



TRIANGULAR EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP, EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREER GROWTH OF AGENCY WORKERS IN THE NIGERIAN BANKING INDUSTRY

F. C Anyim¹ & D. A. Ideh²

¹Department of Industrial Relations and Personnel Management

²Faculty of Business Administration, University of Lagos, Nigeria

E-mail: ¹fanyim@unilag.edu.ng; ²tonydum68@yahoo.com

Abstract

The use of agency workers is a common phenomenon in the Nigerian banking industry. The study examines how employment practices and triangular employment relationship affect career opportunities of agency workers in the Nigerian banking industry. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design with the aid of a structured questionnaire and in-depth interview schedule. A total of 451 respondents were randomly selected from 18,451 agency workers in triangular employment relationship in the 4 selected banks. Data from the questionnaire were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, while the analysis of interview data was based on thematic analyses. The findings of the study revealed that: there is a significant relationship between employment practices and opportunities for career growth of agency workers in triangular employment relationship. The study therefore concludes that, triangular employment relationship does not enhance the agency workers' opportunities for career growth as a result of their exposure to negative employment practices.

Keywords: Agency, banking, career, employment, triangular

Introduction

The history of humanity could always be treated in relation to the history of production and exchange. In the primitive stage, which preceded the appropriation of land and accumulation of stock, the labourer owned the whole produce of labour because the labourer had neither landlord nor master to share the produce with (Smith, 1993). According to Braverman (1974), the early phases of industrial capitalism were marked by sustained efforts by the capitalists to put aside the difference between human capacity to perform work and the labour that comes out of it and to buy labour in the same way raw materials and machinery were bought. The capitalists achieved this through the use of different forms of sub-contracting and other third-party work arrangements.

Agency employment relationship is not a new phenomenon in the world of work as it has been with humanity since the advent of wage employment. During the late 1880s and early 1900s, labour contracting in the United States, Great Britain and Australia was commonly referred to as the sweating system (Goldstein, 2006). Braverman (1974) posits that as late as 1870, the immediate employer of many workers was the intermediate subcontractor who stood as both an employee and a small employer of labour. Such methods of dealing with labour bore the marks of the origins of industrial capitalism in mercantile capitalism which had a full understanding of buying and selling of commodities far above their production. Hence, these capitalists treated labour like any other

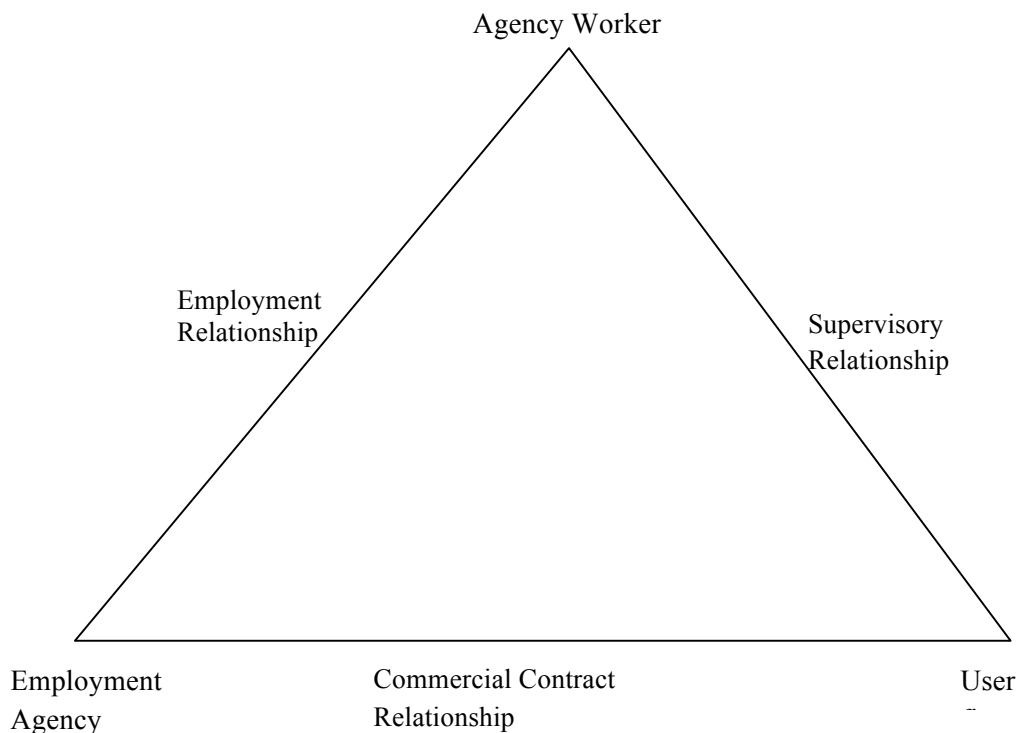
commodities (Braverman, 1974). The above supports Fajana's (2000) position that, the employers' objective according to both the classical and Marxist theories of production is the maximisation of profit through the subordination of employees to long hours of work at minimum costs.

In contrast, the workers and their unions have the broad objective of improving their wages and conditions of work. Many of the agency workers took the contract in the hope of being able to get permanent employment, acquire skills and experiences needed for career development, to gain the opportunity and desire for improved family life in the epoch of growing unemployment as well as economic hardship. A major challenge of agency work arrangement as argued by Mitlacher (2005) is that the employment agency is neither in a position to supervise the work process nor are they able to establish and verify circumstances that might lead to disciplinary action against the agency worker. This is because, in most instances, the responsibility of setting, monitoring, and evaluating the performance of the agency worker rests with the client organisation that only passes information to

the employment agency. Such information forms the basis for both positive and negative appraisal and career progression

Agency work could come in the form of triangular employment relationship. Davidov (2004) states that, tripartite or triangular employment relationship refers to the relationship among the employment agency, the user organisation and the worker. Triangular employment relationship according to Bergstrom & Storrie (2003; Hakansson, Isidorsson & Kantelius (2012) involves an employment relationship between the agency worker and the employment agency; management or supervisory relationship between the agency worker and the user organisation; and a commercial contract relationship between the user firm and the employment agency. Therefore, not all agency workers are in triangular employment relationship. An agency worker in triangular employment relationship has two masters at the same time and such workers are generally referred to as 'contract workers' in Nigeria. The focus of the study is on the category of agency workers in triangular employment relationship.

Figure 1: Triangular Employment Relationship among employment agency, agency worker and user firm



Source: Adapted from Hakansson, Isidorsson, & Kantelius (2012, 154)

Triangular employment relationship is multidisciplinary because it involves social, political, economic, and psychological factors. The adoption of triangular employment relationship by employers could create negative employment outcomes for agency workers. It could be a way to exploit workers by engaging in employment practices that will deny workers the opportunities for career growth. Some of the agency employees may have been 'trapped' as they cannot move up the career ladder owing to lack of developmental training. Others may not be able to make a career switch as a result of certain characteristics, such as age that places them in a disadvantaged position when competing for jobs with applicants of younger ages. While to some other agency workers, it is a launch pad into mainstream or permanent employment.

An employee that has opportunities for career advancement is most likely going to experience promotion in the workplace, be it in permanent employment and where he/she is in temporary employment, should have developmental training, easy process of conversion to permanent status, and upward movement in career path. This study therefore argues that where employees are exposed to negative employment practices such as lack of capacity to be converted to permanent staff status, none exposure to developmental training and/or are not promoted, such employees are likely to experience a lean opportunity for career growth or progression.

Various researchers (Bartkiw, 2013; Connelly, 2004; Davidov, 2004; Davy, 2010) have conducted studies in the area of triangular employment relationship from different perspectives, such as labour law and psychology, and these studies were carried out based on the experiences in some countries other than Nigeria. Although the concept of non-standard work arrangement is not new in Nigeria, but a review of extant literature reveals that there are not sufficient empirical studies that deal with triangular employment relationship and career

implications for agency workers particularly in the banking industry. It is the intention of this study to address this gap in research and literature by examining the effects employment practices and triangular employment relationship have on the opportunities for career growth of agency workers in the Nigerian banking industry.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the influence of triangular employment relationship on the career growth of agency workers in the Nigerian banking industry.

The specific objectives of the study include the following:

- i. Examine the correlation between developmental training and opportunities for career growth
- ii. To investigate the relationship between conversion of agency workers to permanent staff status and opportunities for career growth

Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant correlation between developmental training and opportunities for career growth
- ii. There is no significant relationship between conversion of agency workers to permanent staff status and opportunities for career growth

Literature Review

Labour Market Segmentation Theory

Labour market segmentation theory is credited to Reich, Gordon and Edwards (1973) who argue that development in the labour market during the period of competitive capitalism pointed towards the homogenisation of the labour force and not towards segmentation. Labour market segmentation arose both from deliberate strategies and systemic forces. The central thrust for the adoption of the new

strategies was to attempt the breakdown of the increasingly unified workers' interest which grew out of the proletarianisation of work and the concentration of workers in urban areas. On the other hand, certain systemic forces also helped to intensify segmentation within the corporations in the primary sector. Labour market segmentation theory, also referred to as the dual labour market theory, is assumed as comprising two major segments – the formal and informal sector or the core and periphery (Fajana, 2000; Krahn & Lowe, 1998).

This model proposes that, while the core sector contains primary labour market with better jobs, characterised by high wages, stable employment, good employment conditions and opportunities for promotion and career advancement, the periphery sector is made up of secondary labour markets, with jobs characterised by lower wages with little or no attachment to the firm, job insecurity, low opportunities for promotion and poor employment conditions (Doeringer & Piore, 1971; Launov, 2004). This segmentation can also be seen in the form of permanent or standard work and temporary or non-standard work arrangements. Fajana (2000) posits that temporary workers are only short-term employees that can have their contract of employment terminated at any time that is convenient for the organisation. The labour market segmentation theory is relevant to this study as it helps to give an understanding of the internal market structure of organisations, that is, the existence of two labour market structures in the same labour market. It therefore helps to focus on the problem that may be traced to the dual structure of organisations' internal labour market.

Empirical Review

Temporary agency employees are, in most cases, confined to low occupational statuses and are viewed as incapable of occupying other higher social statuses, qualification, abilities and characters such that even the most skilled temporary employees cannot prove their worth if their employers refuse to entrust them with higher profile

or challenging work (Cheng, 2010). Transitioning from non-standard to standard employment is an issue of great importance for workers in agency employment. Shyman (2011) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2015) opine that dominant employment pattern for non-regular workers, is to hire and fire the same worker at frequent intervals. Temporary jobs are seen by some as a stepping stone to the construction of a career; while, to many others, it may be regarded as a stepping stone down into a lower income status (Standing, 2011). Therefore, instead of being stepping-stone jobs, agency work may become dead-end employment, as workers may either slip into unemployment or get entrapped in non-standard employment (ILO, 2015).

In their study, Forrier and Sels (2003) opine that most temporary employees received only one type of training, while permanent employees participated in multiple forms of training and, that, permanent employees were more likely to receive employer-funded training than temporary agency employees. In a related development and study, Cheng (2010) concludes that employers' lack of investment in temporary employees' training precludes temporary workers from experiencing upward mobility in the labour market and that because of their limited capacity to increase skill sets through employer-funded training, temporary workers have great difficulties transiting into permanent employment. 'Good jobs' provide opportunities for on-the-job training and opportunities for advancement through the internal labour market (Lester, 1998). On-the-job training is required for upgrading workers' skills and improving their productivity and that of their organisations. It helps workers improve their earning potentials, develop a career and enhance their chances of transition to a regular job. However, the use of agency workers usually decreases the incentives and the need for employers to provide training if there is low conversion rate for fixed term contract into permanent contracts (Dolado, Garcia-Serrano & Jimeno, 2002).

Preenen, Verbiest, Vianen and Wijk (2015) find that self-profiling and career control are positively related to informal learning of temporary agency workers and these relationships are mediated by job challenge. Therefore, hiring companies and temporary work agencies could stimulate and train temporary agency workers' self-profiling and career control competencies to enhance their job challenge and informal learning by considering assigning challenging tasks to temporary agency workers, which may be a good alternative for expensive formal training programmes. Individual characteristics have negative influence on the probability of transiting from temporary employment to a permanent job. When considering certain group of workers, such as women, older and less educated employees, exiting temporary employment is a tough task and practically difficult. In this regard, temporary employment is a dead-end job (Gonzalez-Rendon, Alcaide-Castro & Florez-Saborido, 2005).

Hakansson and Isidorsson (2015) in their analysis, show that competence development is crucial to perceptions of job security but that, temporary agency workers lack competence development, both on the part of their employers and on the part of the client organisation. It is important to note that the client organisations have no incentive to invest more than the required competencies, since temporary agency workers only constitute a safeguard in case of a downturn. Hakansson and Isidorsson (2015) therefore argue that it is the agency workers' non-connection with a buffer that results in a lack of job security and that temporary agency workers' job security could be increased, if

temporary agencies were to invest in competence development for the agency workers, thus overcoming these workers' vulnerability in constituting a buffer.

Research Methods

The cross-sectional survey research design and mixed research method were adopted. Self-developed questionnaire and in-depth interviews were used to collect data needed to examine how employment practices and triangular employment relationship affect agency workers' opportunities for career growth in the Nigerian banking industry. The questionnaire was administered on 451 agency workers (respondents) working in 4 commercial banks, while in-depth interviews were conducted on 6 individuals (two union leaders and four management staff from the banks selected for the study). Stratified random sampling was adopted in the selection of 4 banks from the 13 unionised commercial banks that engage in triangular employment relationship. The 13 unionised banks sampled were stratified into old and new generation banks. One bank was randomly selected from 3 old-generation banks while 3 banks were selected from the remaining 10 new-generation banks. The simple random sampling technique was thereafter used in the selection of individual respondents from each of the 4 selected banks. The names of the banks were not disclosed in line with the confidentiality agreement the researchers reached with the banks. Also, the study adopted the Sample Size Determination Table designed by Bartlett, Kotrlik and Higgins (2001) to decide the number of individual respondents from each of the banks as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Agency Workers and Respondents in Sampled Banks

	Banks	No. of Agency Workers	No. of Respondents
1	Bank A	1,530	110
2	Bank B	11,626	119
3	Bank C	3,795	112

4	Bank D	1,500	110
	Total	18,451	451

Source: Field Survey (2015)

The items in the questionnaire for socio-demographic profile and the dimensions of opportunities for career growth have 21 items. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale (strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed) and was subjected to both internal and external validity while the Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the measure of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha for the dimension of opportunities for career growth subscale was 0.62 while the validity coefficient was 0.79. As stated by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.60 is considered acceptable.

Out of the 451 copies of the questionnaire administered on the respondents, 303 were filled and returned. From the returned questionnaire, 274

were found usable for the purpose of data analyses. The data generated were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20. The descriptive statistics included the use of the frequency distribution. The frequency distributions were also constructed to determine the number of times that each value occurred, the percentages, the count of total sample size and the cumulative percentages. The hypotheses were tested with the aid of SPSS. The statistical tool adopted to test the hypotheses at 5 per cent level of significance was the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The study also adopted Thematic Analysis as the qualitative data analysis technique for analysing the data gathered from the in-depth interviews.

Results

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This section captures the presentation and analysis of the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The socio-demographic profiles include gender, marital status, age, educational qualification, nature of employment contract, length of service and grade level of respondents.

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Valid Per cent
Male	150	54.7
Female	124	45.3
Marital Status	Frequency	Valid %
Married	88	32.1
Single	176	64.2
Separated	10	3.7
Total	274	100
Age of Respondents	Frequency	Valid Per cent
20 years and below	7	2.6
21 - 30 years	52	19.0
31 - 40 years	153	55.8
41 - 50 years	58	21.1

51 years and above	4	1.5
Total	274	100
Educational Qualification	Frequency	Valid Per cent
O/Level	9	3.3
NCE/OND	110	40.3
HND/Bachelor's degree	149	54.6
Master's Degree	5	1.8
Total	274	100
Nature of Employment Contract	Frequency	Valid Percent
Open ended	202	73.7
Fixed term	72	26.3
Total	274	100
Length of Service	Frequency	Valid Percent
Less than 2 years	109	39.9
2 - 5 years	111	40.7
6 – 9 years	51	18.7
10 years and above	2	0.7
Total	274	100
Grade Level	Frequency	Valid %
Junior	257	93.8
Senior	17	6.2
Total	274	100

Source: Field Survey (2015)

Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages of the socio-demographic profile of the respondents such as gender, age, union membership, employment status, educational qualification among other socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 2 shows that there were one hundred and fifty male respondents and which represented 55 per cent of the total sample, while 64.2 per cent of the respondents were single. The remaining 35.8 per cent of the respondents were married, divorced or separated.

Table 2 also reveals that respondents between the age group of 31 to 40 years were in the majority, with a frequency of one hundred and fifty-three, representing 55.8 per cent of the total sample, while those aged below 31 years constituted 21.6 per cent

and the remaining 22.7 per cent, represented those that were 41 years and above. Similarly, respondents with a minimum educational qualification of HND or Bachelor's degrees accounted for 56.4 per cent of the total sample. This indicated that majority of the respondents possessed the requisite minimum educational qualifications to be in the category of the core workforce of the sampled institutions.

Table 2 further discloses that two hundred and two of the respondents, accounting for 73.7 per cent of the total sample, had an open-ended employment contract, while 26.3 per cent had their contracts as fixed-term and 60.1 per cent of the respondents had worked in their different organisations for a minimum of 2 years, with 19.4 per cent of them

having put in 6 years and above in their various organisations.

Table 3: Agency Workers' Opportunities for Career Growth

Research Variables	SA	A	D	SD	M	SD	N
	4	3	2	1			
Agency workers do not experience significant opportunities for career growth in my organisation.	(106) 38.7%	(82) 29.9%	(68) 24.8%	(18) 6.6%	3.01	0.949	274
In my organisation, agency employment is not used as a stepping stone to becoming a permanent staff.	(55) 20.1%	(120) 43.8%	(77) 28.1%	(22) 8%	2.79	.865	274
Agency workers in my organisation are not sent on developmental training to assume management positions.	(74) 27%	(114) 41.6%	(62) 22.6%	(24) 8.8%	2.87	0.912	274
Temporary workers are trained for specific skills needed to perform their work.	(82) 29.9%	(153) 55.8%	(33) 12%	(6) 2.2%	3.14	.701	274
Agency workers experience difficulty when converting to permanent staff status in my organisation.	(110) 40.1%	(94) 34.3%	(52) 19%	(18) 6.6%	3.08	0.922	274
The longer I work as a temporary staff, the more likely I will be made a permanent staff.	(43) 15.7%	(92) 33.6%	(68) 24.8%	(71) 25.9%	2.39	1.04	274
Agency work does not quicken my upward movement in career path.	(85) 31%	(107) 39.1%	(70) 25.5%	(12) 4.4%	2.97	0.862	274
Temporary workers are promoted as at and when due in my organisation.	(18) 6.6%	(72) 26.3%	(81) 31.8%	(97) 35.4%	2.04	.939	274
I am still working here because of the high unemployment rate in the labour market.	(153) 55.8%	(80) 29.2%	(34) 12.4%	(7) 2.6%	3.38	.800	274
The views of temporary workers are not taken seriously in the workplace.	(89) 32.5%	(124) 45.3%	(55) 20.1%	(6) 2.2%	3.08	.780	274
The desire of temporary workers is to become permanent staff.	(156) 56.9%	(93) 33.9%	(19) 6.9%	(6) 2.2%	3.46	.721	274
I occupy privileged positions in my organisation.	(31) 11.3%	(82) 29.9%	(100) 36.5%	(61) 22.3%	2.30	.941	274
Trade unions have contributed to the improvement of temporary workers' terms and conditions of employment.	(37) 13.5%	(114) 41.6%	(76) 27.7%	(47) 17.2%	2.51	.931	274
I am treated same way as every other staff in my organisation irrespective of my employment status.	(28) 10.2%	(68) 24.8%	(96) 35%	(82) 29.9%	2.15	.968	274

Source: Field Survey (2015)

Legend: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, M = Mean, SD = Standard deviation, N = Number of respondents

Table 3 reveals that one hundred and eighty-eight of the total sample, or 67.6 per cent of the respondents affirmed to the statement that agency workers do not experience significant opportunities for career growth in their various organisations, while 63.9 per cent were in agreement that agency employment is not used as a stepping stone to becoming a core or permanent employee of the sampled organisation. Also, 31.4 per cent of the respondents were opposed to the statement that agency workers are not sent on developmental training that will lead to taking over management positions in the sampled organisations. A preponderance of the respondents, that is, one hundred and fifty-three, representing 55.8 per cent of the total sample, indicated that agency workers were trained for specific skills needed to perform their work while 14.2 per cent of the total sample either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. Similarly, 34.3 per cent and 40.1 per cent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively to the statement that temporary agency workers experience difficulty when converting to permanent staff status in their organisations. It is observed that there is a slight difference in the number of those that were opposed to, compared to those in support of the statement that the longer a temporary employee works in the organisation, the more likely the employee will be made a permanent member of staff. That is, 50.7 per cent of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed

with the statement, and 49.3 per cent supported the statement. From the Table also, 70.1 per cent of the respondents agreed that temporary agency work does not quicken the agency workers' upward movement in career path while 67.2 per cent of the total sample either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that agency workers are promoted as and when due in their organisations. Correspondingly, it can be deduced that the respondents that agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that the desire of temporary workers is to become permanent staff are two hundred and forty-nine representing 90.8 per cent of the total sample, which shows that majority of the respondents desired to be made core staff of the bank that they worked for. Equally, 58.8 per cent of the respondents were not in agreement with the statement that agency workers occupy privileged positions in the sampled organisations, while 55.1 per cent of the total sample were in agreement with the statement that trade unions have contributed to the improvement of temporary workers' terms and conditions of employment. However, 44.9 per cent of the respondents were not in agreement with the statement. Also, one hundred and seventy-eight of the respondents, representing 65 per cent of the total sample, neither agreed nor strongly agreed with the statement that agency workers are treated the same way as every other member of staff in their organisations.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 4: Correlation Matrix for the hypotheses

		1	2	3	4
1. Opportunities for career growth	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
2. Developmental training	N	274			
	Pearson Correlation	.234**	1		
3. Conversion to permanent staff status	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	274	274		
	Pearson Correlation	.200**	.047	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.434		

	N	274	274	274	
4. upward movement in career path	Pearson Correlation	.479**	.204**	.326**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	
	N	274	274	274	274

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result from Table 4 shows the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient carried out to establish the relationship between employment practices in triangular employment and opportunity for career growth of agency workers. The correlation among developmental training, conversion of agency workers, and upward movement in career path and agency workers opportunities for career growth is positively and statistically significant ($r = 0.234$, $n = 274$, $p < 0.01$); ($r = 0.200$, $n = 274$, $p < 0.01$); and ($r = 0.479$, $n = 274$, $p < 0.01$) respectively. Since p values are less than $\alpha = 0.01$, the result of correlation analysis shows that there is significant relationship among the variables measuring employment practices in triangular employment relationship and opportunities for career growth among agency workers in Nigerian banking industry.

Discussion of Findings

Agency workers do not experience significant opportunities for career growth in their various organisations; as such, workers do not view agency employment as a stepping stone into the core or permanent employment status in the organisation. Equally, the study reveals that agency workers are not sent on developmental training that will lead to taking over management positions; rather, such workers are trained for specific skills needed to perform their work. The study also observes that agency workers experience significant level of difficulty when efforts are made to convert to permanent status in their organisations. Similarly, it was observed that agency work arrangement does not quicken the agency workers' upward movement along the career path because the workers are not promoted as and when due in their banks. Agency workers are not opportune to occupy privileged

positions in the sampled banks even though it is their desire to become permanent or core staff of the bank where they work.

The results of the test of hypotheses show that employment practices in triangular employment relationship significantly influence agency workers' opportunities for career growth. It means that the more agency workers are exposed to better employment practices, the better the opportunities for career growth and vice versa. This supports the studies by Cheng (2010) and Lester (1998) that temporary employment does not provide opportunities for advancement in the career of agency workers in the organisations of their material employers as they are not exposed to positive employment practices. Temporary jobs are seen by some as a stepping stone to the construction of a career; while, to many others, it may be regarded as a stepping stone down into a lower income status (Standing, 2011). The unions do not view the use of agency employment in banks as a means of moving up the career ladder by the agency workers as can be seen in their argument below.

There is no promotion for the agency workers, certificates acquired are not recognised hence not used for advancement on the job. For example, in the past, Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN) certification was recognised for advancement but now, such professional certification by the agency workers are nothing to the bank management. Most agency workers have spent the useful part of their life as agency staff. There is no future for them.

The above union's position is also observed from Table 2, which shows that 60.1 per cent of the

respondents had worked in their organisation for 2 years and above, while 73.7 per cent of the respondents had their contract as open-ended, qualifying them to be “permanent agency workers”. In their view, Shyman (2011) and ILO (2015) opine that the dominant employment pattern for non-regular workers is to hire and fire the same worker at frequent intervals. Therefore, instead of being stepping-stone jobs, agency work may become dead-end employment as workers may either slip into unemployment or get entrapped in non-standard employment (ILO, 2015). There seems to be a deliberate strategy by employers not to train agency workers to acquire developmental training; rather, agency workers undergo training on specific skills. This position comes from the interview response by bank officials that states as follows:

Yes, agency workers are trained mostly on the job and through daily supervision. I would think this is fine as there are specific roles already identified by the organisation to be handled by this set of employees, so it is okay to train them on the specific skills required. This would also achieve return on investment on the training.

This statement points to the fact that agency workers are trained on specific skills that will aid in their task performance. Although on-the-job training is required for upgrading workers’ skills, improving their productivity and that of their organisation, helps workers improve their earning potentials, develop a career, and enhance their chances of transition to a regular job. However, the use of agency workers usually decreases the incentives and the need for employers to provide training if there is low conversion rate for fixed-term contract into permanent contracts (Dolado, Garcia-Serrano & Jimeno, 2002).

Forrier and Sels (2003) also find that most temporary employees received only one type of training, while permanent employees participated in multiple forms of training and that permanent employees were more likely to receive employer-funded training than temporary agency employees.

In a related study, Cheng (2010) concludes that employers’ lack of investment in temporary employees’ training does not enable temporary workers’ upward mobility in the labour market and that, because of their limited capacity to increase skill sets via employer-funded training, temporary workers have tremendous difficulties transiting into permanent employment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that triangular employment relationship does not enhance the agency workers’ opportunities for career growth as a result of negative employment practices. It can be observed from the study that agency workers are not exposed to developmental trainings. Similarly, some of the agency workers have worked in their respective organisations for over two years and in some cases for up to ten years without being offered permanent contracts. Therefore, to most workers, because of the negative employment practices, triangular employment relationship rather than being a stepping-stone to permanent jobs, is viewed as dead-end jobs. As noted by a trade union executive during the interview, “most agency workers have spent the useful part of their lives as agency staff and that there is no future for them”.

It is therefore recommended that agency workers in triangular employment relationship should be exposed to employment practices that will enhance their career opportunities as it is in the best interest of the three parties in triangular employment relationship to do so. Furthermore, the career of the agency workers should be protected through law reforms that will make the agency workers’ contract with the employment agencies operate on permanent basis. Also, the collective agreement that covers the employment of permanent staff should be extended to cover the agency workers.

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