perceive a high level of social capital and employees' creativity within the banking sector in Nigeria. Across all dimensions of social capital and employees' creativity, the mean scores are above 4.0, indicating strong agreement with the statements presented in the questionnaire. The low standard deviations suggest that there is minimal variation in responses, further supporting the consistency of perceptions among employees. Overall, these findings suggest that social capital and employees' creativity play crucial roles in driving organizational effectiveness and performance within the banking sector in Nigeria.

Bivariate Analysis

Table 3: Structural Social Capital and Employees' Creativity (Test for Hypothesis 1)

| | | Structural Social Capital | Employees' Creativity |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Structural Social Capital | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .671** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 307 | 307 |
| Employees' Creativity | Pearson Correlation | .671** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 307 | 307 |

The analysis aimed to test the hypothesis regarding the relationship between structural social capital and employees' creativity in the banking sector of Nigeria. The Pearson correlation coefficient between structural social capital and employees' creativity was found to be significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$), with a correlation coefficient of 0.671. This indicates a strong positive and significant correlation between structural social capital and employees' creativity. The findings suggest that structural social capital, including established channels for sharing information and resources, strong professional relationships, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities within teams/departments, is positively associated with employees' creativity in the banking sector of Nigeria. The null hypothesis, which posits that there is no

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significant relationship between structural social capital and employees' creativity, is rejected. The alternative hypothesis, which suggests a significant relationship between the two variables, is upheld.

H_{A1}: There is a significant relationship between structural social capital and employees' creativity.

Table 4: Content or Communication Social Capital and Employees' Creativity (Test for Hypothesis 2)

| | | Content or communication Capital | Employees' Creativity |
|--|---------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Content or Communication Social Capital | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .623** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 307 | 307 |
| Employees' creativity | Pearson Correlation | .623** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 307 | 307 |

The analysis aimed to test the hypothesis regarding the relationship between content or communication social capital and employees' creativity in the banking sector of Nigeria. The Pearson correlation coefficient between content or communication capital and employees' creativity was found to be significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$), with a correlation coefficient of 0.623. This indicates a strong positive correlation between content or communicationsocial capital and employees' creativity. The findings suggest that content or communication social capital, including shared understanding of the organization's mission and objectives among employees, use of common language or terminology, and expression of alignment with the organization's values, is positively associated with employees' creativity in the banking sector of Nigeria. The null hypothesis, which posits that there is no significant relationship between content or communicationsocial capital and employees' creativity, is rejected. The alternative hypothesis, which suggests a significant relationship between the two variables, is upheld.

H_{A2}: There is a significant relationship between content or communicationsocial capital and employees' creativity.

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Table 5: Relational Social Capital and Employees' creativity (Test for Hypothesis 3)

| | | RelationalCapital | Employees' Creativity |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Relational Social Capital | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .721** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 307 | 307 |
| Employees' creativity | Pearson Correlation | .721** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 307 | 307 |

The analysis aimed to test the hypothesis regarding the relationship between relational social capital and employees' creativity in the banking sector of Nigeria. The Pearson correlation coefficient between relational social capital and employees' creativity was found to be significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$), with a correlation coefficient of 0.721. This indicates a strong positive correlation between relational social capital and employees' creativity. The findings suggest that relational social capital, including camaraderie and mutual support among team members, established mechanisms for resolving conflicts and building trust within teams, and a fostered sense of belonging and identification among employees, is positively associated with employees' creativity in the banking sector of Nigeria. The null hypothesis, which posits that there is no significant relationship between relational social capital and employees' creativity, is rejected. The alternative hypothesis, which suggests a significant relationship between the two variables, is upheld.

H_{A3}: There is a significant relationship between relational social capital and employees' creativity.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Structural Social Capital and Employees' Creativity (Hypothesis 1)

The results of the analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between structural social capital and employees' creativity in the banking sector of Nigeria. This finding aligns with previous research by Bina and Olori, (2019) and Han *et al.* (2014), who highlighted the importance of strong social networks and organizational structures in fostering creativity and innovation among employees. Specifically, employees who perceive well-established channels for sharing information and resources, strong professional relationships, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities within teams are more likely to exhibit higher levels of creativity in their work. This suggests that investments in building and maintaining structural

socialcapital within organizations can contribute to enhancing employees' creativity, thereby driving innovation and competitiveness in the banking sector.

Content or Communication Social Capital and Employees' Creativity (Hypothesis 2)

The analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between content or communicationsocial capital and employees' creativity in the banking sector of Nigeria. This finding is consistent with prior research by Liu (2018) and Jia *et. al.* (2014), who emphasized the role of shared understanding, common language, and alignment with organizational values in promoting creativity among employees. Employees who share a common understanding of the organization's mission and objectives, use common language or terminology, and express alignment with the organization's values are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of creativity in their work. This suggests that fostering content or communication social capital within organizations can catalyze stimulating employees' creativity and innovation.

Relational Social Capital and Employees' Creativity (Hypothesis 3)

The analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between relational social capital and employees' creativity in the banking sector of Nigeria. This finding is consistent with existing literature by Sözbilir (2018) and Wu and Chen (2018), which emphasized the importance of camaraderie, trust, and a sense of belonging in fostering creativity among employees. Employees who experience camaraderie and mutual support among team members, have access to established mechanisms for resolving conflicts and building trust, and feel a sense of belonging and identification within the organization are more likely to exhibit higher levels of creativity in their work. This suggests that investing in building relationalcapital can contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive work environment that stimulates employees' creativity and innovation.

Overall, the findings of this study provide empirical support for the hypothesized relationships between social capital dimensions and employees' creativity in the banking sector of Nigeria. These findings underscore the importance of fostering social capital within organizations as a strategy for enhancing employees' creativity and driving innovation.

CONCLUSION

The empirical analysis of the relationship between social capital and employees' creativity in the Nigerian banking industry reveals significant correlations between these constructs. Structural, content or communication, and relational dimensions of social capital exhibit strong positive associations with employees' creativity, indicating that investments in fostering social capital within organizations can contribute to enhancing such measures of employees' creativity as expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation and driving organizational innovation.

The findings of this study align with previous research highlighting the importance of social capital in fostering creativity and efficiency within organizations, as evidenced by studies conducted in different industries and cultural contexts. The interconnectedness between social capital, organizational creativity, and efficiency underscores the pivotal role of social capital in shaping organizational dynamics and outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Invest in Social Capital Development:** Organizations in the Nigerian banking industry should prioritize initiatives aimed at building and nurturing social capital among employees. This includes fostering strong professional relationships, promoting a shared understanding of organizational goals and values, and creating a supportive and inclusive work environment.
 2. **Encourage Collaboration and Communication:** Promote collaboration and open communication channels across teams and departments to facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge. Encouraging cross-functional collaboration can enhance social capital and stimulate employees' creativity.
 3. **Provide Training and Development:** Offer training programs and development opportunities focused on enhancing social capital skills such as networking, communication, and conflict
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resolution. Investing in employees' social capital competencies can improve their ability to leverage social networks and foster creativity within the organization.

4. **Recognize and Reward Creativity:** Implement recognition and reward systems that acknowledge and celebrate employees' creativity. This can help reinforce a culture that values innovation and encourages employees to contribute their creative ideas and solutions.
5. **Promote Diversity and Inclusion:** Embrace diversity and inclusion initiatives that foster a diverse workforce. Research has shown that diversity can enhance social capital and lead to more innovative outcomes. By promoting diversity in all its forms, organizations can tap into a broader range of perspectives and ideas, thereby enriching social capital and fostering creativity.

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