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# HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS' COMPETENCIES AND CAREER SUCCESS IN THE SERVICE INDUSTRY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS' COMPETENCIES AND  
CAREER SUCCESS IN THE SERVICE INDUSTRY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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As a doctoral student who just finished this study, I want to thank the 20 HRD professionals for providing their stories so selflessly for the benefit of other practitioners like them. These HRD professionals have served as guides for how to attain career success, especially for those experiencing trying times in their careers. As I reflect upon the words of these HRD professionals, I feel a calling in my heart, based on their example, to embrace the challenging aspects of HRD rather than chasing only after the less challenging ones. I commit to

not losing the excitement and enthusiasm that brought me to this field. At the start of this journey, I thought I knew HRD's *place* in the firm and now I know how much and what type of power HRD has in the organization.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to explore HRD professionals' competencies leading to career success through an examination of their lived experiences of working in the service industry and to provide implications for HRD research and practice. Two research questions guiding this inquiry included: How do HRD professionals in the service industry experience career success? And how do HRD professionals in the service industry define and experience competencies leading to career success? To answer the two research questions, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 HRD professionals in the service industry. I then transcribed and coded the interview data and identified six themes including: (1) defining and experiencing career success through affect; (2) defining and experiencing career success as contribution to others; (3) defining and experiencing competency as KSAs and other attributes (e.g., capabilities, attitudes, values); (4) using the competency of relationship-building through trust and effective communication to define and experience career success; (5) implementing the competency of agility to define and experience career success; and (6) creating a unique competency mix by developing expert knowledge to define and experience career success. The study findings emphasize the need for HRD practitioners to become exemplars in their field, build credibility, be full organizational members who are credible, and develop unique competencies distinctive to their role. Future research should be conducted on HRD professionals' perceptions of career success in the service industry. Further, given how emotional the topic of career success was to participants, scholars should explore the emotional well-being of HRD professionals. This study is limited to online interviews that were conducted because of interview participants' busy schedule. Future research is called on to conduct in-person

interviews, with the benefit of bodily presence, to collect richer data. For the sake of triangulation, I suggest adding multiple data collection methods such as observation, document review, and survey.

*Keywords:* HRD professionals, the service industry, career success, competencies

## Chapter 1: Introduction

In this opening chapter, I present a problem statement of this dissertation study, state the study purpose, provide a conceptual framework, list the two research questions, describe the study design, and discuss the significance of the study. I conclude the chapter with my positionality, study limitations, and the definition of terms.

Human resource development (HRD) professionals can improve their work performance and the performance of those they support by understanding which competencies lead to career success in various HRD roles (Park, 2020). A definition of career success includes the psychological outcomes and perceptions of others, such as organizations and peer groups, resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005). Career success contains psychological outcomes. *Psychological outcomes* are how one experiences and defines the quality, effectiveness, and meaning of their accumulated work (Seibert et al., 1999). Other perceived career success comes from other people's observations (Spurk et al., 2019). HRD professionals seek career success in their work.

For decades, HRD professionals have created a competitive advantage in the workplace by using competencies that lead to career success (Elia & Margherita, 2015). Many industries, particularly the service industry, challenge HRD professionals to use competencies, such as those involving the use of virtual learning to remain competitive (Tseng & Chen, 2020). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (n.d.), the service industry is an industry group consisting of any industry that provides a service, including arts, entertainment, leisure, accommodation, food service, wholesale, retail, and transportation companies. This study focuses on only the restaurant, retail, and hospitality service sector, where HRD professionals have found themselves unemployed due to recent global and economic events, such as the last few years of the recent

COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant subsequent economic volatility (Long et al., 2020). The service industry was competitively thriving prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Aigbedo, 2021). Using HRD competencies can help the service industry rebound (Ranasinghe et al., 2021). Researching the competencies of HRD professionals in the service industry is a valuable step to help those who need their employees and the organizations they support to remain competitive and achieve their goals.

### **Problem Statement**

HRD professionals who understand the capabilities needed for career success in the service industry will better retain employment during economic downturns. This may ensure economic stability and growth in the field (McDonald & Hite, 2018). HRD professionals, like other professionals, are sometimes left by organizations and their members to learn what competencies are essential to succeed in a role and to do what makes sense to them in the situation (van Stralen & Mercer, 2020), potentially costing HRD professionals' success in their careers. Competencies may be challenging to learn because not all HRD professionals know which competencies are needed to achieve career success (Arora & Suri, 2020). HRD professionals need career support, lest they become frustrated in their attempts at career success (Russ-Eft et al., 2014). There is no guarantee that training and development programs will help develop the competencies HRD professionals need (Torraco & Lundgren, 2020). HRD professionals may find themselves disadvantaged in career advancement and supporting others if the competencies discovered through trial and error do not lead to career success (Hubner & Baum, 2018). HRD professionals who discover the competencies leading to career success will better understand the knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs), and other attributes needed to ensure career success (Blokker et al., 2019; Torraco & Lundgren, 2020).

What is not known are the specific capabilities needed for HRD professionals working in the service industry. Arora and Suri (2020) stated that challenges facing HRD professionals beyond the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 should prompt *relooking* at the competencies required to ensure HRD professionals' personal career success and the success of their firms. That is, the competencies required for HRD professionals in the service industry are undefined. Watkins and Marsick (2014) highlighted that much learning in HRD practice occurs informally, suggesting future research to help identify the supports needed to enable such learning, of which competencies are most important. Further, Torraco and Lundgren (2020) discussed the need for HRD professionals to be transformative through the discovery and continuous improvement of competencies benefiting everyone they serve. With a solid understanding of competencies, HRD professionals may achieve career success (Blokker et al., 2019).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore HRD professionals' competencies leading to career success through an examination of their lived experiences of working in the service industry and to provide implications for HRD research and practice. Understanding these competencies can help HRD professionals achieve career success by supporting development, objectives, and goal achievement. The study findings can assist HRD professionals in developing and managing talent development programs that include onboarding, training, coaching, and performance programs in their organizations (Werner, 2021).

### **Conceptual Framework**

HRD professionals enhance individuals, groups, organizations, and processes by expanding their expertise (Swanson, 2022). HRD professionals are involved in the development of employees, organizations, and careers in a range of roles in workplace learning and

performance (Hamidi, 2018). Typically, HRD professionals are responsible for implementing organized actions, interventions, and initiatives focused on change, learning, and performance (Gilley & Maycunich, 2000). The past research on HRD professionals focused on learning and development, whereas recent research focuses on developing practices that lead to career success (Kiong & Yin-Fah, 2016). HRD research has shown how HRD professionals experience career success and develop and discuss competencies that lead to career success. What is not known are the competencies that lead to the career success of HRD professionals in the service industry. Several studies, such as The Association of Talent Development (ATD, 2013) research study discussed HRD professional career success, HRD professional competencies, and the competencies that lead to career success for HRD professionals. However, these studies have not (1) examined competencies that lead to career success for HRD professionals in the service industry, or (2) defined competencies as including KSAs, and the attributes of capabilities, attitudes, and values. In this study, I used the 2013 ATD competency model (see Figure 1).

Numerous models have accounted for what competencies in the human resource field bring about career success for HR professionals. For example, Ulrich (1996) and Ulrich et al. (2021) present professionals as needing to be competitive, generating business results, advancing human capability, mobilizing information, enabling collaboration, and simplifying complexity. However, these past models do not focus on the development aspect of human resources. The ATD published the competency model in 2013, which focuses on the development aspect of the work of HRD professionals. I used this model because it established a standard framework of competencies used in HRD and because of its focus on the development aspect of the work of HRD professionals. The model is made up of two parts: 10 “T&D Areas of Expertise” competencies and six *Foundational Competencies*. The six Foundational Competencies include:



business skills, interpersonal skills, global mindset, personal skills, industry knowledge, and technology literacy. I used the ATD competency model and six Foundational Competencies to formulate an interview protocol (see Appendix B). I used these competencies in this study to analyze the interview data, serving as initial codes and categories.

**Figure 1**

*Competencies for the Training & Development Profession Model*



**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to explore HRD professionals’ competencies leading to career success through an examination of their lived experiences of working in the service

industry and to provide implications for HRD research and practice. Research (Park, 2020) indicated that specific competencies lead to HRD professionals' career success. I sought to outline the competencies that contribute to the career success in the service industry of participating HRD professionals. The following research questions guided the inquiry:

- How do HRD professionals in the service industry define and experience career success?
- How do HRD professionals in the service industry define and experience competencies leading to career success?

### **Design of the Study**

Using a basic qualitative research design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I investigated HRD professionals' experiences with competencies and career success. A basic qualitative study design enabled the discovery, understanding, and connection of meanings to people's experiences to understand how they construct their lives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Using a basic qualitative study to explore the experiences of HRD professionals, I provided a rich and unique understanding of HRD professionals' competencies necessary for career success.

Using purposive sampling techniques, I selected 20 HRD professionals to participate in the study. I selected participants who were full-time HRD professionals, worked in the United States, and had at least 3 years of experience working in an HRD role so that they could share their own experiences. Using an interview protocol, the 20 HRD professionals participated in a 60- to 120-minute interview via Zoom. I transcribed and analyzed the interview data using a thematic analysis technique (Lester et al., 2020) to identify major themes from the perspectives of HRD professionals.

## **Significance of the Study**

I conducted this study to examine HRD professionals' lived experiences of competencies and career success, which had yet to be explored in the literature. As no scholarship had examined competencies that lead to career success for HRD professionals working in the service industry, I qualitatively explored HRD professionals' lived experiences of such competencies. The study findings will help HRD professionals understand the competencies that lead to career success so that they can help employees, groups, and organizations. Additionally, this study may serve as a coaching and mentoring tool to help HRD professionals succeed through a rich description of how HRD professionals can achieve career success. This study is significant because no qualitative studies have identified capabilities for HRD professionals' career success in the service industry. While several researchers discussed career success capabilities and many researchers explored the capabilities necessary for HRD professionals to obtain career success, the research lacked a focus on the service industry.

## **Positionality**

While I worked as an HRD professional for a technical writing and training facility, the economy experienced a boom (see Vita). After working for a different organization briefly, the .com bust occurred and layoffs eliminated the entire HRD department. It had become apparent how expendable HRD professionals were. I was then hired as a consultant and served reduction-in-force (RIF) notices to HRD professionals. My experience has led me to address the dangers that HRD professionals face when their organizations experience financial difficulties since termination is often the result. To learn how HRD professionals working in the service industry can demonstrate their value to their clients, I studied what competencies contribute to career success.

## Study Limitations

Regarding the study limitations, I considered the following: All data were collected via Zoom and therefore lacked the richness of in-person interviews. While data collection included interviews and the review of archival documents, in-person interviews would have offered additional data regarding body language and the participants' environment, my interviews and archival data collection were biased. Next, one limitation of this study was my limited interview skills based upon my existing training and experience. With more training and experience, I may have obtained richer data. Finally, given my professional experience, I am inherently biased regarding HRD topics. Every effort was made to report this data without bias.

## Definition of Terms

Table 1 illustrates 22 terms critical for this study. The definitions for the terms are given to enhance the reader's understanding of the term in relation to this study.

**Table 1**

### *Definition of Terms*

Term	Definition
HRD professionals	HRD professionals enhance the performance of individuals, groups, and organizations as well as processes by expanding expertise (Swanson, 2022).
Competencies	Knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, and values that lead to the high performance that is necessary for creating career success intended to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations (Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase & Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014).
Career success	The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others, such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).
Career	Accumulated work (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011) over time.
Psychological outcomes	The way one experiences and defines the quality, effectiveness, and meaning of their accumulated work (Seibert et al., 1999).
Capabilities	The extent of a person's ability to perform a task within a job role (Hase & Davis, 1999).

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs)	Work behaviors needed to successfully accomplish a job (SHRM, n.d.).
Attitudes	A socially acquired and steady feeling toward something or someone. that is socially acquired (Terry & Hogg, 2000).
Values	The judgments someone has toward something important (DeShon & Gillespie, 2005).
Self-perceived career success	The status of one's career success contains criteria set by oneself (Heslin, 2003).
Other-perceived career success	The status of one's career success as compared to others (Guan et al., 2017).
Intrinsic factors of career success	Markers of career success that individuals experience internally (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).
Extrinsic factors of career success	Markers of career success that individuals experience externally (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).
Subjective career success	A person's own evaluation of their career success (Ng & Feldman, 2014).
Objective career success	Another's evaluation of an individual's career success (Ng et al., 2005).
Business competencies	The ability to analyze needs and propose solutions, apply business skills, drive results, plan and implement assignments, think strategically, and apply innovation (Rothwell et al., 2013).
Interpersonal competencies	The ability to successfully communicate, build trust, leverage diversity, network, partner, and influence stakeholders (Rothwell et al., 2013).
Global mindset	The ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences, worldwide traditions, and norms (Rothwell et al., 2013).
Personal competencies	The ability to demonstrate adaptability and personal development (Rothwell et al., 2013).
Industry knowledge-related competencies	The ability to understand an organization's pressures, competitors, regulations, and their primary product or service (Rothwell et al., 2013).
Service industry	An industry group consisting of any industry that provides a service (BLS, n.d.), including arts, entertainment, leisure, accommodation, food service, wholesale, retail, and transportation-providing companies.
Technology competencies	Participating in a cooperative culture that promotes talent management, learning analytics, and mobile and social technology (Gauld, 2014).

### Summary of the Chapter

The purpose of this study was to explore HRD professionals' competencies leading to career success through an examination of their lived experiences of working in the service industry and to provide implications for HRD research and practice. In this chapter, I presented a

problem statement, purpose statement, a conceptual framework, research questions, the study design chosen, the significance of the study, positionality, study limitations, and definitions of key terms.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In this chapter, I review the literature on HRD professionals, their competencies and career success, HRD professionals' competencies leading to career success, and HRD professionals in the service industry, and present a conceptual framework that would be used in this study. In the following, I begin the review of the literature regarding HRD professionals.

### **HRD Professionals**

HRD professionals enhance the performance of individuals, groups, organizations, and processes by expanding their expertise (Swanson, 2022). HRD professionals work in workplace learning and performance roles, such as organizational development, career development, training, and in capacities that include developing employees, organizations, and careers (Hamidi, 2018). HRD professionals typically perform organized actions, interventions, and initiatives focused on change, learning, and performance (Gilley & Maycunich, 2000). Past research on HRD professionals focused on learning and development, whereas the new focus is on developing practices that lead to career success (Kiong & Yin-Fah, 2016). The focus of current research has shifted to supporting HRD professionals with knowledge that helps them succeed in their roles from the start rather than requiring that HRD professionals prove they can learn from their mistakes (Hubner & Baum, 2018).

### **Competencies**

Competencies have many definitions. Competencies are KSAs learned in a role and can include capabilities or the extent of someone's individual ability to perform a task within a job role (Hase & Davis, 1999). Competencies also include attitudes and values (Dumitrescu et al., 2014). Reio (2020) observed that competencies specific to HRD professionals are those that help an individual, group, or organization with its goals and objectives. An additional definition of

competencies states that competencies are qualities that lead to high performance, and which are necessary for career success (Smits, 2014). These authors (e.g., Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase & Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014) agree that competencies include an element of growth or improvement. However, most researchers have differing views on the audience whose competencies aim to benefit, whether that be a professional, organization, or group. Whereas Reio (2020) noted that competencies serve to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations, Hase and Davis (1999) focused exclusively on the benefit to individuals. Additionally, Dumitrescu et al. (2014) posited that competencies include attitudes and values.

For this study, I synthesized the definitions of competencies provided by Smits (2014), Reio (2020), Hase and Davis (1999), and Dumitrescu et al. (2014). *Competencies*, therefore, are defined as knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, and values that lead to high performance necessary for creating career success intended to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations (Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase & Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014).

Researchers are interested in discovering the most necessary competencies for current and future work (McCue, 2021). Developing competencies can improve the following: effectiveness (Akdere & Egan, 2020), engagement and retention (Sumathi, 2017), problem-solving (Desha et al., 2021), team spirit (Mejabi & Adah, 2021), employee growth and development (Dirani et al., 2020), and efficiency (Potnuru et al., 2021).

HRD professionals can support individuals, groups, and organizations to achieve their goals and objectives using specific competencies. Past research has primarily centered on the competencies that lead to success for individuals and organizations (Wang et al., 2017). Future research should aim to discover what career-specific competencies for success an HRD professional needs (Park, 2020).



## **Career Success**

A simple definition of a career is accumulated work over time (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011). Career success is the amassed work of HRD professionals that includes psychological outcomes and the perceptions of others, such as organizations and peer groups. To better understand career success, it is critical to understand the nuances that define internal and external career success.

First, researchers examine internal career success, commonly referred to as psychological outcomes, intrinsic factors, self-referential career success, or subjective career success.

*Psychological outcomes* are how individuals experience and define the quality, effectiveness, and meaning of their accumulated work (Seibert et al., 1999). A quality that leads to psychological career success is the ability to create and monitor networks to obtain resources (Woehler et al., 2021). Professionals who seek to understand how to succeed in their careers enhance their psychological career success (Najam et al., 2020). In other words, intrinsic factors are those markers of career success that individuals experience internally, such as employee and personal perceptions (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).

Increased intrinsic career success often comes to those who seek to understand how to succeed (Otto et al., 2017). The notion of self-referential or self-perceived career success has historically served as the status of one's career success based on criteria set by oneself (Heslin, 2003). It is essential to understand that self-perceptions of one's competencies can affect career success (Hakhmigari et al., 2019) and that self- and other-referent perceptions of career success may not align (Spurk et al., 2019). The more self-referent one is in their career, the greater the level of self-perceived career success (Lo Presti et al., 2018). A person's evaluation of career

success is a definition of subjective career success (Ng & Feldman, 2014). Employees' subjective views of their jobs are also intrinsic factors (Aydogmus, 2019).

Second, researchers examine external career success other-perceived career success, extrinsic factors, and other-referent or objective career success. All versions of external career success qualify as career success based on others' perceptions, such as peers' (Spurk et al., 2019). Extrinsic or objective factors as definers of career success include desired awards, rewards, promotions, and other compensation, as well as continuous employment (London & Stumpf, 1983). Heslin (2003) suggested that these achievements can be seen, observed, or measured, including compensation and rewards, employee role commitment, work autonomy and control, and consequences for failure to complete goals or reach quotas. Many organizations still use traditional means—such as promotions—to define who succeeds in their careers (Baruch & Sullivan, 2022). Being externally recruited or appointed to top management roles are other ways to indicate career success (Frederiksen & Kato, 2018).

Finally, some researchers maintain that a combination of internal and external factors is necessary for career success. In their seminal works, Gunz and Heslin (2005) and Judge et al. (1995) maintained that using objective and subjective factors to define career success assists with how career success can be organizationally defined and self-defined by employees. Extrinsic indicators of career success help a person understand the employee's role in the organization and career, but intrinsic factors are equally notable (Iselin et al., 2011).

Career success includes a professional's successful completion of roles within an organization *and* their feelings about their work (Colakoglu, 2011). Past research centered on attaining career success within an organization (Park et al., 2017). Future research should continue to focus on psychological career success (Najam et al., 2020).

## **HRD Professionals' Competencies Leading to Career Success**

Only a few studies have directly explored the competencies of HRD professionals leading to career success in the service industry. However, much research has considered these themes in pairs. Some of these studies form the basis for my study. Concerning competencies of HRD professionals, one study specific to my research is Gray (1999), in which five areas of HRD competence were compiled based on employment advertisements: technical, interpersonal, intellectual, personal, and business. These five areas of competence consisted of subject-matter expertise, needs analysis, presentation, interpersonal behavior, communication, collaboration, relationship-building, coaching, and supervising, in addition to personal competencies, including motivation and drive, enthusiasm, autonomy, and flexibility (Gray, 1999). Gray rounded out his list with business skills—including project management, industry understanding, and customer focus—and intellectual skills, such as data reduction, intellectual versatility, and visioning. Two seminal international studies also examined competencies necessary for HRD professionals. In Thailand, Yoo (1999) replicated the guidelines of Rothwell (1999) to inform the ATD studies. Similarly, Chen et al. (2005) applied the same guidelines used to inform ATD studies to determine the competencies that HRD professionals in Taiwan considered the most important. Communication, interpersonal skills, and intervention implementation scored the highest of all competencies. Yoo's study was similar to Chen et al.'s study and yielded a similar result. Both studies confirmed that strong HRD competencies include technological, leadership, and evaluation skills (Chen et al., 2005; Yoo, 1999).

In an ethics-based article, Kuchinke (2017) described the need for HRD experts to be knowledgeable practitioners, setting the stage for my study. HRD professionals must also be competent in synthesizing the practices of HRD with the needs of the business thus forming

strategic partnerships (Hirudayaraj & Baker, 2018). As society’s reliance on technology grows, HRD professionals should develop strong technology competencies to facilitate more transformational rather than transactional work (Lloyd-Jones, 2021).

Regarding competencies and career success, although some predict career success (Ahmad et al., 2019), career success is only sometimes the result of developing competencies (Akkermans & Tims, 2017). Dating back several decades, much research has centered on competencies related to career success. For this study, Table 2 provides an overview of recent significant research on competencies that lead to career success.

**Table 2**

*Research on Competencies Leading to Career Success*

Author (Pub. Year) (in chronological order)	Research Type	Competencies Leading to Success
Akkermans & Tims (2017)	Quantitative	Communication that helps expand networks
Hirudayaraj & Baker (2018)	Quantitative	Education technology-based knowledge and skills, including instructional design, learning management systems, learning technologies, and training delivery
Beigi et al. (2018)	Qualitative	Embracing opportunities, profession identification, and passion and drive
Gubbins et al. (2018)	Literature Review	Evidence-based feedback
Park (2020)	Qualitative	Credibility, personal networking, professional networking
Ulrich et al. (2021)	Quantitative	Accelerating business results, advancing human capability, fostering collaboration, mobilizing information, and simplifying complexity.
Presti et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Strong career self-awareness, comprehensive external network of personal and professional relationships, and development of transferrable skills and knowledge

Concerning the career success of HRD professionals, an early study by Kirk (1991) postulated that HRD professionals self-identify as being remarkably successful in their careers

and believe their college degrees contribute a great deal to their success. Kirk (1991) also posited that HRD career success includes being more visible to upper management while spending more time on nonmanagerial tasks. Finally, Kirk (1991) noted that HRD professionals value variety and are less interested in advancement opportunities. Gilley and Maycunich Gilley's (2003) historical view suggests that HRD professionals' career success has evolved to include focusing on change management, training, and development; including stakeholders in making strategic decisions; establishing credibility and maintaining role effectiveness through relationship-building; working with all parts of the organization; and building human capital. Lastly, the seminal study of Gubbins and Garavan (2005) placed high value on networking in HRD professional career success. These researchers observed that HRD professionals who exchange knowledge with other HRD individuals outside their work organizations in professional associations build a more extensive support network, further leading to success. Creating and monitoring networks as needed, using these networks to obtain resources, and understanding how the business works is essential to success for HRD professionals (Gubbins & Garavan, 2005). Ulrich et al. (2021) conceptualize competencies in the HR field that lead to career success as those that *accelerate business, advance human capability, foster collaboration, mobilize information, and simplify complexity* (p. 2).

### **HRD Professionals in the Service Industry**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (n.d.) broadly defined the service-providing industry group as consisting of any industry that provides a service, including arts, entertainment, leisure, accommodation, food service, wholesale, retail, and transportation companies (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). The trade, transportation, and utilities subgroup of the service industry includes wholesale and retail stores. This study concerns these two subgroups of the service

industry (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). Although the service industry earned more than \$4.5 trillion in revenue during 2020 and included two of the largest companies in the United States, 2020 earnings were lower than 2019 earnings due to the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic (Amadeo, 2021). Specifically, restaurant and food service revenue fell more than 26% in 2020; thousands of eating establishments closed temporarily or permanently, and 2.5 million jobs were lost (National Restaurant Association Cision PR Newswire, 2021). Small and large restaurant, retail, and hospitality organizations became focused on simply staying in business, leaving many HRD departments bare and HRD professionals unemployed (Long et al., 2020). Since the end of 2021, the service industry has experienced growth, rebounding beyond pre-pandemic levels that were stifled because of the pandemic variants, supply chain issues, exceptionally low employment, and increasing prices (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023).

The service industry in the United States was a consistent, thriving, and highly competitive arena before the various shutdowns caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic (Aigbedo, 2021). HRD professionals in the service industry were willing to work in demanding environments and challenging conditions during the pandemic, where new competencies were required to achieve career success. However, HRD professionals in this industry have experienced job loss since the pandemic started (Boone et al., 2020). The global pandemic's consequences resulted in layoffs for HRD professionals within the service industry and fostered millions of unemployment claims for many employees (Bartik et al., 2020). HRD professionals are a strategic source of competitive advantage for the service industry (Reio, 2020). Practical training efforts can aid the development of well-defined competencies. One study of the banking sector in Ghana showed the importance of HRD training practices in developing employee

effectiveness through the mediating role of employee competencies (Human Resource Management International Digest, 2020). Aligning HRD planning with corporate strategic development leads to career success (Akoi & Yesiltas, 2020).

There is concern over whether the service industry will fully rebound and remain competitive without retaining HRD professionals and developing their competencies (Ranasinghe et al., 2021). To remain agile and competitive during unstable times and to succeed in their careers, HRD professionals require reskilling and upskilling (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 2021). As a result of the pandemic and resulting economic downturn, HRD professionals were reskilled and upskilled to pivot quickly and solve problems creatively (Banerjee & Bhattacharyya, 2020). In an industry accustomed to face-to-face learning, service industry HRD professionals were challenged in 2020 to use competencies to incorporate virtual learning initiatives with web-based technologies to remain successful in their careers (Tseng & Chen, 2020).

Although vital areas of competency development for HRD professionals exist, the mystery remains regarding the vast number of other competencies needed to ensure career success beyond the pandemic and as the industry prepares for economic recovery. Segments of the service industry were some of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the United States prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Childs et al., 2021). As the country emerges from the pandemic, the service sector should flourish, reclaim its position as a significant provider of jobs, and contribute significantly to the economy (Xiang et al., 2021).

Overall, HRD professionals in the service industry are subject to significant changes and adjustments and must discover and develop specific competencies to succeed in their careers (Arora & Suri, 2020). As the service industry is agile and there has been an increased focus on

upskilling and reskilling, HRD professionals should recognize the most necessary competencies for career success (Turnbull, 2021). Therefore, HRD professionals must evaluate their competencies that can lead to career success for those supporting employees and organizations in the service industry (Otoo & Mishra, 2018).

### **Conceptual Framework**

HRD professionals enhance individuals, groups, organizations, and processes by expanding their expertise (Swanson, 2022). HRD professionals are involved in the development of employees, organizations, and careers in a range of roles in workplace learning and performance (Hamidi, 2018). Park (2020) and CheRusuli et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of competencies in HRD. ATD (2020), Srikanth (2019), and Rothwell et al. (2013) discussed competencies for career success by implementing organized actions, interventions, and initiatives focused on change, learning, and performance (Gilley & Maycunich, 2000). Past research on HRD professionals focused on learning and development, whereas the new focus is recent research focused on developing practices that lead to career success (Kiong & Yin-Fah, 2016). Thus, the emphasis of the research has shifted from a singular focus only on knowledge to the support of HRD professionals' role success supporting HRD professionals in succeeding in their roles from the very beginning (Hubner & Baum, 2018). Still, HRD professionals learn from their mistakes (Hubner & Baum, 2018). Indeed, HRD professionals build upon their knowledge and competencies to create career success.

HRD professionals can use specific competencies in their organizational roles. Researchers previously investigated the competencies that contribute to organizational and individual success (Wang et al., 2017). To ensure that HRD professionals are successful, future research should examine career-specific competencies (Park, 2020). In addition to the role of



competencies in career success, researchers identified career success as the satisfaction of completing a function within an organization (Colakoglu, 2011). Contrary to self-defined career success based on self-measure and feelings, a number of previous studies focused on career success as peer-defined (Park et al., 2017). As much research has centered on peer-defined career success, researchers recommend the focus of future research should be on psychological career success (Najam et al., 2020).

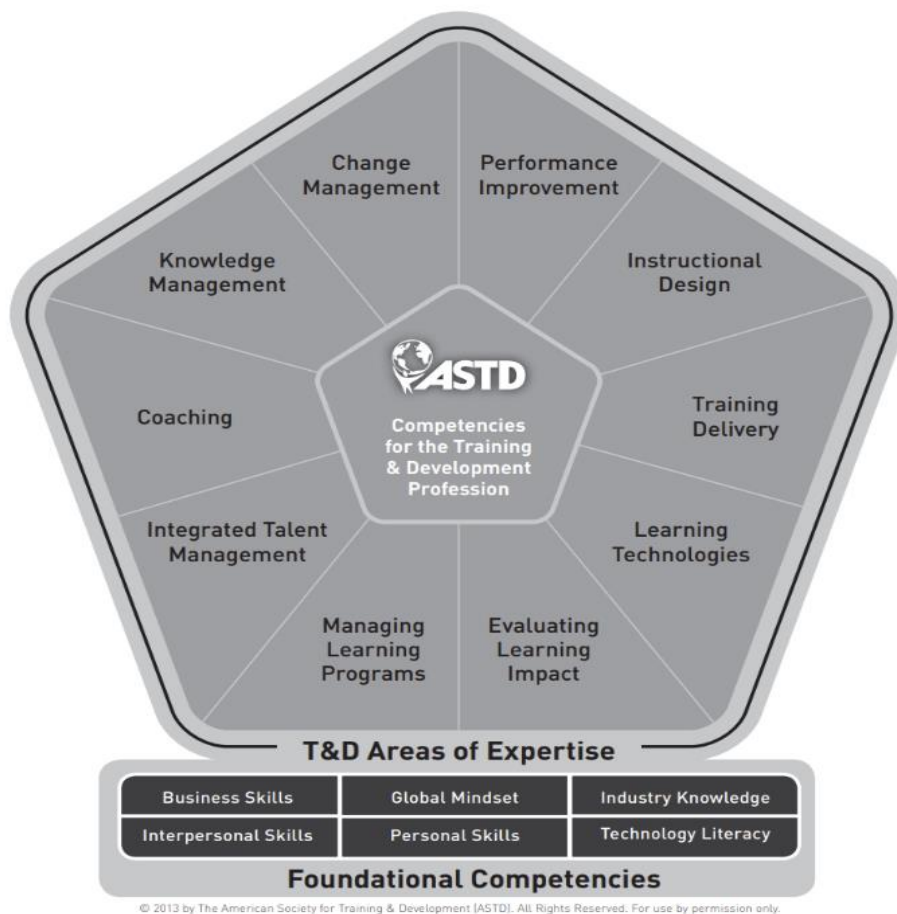
Seminal research by David Ulrich (1996) in his book *Human Resource Champions* frames human resource professionals' career success being dependent upon their ability to face challenges and be competitive. Further research by Ulrich et al., (2021) in the eight iteration of the *Human Resource Competency Study* (HRCS) survey presents career success in HR industry as revolving around competencies that (1) accelerate business, (2) advance human capability, (3) foster collaboration, (4) mobilizes information, and (5) simplify complexity. While the work of Ulrich et al. (2021) is highly respected within the HRD field, the HRCS is a broad model that works well within human resources but lacks focus on development as is found in other models like the ATD (2013) model.

The HRD profession in the service industry is subject to significant changes and adjustments, and requires specific competencies to succeed (Arora & Suri, 2020). HRD professionals need to identify the most necessary competencies for career success in the service industry due to the industry's agility and increased emphasis on upskilling and reskilling (Turnbull, 2021). For this reason, HRD professionals should evaluate their competencies, which can lead to career success for individuals who support those employees and organizations in the service industry (Otoo & Mishra, 2018).

In 2013, ATD (2013), published its third competency study training and development framework, a follow-up to their 1987 and 2004 frameworks, formally called the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD). This 2013 framework was created in response to the 2008 recession, a rapid advance in technology, demographic shifts, and globalization (ATD, p. xi). Prior, the ASTD (2004) competency study framework included three foundational competencies: interpersonal, business/management, and personal skills. The ASTD (2013) framework expanded these foundational competencies to six areas (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*ATD Competency Model*



First, business skills include the ability to analyze needs and propose solutions, apply business skills, drive results, plan and implement assignments, think strategically, and apply innovation. Second, *interpersonal skills* include the ability to successfully communicate, build trust, leverage diversity, network, partner, and influence stakeholders. Third, a *global mindset* is the ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences, worldwide traditions, and norms. Fourth, *personal skills* include the ability to demonstrate adaptability and personal development. Fifth, *industry knowledge* includes understanding your organization's pressures, competitors, regulations, and the primary product or service of one's organization. Last, *technical literacy* includes participating in a cooperative culture that promotes talent management, learning analytics, and mobile and social technology.

Even though there have been further revisions to the ATD framework in 2019, these foundational competencies remain the same. In this study, I examined the competencies that lead to career success in the service industry through the lens of the *foundational competencies* identified in the ATD (2013) competency study training and development framework. I used this conceptual framework to develop the interview protocol and to analyze the interview data in this study.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on HRD professionals, competencies, career success, and the service industry. HRD professionals support individuals, groups, and organizations in various roles and capacities. Developing competencies can create improvements in many ways. Researchers have found competencies that lead to career success for HRD professionals, most notably networking, communication, and social skills. Career success consists of psychological outcomes and can include others' perceptions of that success. ATD

(2013, 2020) released two major quantitative survey-based studies focused on career success for HRD professionals. The first of these studies addressed HRD professionals, competencies, and career success (ATD, 2013). The second focused on HRD professionals, capabilities, and career success (ATD, 2020). Therefore, only a few studies have explored HRD professionals and career success alongside capabilities or competencies. In this study, I examine the HRD competencies leading to career success in the service industry.

### **Chapter 3: Method**

In this chapter I provide detailed information on the research process I followed, including the selection of a study design, the pilot study, participants, data collection, and the data analysis. I conclude this chapter with statements on how I ensured validity and reliability in the research process, followed by a chapter summary.

The purpose of this study was to explore HRD professionals' competencies leading to career success through an examination of their lived experiences of working in the service industry and to provide implications for HRD research and practice. The following research questions guided the study:

- How do HRD professionals in the service industry define and experience career success?
- How do HRD professionals in the service industry define and experience competencies leading to career success?

#### **Study Design**

I used a basic qualitative study design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to examine the lived experiences of HRD professionals' competencies in order to understand how people build their lives by discovering, understanding, and connecting meaning to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). An analysis of competency descriptions using a qualitative approach revealed that descriptions varied widely among professionals.

In this basic qualitative study, I collected interview data from HRD professionals using a semi-structured interview format with open-ended questions to solicit participants' knowledge without restrictions (Ahlin, 2019). The primary areas of interest I explored with participants

were: (a) how do HRD professionals define career success and (b) how do HRD professionals define and experience competencies leading to career success?

### **Pilot Study**

I conducted a pilot study after obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A). The pilot study used the main study interview guide to collect data from three participants. These participants in the pilot study were HRD professionals known by the researcher to fit the description of desired participants. I asked the pilot study participants 13 questions. The pilot study allowed me to confirm and perfect the interview questions prior to conducting the main study (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Specifically, information obtained from this pilot study helped me ascertain whether the questions and interview structure would adequately solicit information to answer the research questions during the main study. Additionally, information from the pilot study informed the researcher of any adjustments needed prior to data collection. I made no changes to the study as a result of the pilot study. I used data obtained from the pilot study integrated with the data collected in the main study. Remarks regarding the validity and reliability of the pilot study, being the exact same design as the main study, are found in the validity and reliability section of this chapter.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were HRD professionals in the service sector including restaurant, retail, and hospitality businesses. The service industry has faced significant economic downturn during and emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. HRD professionals in the sector experienced unemployment due to economic challenges rising from this global crisis. My study of the competencies of HRD professionals in the service sector will aid organizations in the sector and their employees to remain competitive and achieve their goals.

I used purposive sampling to recruit participants. I included people willing to provide a rich, thick description of their experiences. I recruited 20 participants for this study who (a) were full-time HRD professionals, (b) working in the United States, and (c) had at least 3 years of experience working as an HRD professional in an area of the service industry, namely like arts, entertainment, leisure, accommodation, food service, wholesale, retail, and transportation-providing companies (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). I agreed with my chair on three years as a benchmark to ensure a certain level of engagement and participation in HRD work. To recruit participants, I sent an initial interest message to individuals who met the selection criteria: (a) those with whom I had personal relationships and who were past colleagues, and (b) acquaintances. My first points of contact were HRD professionals who met the above selection criteria and who were part of my existing professional network.

I interviewed 20 participants holding HRD-related roles at private organizations or businesses. Using the interview protocol, HRD professionals participated in 60- to 120-minute interviews by telephone or web conferencing tool (e.g., Zoom). Table 3 describes the participants' demographics.

**Table 3**

*Interview Participants*

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Years of work experience	Service industry type	Role (employee or consultant)
1	Alpha	F	41	Hospitality, retail	Consultant
2	Beta	M	20	Retail	Consultant
3	Gamma	F	35	Restaurant	Employee
4	Delta	F	16	Hospitality	Employee
5	Epsilon	M	24	Retail	Consultant
6	Zeta	F	19	Restaurant	Employee
7	Eta	F	15	Hospitality	Employee
8	Theta	F	18	Retail	Employee
9	Iota	M	16	Retail	Employee
10	Kappa	M	16	Retail, restaurant	Employee

11	Lambda	F	5	Restaurant	Employee
12	Mu	F	12	Retail	Consultant
13	Nu	M	11	Restaurant	Consultant
14	Xi	F	4	Hospitality, retail	Employee
15	Omicron	F	5	Hospitality	Employee
16	Pi	F	7	Retail	Employee
17	Rho	F	23	Retail	Consultant
18	Sigma	F	10	Retail	Employee
19	Tau	F	17	Retail	Employee
20	Upsilon	F	5	Retail	Employee

Of the 20 participants, 15 were female, and five were male. More than 80% of respondents reported working for at least five years. Fifteen participants had more than 10 years of experience; 13 worked in the retail industry and five in the hospitality industry. Fourteen participants worked in companies, while six ran private consultancies.

### **Data Collection**

I collected two types of data to attempt to ensure the triangulation of the study. First, I used the interview method using an interview protocol that was developed based on the review of the literature. Second, I conducted a pilot study with three participants before conducting 20 semi-structured interviews. Third, I reviewed archival data related to the participants' LinkedIn profiles. Accordingly, the two types of data collected in the study were interview and archival data.

### **Interviews**

Before conducting interviews, I sent participants interview questions so they could prepare (see Appendix B for Interview Protocol). Interview questions in this study align with the concepts developed in the ATD 2013 study (see Appendix C). I asked for each participant's permission to record their interview. Each HRD professional participated in a semi-structured interview for approximately 60 to 120 minutes using the interview protocol via Zoom. Interviews



were conducted via Zoom as to allow interview participants to participate from throughout the country. I developed the interview protocol based on the literature review and the research questions. I further developed the purpose of this study through consultation with my dissertation chair. Further, I developed the interview protocol was developed based upon the six ATD (2013) Foundational Competencies found in ATD's competency study training and development model. I selected a semi-structured interview protocol to allow for flexibility in the dialogue with the participants while maintaining a structure that answered the research questions. I prepared a consent form to present to participants to sign before beginning the interview, and I audio-recorded each interview. During the interview, I took notes regarding the participant's physical and behavioral characteristics, the participant's affect, my thoughts and reactions as the participant answered questions, and the physical characteristics of their environment. I also noted the physical and behavioral characteristics of the interviewee. I continue interviews until data saturation was reached, where no new information surfaced. Once all interviews were completed, I listened to the audio recordings of all interviews and made notes of tone, pitch, and volume, listening intently without video to participant responses. I then viewed and listened to all 20 interviews to obtain any information I missed as a result of engaging in the interview process (i.e., body language).

### **Archival Data**

Prior to each interview, I obtained the participant's information from LinkedIn regarding their career history. Further, I obtained screenshots of their activity, biography, experience, education, licenses, certifications, skills, and recommendations. For each interviewee, I determined their current and former places of employment. For each represented company, I used publicly available websites to verify if each represented company was part of the service

industry. Then, I obtained any publicly available profile or biography of the participant from these company websites. These screenshots of their LinkedIn activity served as a supplement to add depth and support to the interviews, as presented in Chapter 4.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis and interpretation began with a multiphase process after the first interview using a thematic analysis (Lester et al., 2020). I interviewed participants via Zoom and uploaded the audio and visual files to Temi. I checked the interview transcripts for errors or inaccurate information. The speech recognition software Temi (Lester et al., 2020) allowed for straightforward text transcription for hand-review and editing. I imported transcripts into ATLAS.ti for coding. I chose ATLAS.ti since its unique features include a flexible workflow, margin codes, and quotation coding that could be moved freely amongst multiple document views (Friese, 2019). As described in the five-phase process by Lester et al. (2020), I conducted thematic analysis by moving the analysis from codes to categories to themes that respond to the research questions (Lester et al., 2020). Last, I ensured the transparency of the analytic process by mapping the process of moving from codes to categories and then to themes. I included code frequencies below to show the density of the code application.

Immediately following, I hand-reviewed transcription and corrected for errors. I began data analysis and interpretation after the first interview using thematic analysis (Lester et al., 2020). I adopted the multiphase process outlined by Lester et al. (2020) for thematic analysis. The first phase consisted of preparing for thematic analysis. The first phase consisted of preparing for thematic analysis. To ensure all documentation was kept organized during this phase, I created storage for all files, including naming conventions and PDFs of notes saved as Word documents. I scanned all additional documents and set up an import into ATLAS.ti. Lester

et al. (2020) recommended structured naming protocols for documents and a catalog that included data source, location, creator, and date. The second phase consisted of transcribing data for analysis. Lester et al. (2020) recommended carefully considering transcription technology as an option during this phase because of the benefits over hand transcription for the researcher. Also, I uploaded the audio files and used Temi to convert the audio files to text.

The third phase consisted of familiarizing myself with the data. During this phase, I first took note of initial reactions to the transcription, notes, and other collected documents. During this phase, Lester et al. (2020) recommended becoming familiar with the limitations or gaps in the data because this might lead to future research. The fourth phase consisted of memoing the data. During this phase, I jotted down initial reflections and interpretations of the data. Lester et al. recommended attaching these memos in comments to original data sources due to their analytic importance. The fifth phase consisted of coding data to occur in multiple phases.

During this phase, I assigned codes to the entire data set, added additional codes to the first set more related to the phenomenon examined, and made connections from theory to data. Lester et al. (2020) suggested using software, such as ATLAS.ti to code the data, which can also be used to facilitate the steps outlined for Phase 7. The sixth phase consisted of moving from codes to categories and from categories to themes. I engaged in thematic analysis during this phase after developing categories and applying codes. The seventh phase consisted of making the analytic process transparent. During this phase, I mapped the process of moving from codes to categories to themes to increase the transparency of this process. Lester et al. (2020) recommended creating an audit trail showing the connection between the codes, categories, and themes. During this phase, I reported coding frequencies to show the density of the code application. I assigned codes to the entire data set, then added additional codes to this first set

more related to the phenomenon I studied. Then I made connections between the data and theory. Through the analysis, 53 initial codes emerged; I merged five codes, resulting in 49 final codes. From these 49 codes, I observed 16 categories. These categories and their codes denoted eight themes. I merged two themes through discussion with the chair, resulting in six final themes.

The six themes identified in this study are, (a) defining and experiencing career success in the service industry through affect; (b) defining and experiencing career success in the service industry as contribution to others; (c) defining competency as KSAs and other attributes; (d) using the competency of relationship-building through trust and effective communication to define and experience career success; (e) implementing the competency of agility to define and experience career success; and (f) creating a unique competency mix to define and experience career success. Table 4 illustrates the organization of codes, categories, and themes. I further developed these initial themes into final themes, as presented in Chapter 4.

**Table 4**

*Codes, Categories, and Themes*

Codes	Categories	Themes
Abilities, attitudes, capability, career development, career success, competencies, contribution to HRD, early influences, external career success, feelings regarding experiences, global mindset, goals, internal career success, knowledge, learning from experiences, personal competencies, technology, thoughts and ideas, values	emotional intensity emotional distance lack of affect	Defining and experiencing career success through affect
Capability, career development, change in participant career, competency, contribution to HRD, direct reports, early influences, feelings about experiences, generational cohort, helping others, internal career success, interpersonal competencies, knowledge, personal competencies, service industry, skills, thoughts and ideas, traditional HRD vs. nontraditional, values	story contribution impact	Defining career success as the experience of contribution to others
Abilities, attitudes, business competencies, capability, communication, competency, global mindset, helping others, industry-related competencies, interpersonal competencies, knowledge, KSAs, networking, personal	KSAs beyond KSAs	Defining competency as KSAs

competencies, personal connection, relationship-building, service industry, skills, technology competencies, values		
Abilities, being a driver, capability, career development, competency, direct reports, early influences, external career success, generational cohort, helping others, HRD professional, internal career success, interpersonal competencies, networking, personal competency, personal connection, relationship-building, service industry, skills	competency trust violation effective communication	Using the competency of relationship-building through trust and effective communication to attain career success
Abilities, business competencies, capability, change in participant career, communication, competency, current HRD, direct reports, global mindset, goals, HRD part or whole, HRD professional, HRD traditional vs. nontraditional, knowledge, KSAs, learning from experience, learning management system, learning the business, organizational level, service industry, skills, technology competencies, thoughts and ideas, trending competencies in HRD, years in career	career shift benefits competency mix	Implementing the competency of agility to define career success
Abilities, being a driver, business competencies, capability, career development, career success, change in participant career, competency, current HRD, direct reports, external career success, global mindset, goals, helping others, HRD part or whole, HRD professionals, industry-related competencies, internal career success, interpersonal competencies, knowledge, KSAs, learning from experience, learning the business, networking, organizational level, personal competencies, service industry, skills, technology competencies, thoughts and ideas, traditional vs. nontraditional HRD, values	unique fingerprint career success	Creating a unique competency mix to define career success
Abilities, business competencies, capability, change in participant career, communication, competency, current HRD, direct reports, global mindset, goals, HRD part or whole, HRD professional, HRD traditional vs. nontraditional, knowledge, KSAs, learning from experience, learning management system, learning the business, organizational level, service industry, skills, technology competencies, thoughts and ideas, trending competencies in HRD, years in a career	career shift benefits competency mix	Implementing the competency of agility to define and experience career success
Abilities, being a driver, business competencies, capability, career development, career success, change in participant career, competency, current HRD, direct reports, external career success, global mindset, goals, helping others, HRD part or whole, HRD professionals,	unique fingerprint career success	Creating a unique competency mix to define and

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industry-related competencies, internal career success,  
interpersonal competencies, knowledge, KSAs, learning  
from experience, learning the business, networking,  
organizational level, personal competencies, service  
industry, skills, technology competencies, thoughts and  
ideas, traditional vs. nontraditional HRD, values

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experience  
career success

## **Validity and Reliability**

Before data collection, I ensured validity by reflecting on the interviewees' question responses. I developed the interview protocol first through careful consideration of the constructs emphasized by the literature. The dissertation chair and two dissertation committee members, who are subject matter experts, reviewed this initial interview protocol during the proposal stage of this study. Further, four subject matter experts during the pilot study reviewed the interview protocol. The subject matter experts included a HRD consultant, two career HRD professionals who teach at academic institutions, and a professional coach who works with people in the HRD field. I analyzed the data through a triangulation of interviews and archival data. I ensured reliability through the following steps: I considered the interview participants' feedback on transcripts to ensure the consistency of the results; I presented the themes of my study to three subject matter experts for their review and comment; I member-checked the findings by emailing the final list of themes to participants for their feedback; and I presented the themes of my study to my research committee for feedback during the final dissertation defense.

To ensure the reliability of the coded and themed data, I maintained a secure record. I included rich, thick descriptions immediately following the interviews to ensure that the results could transfer to other research contexts (Adu, 2019; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Also, I further guaranteed the reliability of the results by keeping notes to clarify bias for future reflection (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As an HRD professional who has worked in this role for 25 years, I acknowledge that I reflected upon my experiences during interviews and while analyzing data. These notes include my reflections on my subjective experiences and how those experiences may color my data analysis.

## **Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I presented the study design, the participants, the data collection and analysis procedures, and a discussion of validity and reliability. I conducted a basic qualitative study to determine which competencies HRD professionals have used to achieve career success. I asked participants to share their experiences in the role of HRD professionals, including which competencies led to career success. The research questions for this study included a focus on uncovering the meaning behind experiences that HRD professionals have had with career success and what competencies led them to this success. I used a purposive sample of 20 participants to complete semi-structured interviews using an interview protocol. I transcribed and analyzed all interview data for themes, and I attempted to ensure trustworthiness in terms of validity and reliability.



## Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, based on an analysis of 20 semi-structured interviews, I report on the study findings that answer the two research questions including six themes. The first research question focused on professionals’ definitions and experiences of career success, and two themes answered the question: (1) defining and experiencing career success through affect, and (2) defining and experiencing career success as contribution to others. The second research question examined definitions and experiences of competencies leading to career success, and four themes answered the question: (1) defining and experiencing competency as KSAs and other attributes (e.g., capabilities, attitudes, values), (2) using the competency of relationship-building through trust and effective communication to define and experience career success, (3) implementing the competency of agility to define and experience career success, and (4) creating a unique competency mix to define and experience career success. Table 5 summarizes all six themes, along with descriptions and verbatim statements. For each research question, themes are presented by order of importance as told by the participants.

**Table 5**

*Six Major Themes*

Theme	Description	Sample Verbatim Statement
<b>RQ1. How do HRD professionals define and experience career success?</b>		
Defining and experiencing career success through affect	HRD professionals shared experiences regarding career success in terms of emotions.	I guess the whole thing is he, he, he realized that we're in [this] together and he appreciated the feedback. Even though I think we all secretly wanted to shoot him or hang him.
		It's like the way we describe it is like, it feels like you're dying a very slow death to have someone constantly mistrust you. Constantly try to catch you doing something wrong.

Defining career success as the experience of contributing to others	HRD professionals describe their career success in terms of contributions to others.	To be successful in a career means I have learned, grown, and served my internal and external customers. I have somehow met their expectations, their goals, and in doing so I've met mine.
		The internal career success is the, what's the word I want to use? I wanna say 'joy,' but the satisfaction or the pleasure derived from helping people succeed in their careers.

RQ2. How do HRD professionals define and experience competencies leading to career success?

Defining competency as knowledge, skills, and abilities	HRD professionals defined competencies leading to career success as consisting of KSAs and other attributes.	But that's why my team was not executing. Not 'cause they didn't want to, but they were so scared to ask me what I said, you know, which is another side of the communication, you know . . . I wasn't approachable.
		If I'm a good trainer or . . . a good consultant, it's [competencies] what makes you [good at] those things . . . you went through all those different areas [competencies], and that's a lot. If I'm an accountant, I don't necessarily have to be good with people.
Using the competency of relationship-building through trust and effective communication to attain career success	HRD professionals chiefly named the competency of relationship-building as leading to career success when combined with communication and networking.	Now, [when people ask me for advice], does that happen with every consultant that I know of in OD and in HRD? No, it really . . . the openness of the relationship that you develop with the people that you interact with.
		Straightforward, trusting conversations . . . and let's come up with a solution here because a lot of times they're not getting any feedback from anyone. So, building . . . a trusting relationship, by being honest . . . creating credibility . . . by delivering the things you say that you're going to deliver.
Implementing the competency of agility to define career success	HRD professionals describe the competency for being "agile" as being one of the most dramatic contributions to a professional's career success.	I started out doing software training and quickly adapted into . . . project management, leadership development. As I grew in leadership development, I [said] this OD stuff is kind of fun. I just kept learning and growing and adding to my skillset.
		I think personal competencies that have contributed to my success are . . . having the opportunity to personally experience the opportunity to adapt . . . myself . . . I had to find a way to adapt my personal skills and styles

<p>Creating a unique competency mix to define career success</p>	<p>HRD professionals state that they had to discover which mix of competencies led to career success.</p>	<p>Finding problems and understanding them and then trying to solve them. I think that always kept me in demand as an employee. How you ask those questions, how you poke it. People's pain points matter. You can do it in a way that is helpful [and] ... aren't helpful ... having the interpersonal skills to handle that with some ... respect has also been important. I think for the longest time I needed to be seen as the expert; now I will tell you that I'm not. I'm merely somebody who's got some experiences and if they're beneficial, maybe they'll help.</p> <hr/> <p>I would be assigned clients or . . . take on clients and continue to learn more about them . . . as I continue to work with more of them that experience kind of begun other experiences . . . you worked with one; now let's have you work with more.</p>
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### **Research Question 1: Define and Experience Career Success**

As for Research Question 1, HRD professionals described how they defined and experienced career success. Participants described and defined career success through affect. *Affect* is defined as the type and range of feelings professionals discuss and display regarding their career success. Further, participants defined and experienced career success as a contribution to others. Contribution, as presented by the participants, is defined as helping others. Helping others played a significant role in how participants defined career success. Additionally, these definitions included internal, external, or a unique combination of internal and external career success.

#### **Defining and Experiencing Career Success through Affect**

During this study, participants discussed their emotions associated with career success in the service industry. Career success was described with emotional intensity and distance and affect. Participants expressed passion for their career success during their interviews and via their

LinkedIn profile posts. The types and range of emotions and intensity were equally strong regarding competencies.

Continuing with the concept of emotional intensity, a participant, while using expletives, passionately insisted that various reasons show why applying a global competency often has the opposite effect. A different participant described a common situation faced by HRD professionals when they meet with leaders who are hesitant to discuss the succession planning of their direct reports' performance due to feeling dread, fear, or vulnerability. As a result, a participant felt embarrassment and fear yet took pride in leaders who better conveyed sensitive but necessary information. Another participant, however, expressed sadness and disbelief about their impact on the organization. As other employees consistently expressed opinions of the participant's contribution that differed from theirs, the participant's opinion of themselves grew.

No HRD professional described career success without affect. Participants described their experiences in an emotional tone or with words that described the emotions, even when an event might be interpreted as not needing to be connected to an emotion. They did not convey their experiences without communicating emotion subjectively or objectively. Participants emotionally conveyed: "I guess the whole thing is he, he, he realized that we're in [this] together and he appreciated the feedback. Even though I think we all secretly wanted to shoot him or hang him." Another participant said, "It's like the way we describe it is like, it feels like you're dying a very slow death to have someone constantly mistrust you. Constantly try to catch you doing something wrong." Even something as banal as an employee engagement survey is met with intense emotion.

Similarly, related to affect, one participant expressed exuberance at loving people, as stated:

I love humans. I feel like some of my favorite days at work are when I've got peer coaching calls and one-on-ones, I have a whole bunch of Zoom meetings with humans, even though I don't get anything done that day. Those are some of the days that I feel most filled up. My cup is overflowing. So, I just, I love the act of connection because I love what it does for me. I get fed my needs, get met in many ways, but I can see the benefits and how other people's needs are also getting met. And I think sometimes . . . other people . . . sometimes don't know what's missing until they have like one of those great conversations that just like lifts you back up. Right. And, and I think that's, that's important . . . connecting is so critical to who I am as a human and that translates professionally.

The participants' most joy-filled days at work included hours of human interaction, even when using technological tools commonly used daily in business: Even using a Zoom app was exciting. This participant described that this level of interaction with others caused them to feel the highest level of fulfillment in a boisterous manner. They described connecting with others and how it met both their own emotional needs and those of others and that they became aware of the need for this through self-development. This participant further explained the importance of others engaging in a similar experience to assist them with their emotional needs. A second participant, who had recently attended a leadership training workshop, described having a sense of fear and joy at engaging in self- and other leadership behaviors. At the same time, they reminded themselves of the need to control their own emotions and exercise and grow their emotional intelligence. A third participant described thoroughly enjoying completing a task that others found mundane. Their manager's response was elation, which the participant shared. It was evident that the participant's manager was enthusiastic about the participant's self-monitoring. Mundane tasks such as administering benefits were considered a joy.

Some HRD professionals communicated commonly sensitive experiences with emotional distance. Participants described situations with strong emotion using stoic terms, phrases, or tones. Although participants may not have disclosed their feelings regarding the described

scenarios, it does not mean they did not feel them in the moment. Instead, in the retelling, participants communicated about an emotional experience in a non-emotive manner.

Working with others and facing intense emotions required participants to hold back their emotions. When a coworker misbehaved, the participant remained undemonstrative. Further, the participant described the highly charged emotional situations where he held his feelings in keeping a level head and neutralizing the situation. He chose not to show emotions in the moment and prudently waited until later. Another participant described retelling a critical moment with a coworker in a way that did not include the typical set of emotions commonly experienced. This conversation included the coworker having a devastating, life-altering personal experience. The participant explained having focused on this coworker's experience as a learning moment for others by suggesting the coworker share their story in an organizational newsletter with the intent of helping others learn from the coworker's experience. With complete excitement toward the prospect of this article also came the regret regarding the substandard quality of the coworker's writing. Lastly, a participant noted their ability to deeply understand another's perspective differing from theirs while observing their own need for justice in the same situation. The participant acknowledged this dichotomy and the challenge involved in balancing their feelings and thoughts while describing an uncomfortable ambiguity. Like other participants, they described a situation that warranted an emotional response but chose not to engage in the feeling.

Participants' emotional expressions when discussing career success varied; some expressed a great deal of emotion, while others could express what otherwise might have been emotionally charged situations with little to no expression. Regardless, every participant who

described their career success in the service industry expressed emotion, even when it was not warranted.

### **Defining and Experiencing Career Success as Contribution to Others**

In the service industry, HRD professionals define and experienced their career success as contribution to others. Participants discussed how helping others contributed to their career success. Participants provided several examples in their interviews and on their LinkedIn profiles of contributing to colleagues or coworkers contributing to others professionally. On a psychological level, this made the participants feel successful in their careers. Participants conveyed three primary notions of experience, including telling stories, recollecting contribution, describing contributions, and delineating the impact of contribution on career success. Participants shared a story about at least one person to whom they contributed that led to their career success. Participants focused on one-on-one interactions that created an unforgettable memory for them.

One participant noted the joy he found in helping people develop their careers. It was a career success and an essential achievement for them to be able to assist those in need. They also noted the importance of having fun at work was vital too, but most important was the individual interactions they had with employees to assist with their professional development. Another participant, having not been exposed to a significant level of diversity, noted their lack of perspective on various minority groups. They profoundly and sincerely wanted to understand, empathize, and connect with their experiences to understand how best they could help. This participant specifically noted not wanting to fix their situations but rather desired to be of service and help others understand one another.

However, not all ways in which participants chose to contribute were purely altruistic. A colleague asked one participant to create a tool for an interview for a job they did not get. The colleague should have used the participant's help. Further, the participant felt they needed to help the colleague given the need to maintain a professional relationship. The interpersonal competencies used in this situation enabled not only learning but also success. Accordingly, participants described career success in terms of storied contributions.

Participants defined career success in terms of contributions to others. The specific contributions included helping in various scenarios that bring emotional satisfaction to the participant, as one participant stated:

I firmly believe that a rising tide raises all ships. So, when I am successful, I help others be successful. And my success is theirs. So, for example, with my employees, when people reported to me, my job really was to grow and develop them. And if I did the best for them, then they were able to be promoted because they did best for our customers. So, career success to me is when I have helped others succeed, whether that's my customers or my employees.

This participant's psychological career success was deeply connected to contributing to others. One participant noted that his success resulted from growth after being exposed to various situations, especially when looking at these situations from others' perspectives. The greater the depth and challenge of the situation, the more they grew and used what they learned to help others. They experienced career success by introducing those who had similar experiences to each other. A participant noted feeling successful given their care for others, the desire to see them succeed, and their natural willingness to do so, not as a requirement. This same willingness was also seen in situations where others were willing to assist, even when it was clear that assistance was not needed. They noted her ability to approach each person and situation and provide help when needed.



As part of their role as a trainer, one participant helped people even when things were difficult, and they lacked motivation. For this participant, finding balance in helping others and themselves was important. The participant realistically acknowledged that, for them, caring was not always something that needed to be emotionally exhausting or lead to burnout. Instead, caring could be an opportunity to willingly, professionally and appropriately, connect with others while maintaining one's boundaries. This was career success for them. Therefore, participants described many situations where they contributed to others.

Participants defined the effects of their contributions. They regarded that effect as part of their career success. For example, one participant proclaimed, "The internal career success is the, what's the word I want to use? I wanna say 'joy,' but the satisfaction or pleasure derived from helping people succeed in their careers."

A different participant shared their passion for helping others by assisting with the creation of successful leaders, which they accomplished by ensuring the new leader was confidentially able to share frustrations and concerns and problem solve with them. Yet another participant spoke about teaching a new hire how to complete tasks according to the organizations' culture, complete with the idea that they could use these transferable skills in other roles internally and externally to be successful. This offering of support to new employees and listening to their concerns led to the HRD professionals' career success. Participants spoke proudly of their impact. Participants contributed to individuals, teams, organizations, and the world. Some contribution were small and in the moment. At other times, these contributions were global. Overall, all participants discussed career success as a contribution to others.

## **Summary**

Research Question 1 asked, “How do HRD professionals define and experience career success?” HRD professionals defined and experienced career success in the service industry as contribution to others. They defined career success in the language of emotion. HRD professionals defined and experienced career success in the service industry through affect. Further, HRD professionals defined and experienced career success in the service industry as contributing to others. All HRD professionals defined their career success in the service industry as contribution to others. The following section explores the findings of Research Question 2.

### **Research Question 2: Definitions and Experiences of Competencies Leading to Career Success**

Regarding RQ2, HRD professionals described how they defined and experienced HRD competencies that led to career success in the service industry. Participants described and defined competencies that lead to career success as KSAs. They defined knowledge as information applicable to their current and future roles. Participants defined skills as information obtained through learning and observation. Participants defined abilities as what they had the potential to accomplish. Participants defined and experienced competency as capabilities, values, and attitudes. The participants described capability as their readiness to perform. The participants described values and attitudes as essential to who they are.

Participants defined and experienced competencies that led to career success as relationship-building through trust and effective communication. Positive, meaningful connections are the foundation of relationship-building. Participants defined and experienced competencies that lead to career success as implementing agility. Agility is defined as successful pivoting when faced with a career challenge. Last, participants defined and experienced

competencies that lead to career success by creating unique positive, meaningful connections that are the foundation of relationship building. The concept of competency mix refers to a combination of KSAs, capabilities, values, and attitudes used in a specific situation to achieve career success. A competency mix combines KSAs, capabilities, values, and attitudes to enable career success in each situation.

### **Defining Competency as Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Attributes**

All participants defined service industry competencies as knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Defining knowledge, skills, and abilities KSAs regarding leadership skills, such as influencing and motivating others, is valuable. Participants used many synonyms when describing *competency*. Among the phrases the participants used were "what I do well," "what I think," and "what I know." Participants used many synonyms of "knowledge," "skills," and "abilities." Specifically, participants described three primary categories of competency: knowledge, skills, and abilities. Five participants discussed competencies beyond KSAs, such as capabilities, values, and attitudes. All participants defined competencies as KSAs, as one participant stated:

If I'm a good trainer or ... a good consultant, it's [competencies] what makes you [good at] those things ... you went through all those different areas [competencies], and that's a lot. If I'm an accountant, I don't necessarily have to be good with people.

This means that HRD professionals do not need to be good at every competency, just those that are core to the role. Participants emphasized that competencies are only sometimes the more tactical skills required to accomplish tasks but can instead be the interpersonal skills needed to work with others. One participant established a corporate learning program at university. Despite their lack of experience, they designed a training program, participated in corporate recruiting, and conducted an assessment center. Their competencies included KSAs

that enabled them to perform many typical HRD responsibilities in their role as an HRD professional.

Another participant asked how new organizational projects, such as training and retention, could be improved. They were referring to the development of skills as part of this improvement. An additional participant described a career path as an executive in their organization where competencies had to develop to advance. It was those KSAs that could propel them to the next level that they meant by using the word “competencies.”

One participant questioned how new organizational projects, such as training and retention, can be improved and what competencies could be developed to contribute to this improvement. Other participants mentioned having a career path as an executive in their organizations where competencies needed to be developed to get to the next level. By this, they meant that competencies were the KSAs that could propel them to the next level.

Participants defined competency beyond KSAs. KSAs may be the most universally accepted definition of competency, but five participants in their interviews and LinkedIn profile evoked words such as “capability,” “values,” and “attitudes” to describe competency, as one participant stated:

Stopped. I stopped dead in my tracks and went, my gosh, I really didn't do that. But that's why my team was not executing. Not 'cause they didn't want to, but they were so scared to ask me what I said, you know, which is another side of the communication, you know ... I wasn't approachable.

By this, they mean that not having the knowledge needed, the competencies necessary, to lead the way they wanted stood in their way of being the leader they wanted to be. They mean that they were able to use those aspects of competencies that aligned with their values and attitudes. One participant described how values were a vital part of defining competency. Additionally, participants reported that participating in an organization-wide philanthropic effort,

leading a team, and providing guidance made their values feel like competencies. One participant said values that drive them to behave in a particular way can be considered a competency separate from KSAs. Another participant said we must understand ourselves and others to succeed in our work. The purpose of their work was to help people succeed in their current jobs or obtain the jobs they need to succeed. According to another participant, they had gained the capabilities to succeed but lamented that only companies recognized and leveraged people's potential. The company listened despite their lack of experience, inability to assist them, and what they required. Here, completing a task, for example, is as essential as possessing knowledge, skills, or abilities. Therefore, knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, values, and attitudes constitute competencies in the service industry.

### **Using the Competency of Relationship-Building through Trust and Effective Communication to Define and Experience Career Success**

All HRD chiefly named the competency of relationship building through trust and effective communication to attain career success in the service industry. Participants described relationship building and trust as catalysts to internal and external career success. Compelling communication that created a connection was crucial for achieving career success through these means. Participants conveyed three primary ideas: related competencies, trust violations, and effective communication. Participants described interactions where they made connections and contribution to others that initiated and developed trust. They grew their competencies to build connections that had a specific result, as one participant stated:

Now [when people ask me for advice], does that happen with every consultant that I know of in OD and in HRD? No, it really [depends on] ... the openness of the relationship that you develop with the people that you interact with.”

One participant noted having been told they were seen as a trusted confidant, a reliable leader, and a knowledgeable specialist. They stated that this resulted from deeply investing in others. They observed that this reputation resulted from deeply investing in others. Another participant established the importance of building trust by creating a “safe environment” for a group gathering. Otherwise, when group members return to their workspaces, information may be shared with others there, rather than in the context of the group. Nevertheless, another participant said that they were both motivated and happy in their career because of getting to help people grow and develop. For them, the level of trust they built with others is apparent in their willingness to seek them out, and this seeking behavior in others brings them the greatest joy, especially when the advice sought is for their career or personal lives. They asserted that this trust seeking is one of the most significant ways they can contribute and have an influence on the lives of others. For participants, the trust-building competency manifested through high-quality networking and connective relationship-building.

Moreover, the interviews revealed the importance of trust, as participants discussed how trust was developed, evolved, broken, and rebuilt. Participants described scenarios where trust had been initiated, built, or violated. For example, a participant related the importance of boundaries and expectations while rebuilding a relationship after a trust violation, as a participant stated:

Straightforward, trusting conversations ... and let's come up with a solution here because a lot of times they're not getting any feedback from anyone. So, building... a trusting relationship, by being honest ... creating credibility ... by delivering the things you say that you're going to deliver.

Another participant described their experience of being focused more on tasks than on relationships and how this behavior affected how others viewed them. Initially, they did not understand why others viewed them negatively, given that they intended to accomplish work.

Instead, they learned that how they were viewed and the trust and relationships built were essential to accomplish work rather than being only task-focused. A participant noted that given that their team is more knowledgeable than they are, they worked to build trust to empower them. They did this by making their jobs easier, removing anything that might block their progress. They hoped that their team saw their efforts to make their jobs more manageable to build trust while also helping their team stay engaged and happy in their roles. One participant noted that their team began performing without their permission once they changed the environment, which they promoted through their leadership tactics. Initially, they were overly direct and curt in their approach, but they later learned that this approach did not foster the trust needed to empower their team. Various scenarios set the stage for participants to redefine and rebuild the competency of trust building.

Nine of the participants described relationship-building as an act of building trust. Just as one participant described building relationships in terms of setting “expectations,” another described it in terms of “accurate, thorough, and honest communication” and effectively communicating. One participant expressed that there was never anything that could be considered “overcommunicating” and that trust and communication can build a network of influence. More than half of the participants used language about communication and trust while describing stories of relationship-building in their one-on-one interviews. All participants had an active LinkedIn presence where they communicated through recommendations, congratulating colleagues, and commenting on the posts of others. Communication in its most authentic, profound form sets the stage for competency development, leading to fulfilling connections with others.

Developing relationships and facilitating networking can be accomplished by understanding and valuing others. Therefore, trust is regarded as essential to the creation and nurturing of relationships that move beyond networking. Trust flourishes and connections are formed when effective communication takes place. Connections are the essence and foundation of internal and external career success. The essential competency communicated by the above is the ability to use communication to create trust, which builds connections and leads to career success in the service industry.

### **Implementing the Competency of Agility to Define and Experience Career Success**

Eleven of 20 HRD professionals described the competency of being “agile” as leading to career success in the service industry. The *competency of agility*—the ability to think or act quickly in each circumstance—brought career success to the participants. The participants described changing after a precipitating event as one of the most dramatic contributions to career success. When participants described career changes on LinkedIn, they reflected on their ability to make shifts and changes in their career. Additionally, participants described the result of this agile behavior as a career change. Participants conveyed thoughts about career shifts, including the advantages of agility and mixtures of competencies.

All participants described how their competency of being agile assisted them during a career shift. Every participant used words related to rapidly pivoting to denote agility, as a participant related a story describing a rapid shift from software training to project management:

I started out doing software training and quickly adapted into ... project management, leadership development. As I grew in leadership development, I [said] this OD stuff is kind of fun. I just kept learning and growing and adding to my skillset.

Like 18 of the participants, this story of a rapid pivot led to discovering new areas of skill that were fun and interesting. Similarly, another participant posited, “I think personal



competencies that have contributed to my success are ... having the opportunity to personally experience the opportunity to adapt ... myself.... I had to find a way to adapt my personal skills and styles.” This is to say, that adapting is not simply a requirement of the job but an experience and opportunity. Another participant told a story about an internal client who approached them with a training problem that, upon further investigation, turned out to be something different.

This participant navigated their client’s emotions in conveying a more impactful and cost-effective solution. They transformed a problem by adapting their approach and turning the situation into an opportunity. This participant navigated their client’s emotions in conveying a more impactful and cost-effective solution. They transformed a problem by adapting their approach and turning the situation into an opportunity. As a result, the participant conveyed the competency of being agile during career changes. Participants described the benefits of agility. Participants benefited from being able to pivot rapidly.

All participants described agility as changing behavior, learning, and growing. All participants framed necessary changes to their KSAs in terms of a gift. One participant found it fun to learn genuinely from individuals with different perspectives. When challenging and potentially harmful situations occurred, one participant described learning to understand the perspectives of others during these challenges as unwrapping a gift where they could embrace the growth and learning that resulted from the difficulty. This participant expressed exuberance at releasing their identity as an expert and embracing ambiguity.

However, a different participant said that when they are in a larger group, they are less assertive, genuine, or even as authentic as they are in a smaller group, which has, in turn, led to stronger professional and interpersonal relationships. However, recently they have begun developing their ability to speak to larger groups through being a facilitator and trainer. They

suggested this change may be due to increased confidence that has grown out of the experience. This increasing confidence also creates a more influential version of how they use their voice. They described it as a transition. Another participant talked about conducting job analysis, job design, and job training in a hospitality organization. They set up a corporate university, designed training programs, and recruited for colleges and corporations. The importance of these activities is that they were hired as a consultant focusing on other projects and found themselves pivoting to these projects that they thoroughly enjoyed. One participant who served as a mentor said they would not have traditionally mentored. What they still needed to count on was that a mentee provided them with insights into topics they had yet to consider. They became increasingly excited over the mentee's ideas, responses, and the challenges they were experiencing. They were mentoring and helping them learn while unexpectedly learning, growing, and developing. Accordingly, HRD professionals find that being agile benefits them.

Participants described competencies that allow them to be agile. That is, particular skills, and often knowledge and abilities, allowed them to pivot. One participant observed they were confident in their abilities and viewpoint; however, instead of arguing their perspective, they provided persuasive information and allowed the other person to make their own decisions. This participant continued by discussing their willingness to see experiences differently and adapt their ways of thinking and behavior. They expressed a strong willingness to reflect and change. Another participant characterized agility as adaptability, including their awareness that they are not always right and possessing the willingness to change. Similarly, another participant stated that HRD could be chaotic with hindrances in many organizations. This participant remarked that this situation must be worked through to provide clients with solutions.

One participant noted that when working with organizational members, at times, undesirable news needed to be delivered that could damage their connection. Therefore, creating an environment of trust was essential while presenting negative information in the most palatable manner. Allowing organizational members to make choices regarding the information helped build trust further while keeping in mind what is most likely best for them. One participant experienced a situation where they worked in a multicultural environment with a culture opposed to theirs. This other culture's way of communicating was so foreign to their own that they had to adapt how they responded to information cues in a vastly new and unique way, causing them to learn and grow. HRD professionals often use several competencies to be agile. HRD professionals used agility as a competency to achieve career success in the service industry. Life and career events could harm one's career success. However, due to the agility of pivoting in a career shift, they enjoyed the benefits of the shifts.

### **Creating a Unique Competency Mix to Define and Experience Career Success**

Twelve of the 20 HRD professionals interviewed shared that they had to discover what the mix of competencies was that led to their success in the service industry. Each participant described a process of discovery, combining learning attempts with competencies that led to internal and external career success. These combinations were unique to the professional's career trajectory and exemplified career success. Participants conveyed prior learning experiences, including understanding their unique competency fingerprints for career success in the service industry.

Participants described a unique fingerprint of a mix of competencies. One participant stated that the particular mix of one's competencies was as unique as one's DNA. One participant revealed how they understand others, remarking that a fantastic team that functions

well can be created when the HRD professional has an excellent combination of employee personalities to work with. This participant talked about different personalities, contending that a need exists for differing types of communication to connect with these people. Given that each person is unique, the challenge this participant had is that sometimes they would rather have had people do what they wanted them to do when they wanted them to do it instead of having to cater to others.

Another participant declared that they had taken an unofficial oath to uphold important principles that helped keep them on track with things that became difficult or challenging in their work. To uphold this oath required various combinations of competencies that they might only have needed due to having committed to behaving as this oath required, as a participant stated:

Finding problems and understanding them and then trying to solve them. I think that always kept me in demand as an employee. How you ask those questions, how you poke it. People's pain points matter. You can do it in a way that is helpful [and] ... aren't helpful ... having the interpersonal skills to handle that with some ... respect has also been important. I think for the longest time I needed to be seen as the expert; now I will tell you that I'm not. I'm merely somebody who's got some experiences and if they're beneficial, maybe they'll help.

Another participant described how exciting a learning mindset is and how being open to differing thoughts and ideas can help build trust. The participant understood the motivation behind differing viewpoints as a result. By doing so, the participant could ask questions rather than remain in the telling mode. The goal was to understand prior to landing on solutions.

Reflecting on how important it was to cooperate with other departments when working on a project, one participant accepted the importance of strategy rather than working in an open-ended manner with a less collaborative approach. They still had to experience a level of learning prior to this. One participant said that understanding the basics prevented challenging situations. Despite the participant's unwillingness to implement a learning management system, their

organization mandated it with little support. The participants pushed themselves to see the implementation through but also realized that building relationships was beneficial. While growing, they also learned about the necessary technology, increasing their self-esteem, and allowing them to document that qualification on their LinkedIn profile.

A participant mentioned how part of what helped them learn how to be a better HRD professional was that during their other roles in HR, they learned more about the business by understanding the language necessary to accomplish work. Continuous learning and keeping up with industry knowledge helped dramatically. Dealing with this situation required various combinations of competencies that they might only have needed to use if they had not been faced with this challenge. Another participant mentioned they were currently in HRD, supporting and working with others in a corporate environment instead of working in a restaurant. The participant noted the differences in these environments and the daily schedule. Understanding both environments, the participant mentioned the discrepancy between how training was delivered as computer based when this is different from how those who typically work in a service environment tend to learn best. Participants described the combination of competencies that bring them career success. According to one participant, their career success was due to the KSAs that helped them, as a different participant stated their career success was due to the combination of KSAs that helped them:

I would be assigned clients or ... take on clients and continue to learn more about them ... as I continue to work with more of them that experience kind of begun other experiences ... you worked with one, now; let's have you work with more.

As a result, HRD professionals described competencies that contributed to career success in the service industry. Participants discovered that they had a unique mix of competencies that led to career success. Participants learned through their work experiences, improving their

unique competencies in the service industry. Each professional had a distinctive career trajectory based on this unique fingerprint of KSAs.

### **Summary**

Research Question 2 asked, “How do HRD professionals define and experience competencies leading to career success?” HRD professionals defined and experienced competencies leading to career success as knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes. Participants defined and experienced competencies leading to career success as using the competency of relationship-building through trust and effective communication to attain career success in the service industry. They defined and experienced career success as the competency of being agile or the ability to change after an unexpected event. Finally, HRD professionals defined and experienced career success in the service industry as a unique mix of competencies.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I presented the findings of six major themes to answer two research questions. In the first theme, participants defined and experienced career success in the service industry through affect; that is, emotions. Second, participants defined and experienced career success in the service industry as contribution to others or helping colleagues at work. The third theme was defining competencies as KSAs; HRD professionals defined competencies as knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes. In the fourth theme, HRD professionals identified relationship-building as a competency that can lead to career success in the service industry when including trust and effective communication. In the fifth theme, participants described the agility competency as one of the most significant factors advancing a professional’s career success in the service industry. The sixth and final theme focused on a unique competency mix to define and experience career success in the service industry. HRD

professionals noted that they had to discover what mix of competencies led to career success. In the next chapter, I present the interpretation of the findings alongside the literature and the implications for research and practice.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

In this chapter, I discuss the significance of the study findings and provide implications for HRD research and practice as well as study limitations. Through an analysis of the interviews with the participants and archival data offered by the participants' LinkedIn profiles, this study identified six themes including: (1) defining and experiencing career success in the service industry through affect; (2) defining and experiencing career success in the service industry as contribution to others; (3) defining and experiencing competency as KSAs and other attributes (e.g., capabilities, attitudes, values); (4) using the competency of relationship-building through trust and effective communication to define and experience career success; (5) implementing the competency of agility to define and experience career success; and (6) creating a unique competency mix to define and experience career success. The following are the significant highlights of this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

In this study, six themes told a story of how these 20 participants attained career success as HRD professionals in the service industry. These themes informed us that participants define and experience career success through affect and contribution to others. These themes also told us that participants define and experience the competencies that lead to career success as KSAs, building trust through relationships, being agile, and developing and using a competency mix. Further, these themes provided significant insights which I will now discuss.

First, concerning affect, HRD professionals who demonstrated emotional intelligence most often attained career success. All participants reported their emotions regarding their career success in the service industry. The participants described horror stories about their work experiences at their former companies. Some of their team members did not feel psychologically



safe at times when they were working together. Participants shared a sense of anger and isolation, as they felt that organizational members were not listening to them. In many instances, participants exhibited a lack of resilience or appeared overly emotional due to the situation. As a result of challenges raised by colleagues, participants described feelings with emotional intensity. It is still a matter of controversy regarding how HRD professionals can prevent burnout, develop communication, interpersonal intelligence, and emotional intelligence skills. Further, there are question about how they can become models of emotional intelligence.

Second, concerning contribution to others, HRD professionals achieved career success by guiding and training individuals to attain their goals. During career transitions, HRD professionals were able to contribute to the development of others. As a result of this coaching, participants consistently mentioned they experienced an increased sense of satisfaction when they specifically helped someone through a career transition. Participants demonstrated servant leadership when they chose to work with, for example, a student who did not have the skills to graduate. HRD professionals in the service industry gave to others and cultivated reciprocal relationships by nurturing and caring for them. Furthermore, participants contributed by demonstrating inclusive leadership practices to show their care. Participants created a culture of inclusivity. By guiding and coaching individuals to improve their performance, these HRD professionals in the service industry contributed to the success of others. Similarly, the participants in this study provided mentorship. As evinced by many growth stories, participants experienced enhanced competencies.

Third, *all* HRD professionals defined competencies in the service industry as KSAs. Specifically, these service industry HRD professionals succeeded due to their contribution and trust-building abilities. Undoubtedly, competencies developed outside the workplace can have a

meaningful impact on an HRD professional's career life. Further, KSAs can bring HRD professionals with solid and well-established competencies career success, including retention during a layoff. Developing KSAs lead to HRD professionals' experiencing career success. Scholars and practitioners should be interested in how HRD professionals can create solutions for their clients. Identifying additional roles HRD professionals may be called upon to undertake beyond traditional HRD is unclear, however. Understanding unexpected business needs is an ongoing process. HRD professionals will need further practitioner reflection and scholarly research to fulfill unexpected business needs.

Fourth, because of this study, HRD professionals identified the competency of relationship-building through trust and effective communication as one of the most significant competencies for career success advancing their careers in the service industry. Numerous participants recounted networking at annual conventions and speaking at association meetings to enhance their credibility out of network. In addition, participants noted how they established credibility within their networks to accomplish their work. Having credibility makes it easier for them to obtain resources. Participants networked, attended annual conventions, and spoke at association meetings. Aside from that, participants established credibility within their network as it was often difficult to accomplish their goals otherwise. Without that credibility, HRD professionals had difficulty obtaining resources for their work. HRD professionals who have established credibility within their network more often achieved and obtained resources for their work. Therefore, questions remain regarding how HRD professionals can build their reputation, reestablish trust after a breach, and always make relationships their highest priority.

Fifth, a focal point of this study was that HRD professionals used agility to continuously expand and develop competencies. For HRD professionals, being agile applies especially to

career change. Several participants championed that they were happy with their current roles and could advance as practitioners even during career changes. All participants described scenarios where they adjusted their work approach to meet the needs of the businesses for which they worked. Participants described working with coaches during career shifts. Numerous participants have had personal life challenges that affected their HRD roles. All participants reached out for additional knowledge and resources, finding more effective ways of learning, coping, and working. This form of agility allowed these HRD professionals to remain focused on their work and further their career success. Participants described being agile with technological changes to meet organizational company strategic goals, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many participants performed work outside their job description. Several participants found themselves leading others and having to quickly learn how to connect with them in challenging interpersonal circumstances. In fact, many participants told stories of working with challenging peers and needing to work with them to meet the firm's needs. In sum, HRD professionals use their competencies to become agile and develop more competencies. Therefore, researchers should consider agility's impact on HRD professionals' influence. Agile HRD professionals in the service industry achieve career success by building longevity in their careers.

Last, participants highlighted communication and interpersonal skills as part of an HRD professional's unique competency fingerprint. Participants often presented data to their employers to support their approach to a problem and influence leadership. In many cases, participants described building longevity by creating value not easily dismissed by leadership. They described possessing the competencies required to demonstrate that value well. A result of their noticed value was that they were not the first to lose their jobs during layoffs. It was not individual competencies that led to them saving their jobs; rather, it was their unique mix of

competencies that often resulted in job retention. Their unique mix of competencies made them less replaceable. Participants built these competencies from KSAs and various attributes, including capabilities, values, and attitudes acquired inside and outside of their organizations. Therefore, questions remain regarding how HRD professionals can fulfill their role as whole employees by using their full competency sets. HRD professionals in the service industry should develop competencies for all aspects of their lives and be mindful of competencies developed outside of formal HRD training.

Overall, this study highlights six major insights. First, HRD professionals who demonstrated emotional intelligence most often attained career success. Next, HRD professionals achieved career success by guiding and training individuals to attain their goals. Third, *all* HRD professionals defined competencies in the service industry as KSAs. Fourth, HRD professionals identified the competency of relationship-building through trust and effective communication as one of the most significant competencies for career success advancing their careers in the service industry. Fifth, HRD professionals used agility to continuously expand and develop competencies. Finally, participants' communication and interpersonal skills often appear as part of a participant's unique competency fingerprint. Next, I will discuss the implications of these matters upon HRD research and practice.

### **Implications for HRD Research**

Reflecting upon the prior literature alongside the findings of the study and recognizing the limitations of prior research in explaining the findings of this study, scholars should consider the following implications for future research. Overall, researchers should consider the influence of self-perceptions and other perceptions on HRD professionals' career success as well as the competencies that assist them with achieving this success. No studies made specific

recommendations to HRD professionals working in the service industry regarding the competencies that lead to career success. I provide such recommendations in this study. The recommendations offered below are based on literature that supports and informs the direction of future research. The following recommendations for research concerning HRD professionals, specifically those working in the service industry, are culled from the findings of this study.

First, in terms of affect, several studies have demonstrated that psychological success significantly impacts an individual's perception of their competence (Colakoglu, 2011). Thus, HRD professionals in the service industry, where it is common in especially restaurant and retail organizations to feel as if one lacks a voice, may also become overburdened with emotional distress due to not being heard (Cumberland et al., 2018). In this study, I noted participants' lack of voice and the resulting affective experiences. Further, according to Najam et al. (2020), HRD professionals' commitment to their organizations significantly impacts their perceptions of internal career success within their organizations. This was seen in participants' experiencing a range of emotions resulting from organizational experiences, forming perceptions, and taking actions based on these experiences. Thus, HRD professionals in the service industry should be asked to participate in research that examines how they perceive themselves from a career success perspective and how these perceptions impact their success (Lion & Burch, 2018). Furthermore, it is necessary to conduct studies to determine to what extent HRD professionals in the service industry have achieved psychological success given that all participants described affective experiences. Based on the findings in this study, researchers should examine how HRD professionals perceive success and how they can deal with these emotions to improve their career success in the service industry.

Second, contributing to others is vital to career success in the service industry. According to Walumbwa et al. (2020), professionals and the individuals they assist can succeed through their contributions. This was one of the most consistent findings between information shared by participants and the literature. Further, leadership requires a focus on others' needs, a willingness to develop, and a preparedness to listen (Sims et al., 2021). For those in leadership roles, this was also a consistent finding. As a result of the development of KSAs, it is recommended that HRD professionals in the service industry guide and train individuals to achieve their career goals. As a result of promoting this growth mindset, HRD professionals can enhance career success in the service industry (Han & Stieha, 2020). The participants and the literature consistently conveyed that contribution to others builds trust, which is the foundation for career success (Guinot & Chiva, 2019). In the literature and the results of this study, assisting others can lead to happiness and career success (Walsh et al., 2018). One caution resulting from experiences shared by participants is the need for researchers to investigate the role of contribution experiences in affecting HRD professionals' well-being and contributing to burnout in the service industry.

Third, competencies are more than just knowledge of what happens in a company (Dumitrescu et al., 2014). This idea resonated with participants in the study. However, participants were reticent to state specific competencies, other than those already noted in the study, that were useful in the service industry. This is important given there are an endless number of competencies that participants could have mentioned. For example, researchers identified many competencies that can benefit an individual personally and professionally, including effectiveness (Akdere & Egan, 2020), growth and development (Dirani et al., 2020), and efficiency (Potnuru et al., 2021). The literature and this study's participants agreed that career competencies in the service industry positively relate to career success and employability

(Blokker et al., 2019). As such, researchers in this field must investigate the role of developing strong competencies that include KSAs, capabilities, values, and attitudes on internal and external career success in the service sector. Specifically, studying how HRD professionals in the service industry develop personal and professional KSAs that lead to career success may significantly contribute to research in this area.

Fourth, building relationships based on trust and effective communication is essential for career success (Woehler et al., 2021). This sentiment is consistent with this study's findings. This study agreed with the literature that effective communication can help HRD professionals build relationships by integrating HRD practices into business needs (Hirudayaraj & Baker, 2018). All participants voiced in this study, as seen in the literature, that effective communication may facilitate the expansion of HRD professionals' networks (Akkermans & Tims, 2017). Inconsistent with this study's findings was that despite relationship setbacks, *affective trust* remains, allowing for growth and renewal (Samian et al., 2021). Some participants noted how loss of trust had a permanent negative effect on relationships. Similarly, HRD professionals can help heal relationships by developing transferable skills and knowledge (Presti et al., 2022), which is consistent with this study's findings. Therefore, researchers should study how HRD professionals in the service industry who have established credibility in their networks are more likely to obtain resources for their work and to achieve success. Researchers should also consider the influences of self-perception and other perceptions on the career success of HRD professionals in the service industry, especially regarding trust violations.

Fifth, a combination of competencies enables HRD professionals in the service industry to be agile, meet career and business challenges, and achieve strategic objectives. I uncovered this finding and also found it in the literature (Akoi & Yesiltas, 2020; Doeze Jager-van Vliet et

al., 2019). However, inconsistent with the literature is that interpersonal skills included in competence combinations ensure agile HRD professionals (ATD, 2020). I found that agility can be achieved using various competencies depending on the context and circumstances. Therefore, researchers should examine how HRD professionals in the service industry use agility to expand and develop their skills.

Finally, to define career success in the service industry, HRD professionals must develop an individual competency mix that brings success to their current role. For example, some of the most successful HRD professionals combine interpersonal skills, flexibility, and versatility to build relationships and be agile (Gray, 1999). I substantiated the findings of this research with the results of this study. This study's findings and the literature concurred that working on the process of finding unique competency combinations provided HRD professionals with insightful information that challenged their viewpoints and incorrect assumptions (Terblanche, 2021). Further research is needed regarding what combination of competencies is needed in organizational culture and how development should occur. It would be interesting for researchers to investigate how HRD professionals in the service industry create distinctive combinations of competencies.

To conclude, the findings of this study were inconsistent and consistent with the literature. Implications for research for HRD professionals to achieve career success in the service industry include the topic of career success perception, especially from an emotional standpoint. Implications include the connection between contribution and burnout for HRD professionals in the service industry and how HRD professionals in the service industry develop strong personal and professional competencies that include KSAs, capabilities, attitudes, and values. Additional implications for research on how HRD professionals in the service industry



achieve career success include the effect of perception on career success, especially in situations of trust violations, the use of agility, and how unique competency combinations are created.

Future research agendas for scholars in the HRD field include:

- How HRD professionals perceive success and how they can deal with these emotions to improve their career success in the service industry
- The role of contribution experiences in affecting HRD professionals' well-being and contributing to burnout in the service industry
- Personal and professional KSAs that lead to career success may significantly contribute to research in this area
- The influences of self-perception and other perceptions on the career success of HRD professionals in the service industry, especially regarding trust violations
- How HRD professionals in the service industry create distinctive combinations of competencies
- How HRD professionals in the service industry use agility to expand and develop their skills

### **Implications for Practice**

Several implications for practice that affect HRD professionals in the service industry and the practitioners who support them emerged from the findings. Practitioners who support HRD professionals in the service industry should be exemplar professionals affected by supporting team members, providing opportunities to serve as role models, and embracing the unexpected such that they can meet business needs, remain aware of blind spots in their careers, use mistakes to create success, ask hard questions, and reflect on and embrace a seat at the table.

First, to succeed in the service industry, the literature suggests that HRD professionals must demonstrate emotional intelligence (Fowler, 2018). The results of this study do not necessarily concur in that all participants demonstrated some level of affect that could be construed as emotional immaturity, yet they are all considered to have achieved career success. Yet, in the demonstration of this affect, HRD professionals unanimously displayed there was a level of emotional maturity. Therefore, it may be more accurate to suggest that HRD professionals in the service industry should be influential, which can be accomplished by helping to create psychological safety by serving as role models regarding their emotional and psychological development. Working together to prevent burnout, understanding how performance feedback impacts them, preventing resentment caused by mismatched expectations, and creating a psychologically safe work environment for team members can lead to this career success (Hsieh & Huang, 2018). Most important, as reflected in this study's results, is that practitioners who support HRD professionals in the service industry must ensure their development of resilience and well-being (Tonkin et al., 2018).

Second, in the service industry, HRD professionals achieve success by contributing to the success of others. In addition to providing support, mentoring, coaching, and buffering challenges helped HRD professionals support others. An added benefit of contributions HRD professionals make was that servant leadership approaches are spread throughout the organization through mentoring, training, and development leading to additional career success (Bragger et al., 2021). The literature and the results of this study agreed that HRD professionals can use coaching as an effective developmental mentoring tool used by HRD professionals (Hsieh & Huang, 2018). These tools are not only beneficial for practitioners to use, but they are also beneficial for practitioners who develop for the HRD professionals in the service industry.

Practitioners in the service industry must provide guidance and training to ensure the career success of HRD professionals (McQuade et al., 2015; Terblanche, 2021). Therefore, practitioners must provide opportunities for HRD professionals in the service industry to learn how to be influential by creating psychological safety. Practitioners must also provide opportunities by guiding and training others through their work, listening to organizational members and clients, hearing followers' voices, making contributions to further a climate of inclusion, and continually developing empathy for others. To achieve career success by contributing to others, practitioners should show up to their work as *whole* employees. They can be *whole* by assisting HRD professionals in building trust and inspiring happiness (Walsh et al., 2018), being aware of their behavior (Blokker et al., 2019), building their reputations (Park, 2020), reestablishing trust following a breach (Woehler et al., 2021), utilizing research to inform their work (Gubbins et al., 2018), staying aware of bias (Byrd, 2022), and prioritizing relationships (Gilley & Maycunich Gilley, 2003).

Third, this study's results and the literature agreed that strong, well-developed competencies can lead to economic gain and meaningful community involvement (Smits, 2014). In addition, as reflected in this study's results and the literature, a combination of KSAs and attributes—such as capabilities, attitudes, and values—are essential for HRD professionals to achieve career success (Torraco & Lundgren, 2020). Practitioners who support HRD professionals in the service industry should assist HRD professionals with developing essential competencies, such as communication and interpersonal skills, which will allow HRD professionals to succeed rather than adopt a sink-or-swim approach (Chen et al., 2005; Hubner & Baum, 2018). Practitioners should create an environment where HRD professionals in the service industry feel psychologically comfortable expressing themselves as whole individuals. Further,

practitioners should assist HRD professionals in becoming aware of competencies developed outside of formal HRD training, and the messages conveyed by their emotions. Organizations should provide onboarding and other developmental opportunities to learn what competencies will lead to career success for HRD professionals.

Fourth, to succeed, this study's results and the literature strongly concur that HRD professionals must establish strong relationships with their employers and clients based on trust and effective communication and that engaging in this networking can enhance career success (Kumar et al., 2022). An HRD professional can build a network by inspiring trust and establishing credibility with their network members; this is how resources are accessed. Building credibility was one of the most important competencies participants and the literature noted as contributing to HRD professionals' career success (Gubbins & Garavan, 2005). Credibility is built by helping other professionals develop resilience and well-being, contribute to others, feel psychologically comfortable, build trust through relationships, and use evidence-based approaches. HRD professionals should be visible to management, use a coach to become more agile, and increase their career longevity by building competencies that lead to career success.

Fifth, the ability to be an agile HRD practitioner was found to be essential in this study and in the literature. Agility is important to help HRD professionals to gain a deeper understanding of and succeed in the service industry (Kuchinke, 2017). It is essential that HRD professionals working in the service industry must constantly expand and develop their competencies to remain agile, and successful in their roles. For HRD professionals to succeed professionally, they must always be prepared and embrace the unexpected. For professionals to succeed in their careers, they must remain aware of their blind spots, learn from their mistakes, ask tough questions, and reflect on their experiences. To make quick decisions and succeed in

their careers, HRD professionals must demonstrate empathy and concern (Baill, 1999). Despite career challenges, successful HRD professionals balance being visible to management and spending time on nonmanagerial tasks (Kirk, 1991). Moreover, HRD professionals are recommended to use a coach to become more agile during career transitions and to become more effective at their job (Terblanche, 2021).

Sixth, HRD professionals can add value to their organizations and increase their career longevity by developing the competencies that lead to career success (McDonald & Hite, 2018). As part of the unique competency fingerprint of HRD professionals working in the service industry, practitioners should ensure that HRD professional training includes communicating effectively and strengthening interpersonal skills. HRD professionals in the service industry can succeed if they create an individualized combination of competencies. Furthermore, HRD professionals should be able to adapt their abilities and knowledge to meet an organization's strategic objectives (Lee & Lee, 2018). HRD professionals in the service industry must immerse themselves in the organizational culture of their organizations to fully comprehend these strategic goals. It is possible to achieve this goal by collaborating with clients in the service industry. Along with working in roles outside the traditional HRD sphere, HRD professionals can also request and accept a seat at the table.

In summary, HRD professionals should remember that veterans in their field who have been through the emotional and practical difficulties of their careers define career success as a meaningful contribution to others. HRD professionals in the service industry define competencies as more than KSAs. These competencies also include attributes, such as capabilities, attitudes, and values that combined, have brought them long-term career success.

When using their competencies of relationship-building, agility, and forming unique fingerprints of competencies, HRD professionals in the service industry enjoy distinguished career success.

### **Study Limitations**

The findings of this study should be understood considering the following limitations. I collected data via Zoom, which lacks the richness of in-person interviews. Accordingly, sources of data included interviews and archival documents to provide consistency between the participants' stories and provide an objective reality. Triangulation with these two data sources in conjunction with observational data did not occur, limiting the results. Another limitation of the study is that my interview skills are limited to my existing training and experience. For example, another interviewer with more training may have obtained richer data. While I made every effort to analyze and report the data to control my bias as an HRD professional, an inherent bias that affects how I analyze the data may have created a level of unavoidable bias. Finally, the findings of this study are limited to the context of HRD professionals in the service industry. The findings may be transferrable to HRD professionals in other industry contexts. For example, HRD professionals' creation of a unique competency mix could be applied to any HRD role in any industry. Additionally, agility used by HRD professionals can be used to achieve career success across industries.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I presented the discussion, the significance of the findings, and the six themes that make up the findings of this study. I also discussed implications for practice and future research as well as limitations. The following chapter concludes this dissertation.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this study, I explored two research questions regarding the competencies leading to career success through an examination of HRD professionals' lived experiences working in the service industry to provide organizations with informed recommendations for employee training and development. I used the ATD (2013) foundational competencies as the framework of this study with combined KSAs and capabilities, attitudes, and values as a way to explore career success. I interviewed 20 HRD professionals using a semi-structured method and then transcription and coding resulted in six themes. Further, the LinkedIn profiles of these professionals were examined.

As evidenced by the stories offered by these 20 HRD professionals in their interviews and LinkedIn profiles, career success is why these professionals are engaged in this kind of work: Career success is everything to them. It keeps them on the job. It gets them to work every day. Career success is their reason for working. However, through distinguished career challenges come a great weight of introspection: "Is this really career success? Am I truly as successful as I thought I was?" Through sober reflection upon their career success, practitioners answered these questions by describing emotional stories of contribution to others. They talked about the capacities they developed through trial and error in good times and tough times in their careers. They built relationships that assisted them. They enhanced their ability to make sudden pivots in their careers. They developed a mix of competencies unique to *them*. That is to say, what one HRD professional calls *success* is a unique competency fingerprint of their impact upon the humans of their organization.

HRD professionals can look to others for marks of career success, for patterns that they can emulate. In the end, however, HRD professionals must embrace their own values. They must

prioritize relationships as critical to their success. They must be paragons of HRD by living by example. My hope as the researcher of this study is that HRD professionals would dare to look in the mirror and see who they uniquely are and what they alone can provide. Therefore, to support these professionals, researchers should focus on identifying how mixes of competencies combine to generate not only career success of HRD professionals, but also growth for those they serve. Researchers should showcase the marks of career success in the service industry such that professionals can have exemplars to which they can look. Further, HRD researchers should discover the competency combinations that, when used together, generate a powerful, unique offering: One that is as unique to them as are the exceptional needs of the organizations and humans they serve.



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## Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



May 12, 2022

Dear Cheryl DePonte,

Your request to conduct the study, *CAPABILITIES CONDUCIVE TO CAREER AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS FOR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS IN SERVICE INDUSTRIES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY*, IRB-FY2021-140 has been approved by The University of Texas at Tyler Institutional Review Board under expedited review, Category 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

This approval includes prospective informed consent. Included with the approval is a requirement of signed informed consent, and your assurance of participant knowledge of the following prior to study participation: this is a research study; participation is completely voluntary with no obligations to continue participating, and with no adverse consequences for non-participation; and assurance of confidentiality of their data. This approval is valid for one year.

In addition, please ensure that any research assistants are knowledgeable about research ethics and confidentiality, and any co-investigators have completed human protection training within the past three years, and have forwarded their certificates to the Office of Research and Scholarship ([research@uttyler.edu](mailto:research@uttyler.edu)).

Please review the UT Tyler IRB Principal Investigator Responsibilities, and acknowledge your understanding of these responsibilities and the following through return of this email to the IRB Chair within one week after receipt of this approval letter:

- Prompt reporting to the UT Tyler IRB of any proposed changes to this research activity
- **Prompt reporting to the UT Tyler IRB and academic department administration will be done of any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.**
- Suspension or termination of approval may be done if there is evidence of any serious or continuing noncompliance with Federal Regulations or any aberrations in original proposal.
- Any change in proposal procedures must be promptly reported to the IRB prior to implementing any changes except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject.
- If you are using student emails to distribute surveys, always BCC them to facilitate confidentiality.
- Ensure that any online consent form, whether anonymous or not, always has the IRB# and approval date.
- Submit a Closure form when study is concluded. See Cayuse Resources on our Cayuse IRB webpage for instructions on how to do so.
- Please retain the information pertaining to this study in printed or electronic form for three years from the completion of the research.

Best of luck in your research and do not hesitate to contact the Office of Research and Scholarship if you need any further assistance.

Sincerely,

[Tenant] Institutional Review Board

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

### Interview Questions

- 1 What does career success mean to you?
- 2 Do you think you have had career success? If so, please explain. If not, why not?
- 3 External career success includes indicators of career success that individuals experience externally. What external career success have you had?
- 4 Internal career success includes indicators of career success that individuals experience internally. What internal career success have you had?
- 5 What do competencies mean to you? What competencies do you think have contributed to your career success?
- 6 Business competencies are the ability to analyze needs and propose solutions, apply business skills, drive results, plan and implement assignments, think strategically, and apply innovation. What business competencies have contributed to your career success?
- 7 Interpersonal competencies are the ability to successfully communicate, build trust, leverage diversity, network, partner, and influence stakeholders. What interpersonal competencies have contributed to your career success?
- 8 Global mindset is the ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences, worldwide traditions, and norms. In what way has a global mindset contributed to your career success?
- 9 Personal competencies are the ability to demonstrate adaptability and personal development. What personal competencies (TBA) have contributed to your career success?
- 10 Industry knowledge-related competencies include understanding your organizations' pressures, competitors, regulations, and their primary product or service. What industry-related (TBA) competencies have contributed to your career success?
- 11 Technology competencies include participating in a cooperative culture that promotes talent management, learning analytics, and mobile and social technology. What technology competencies do you have? How have your technology competencies contributed to your career success?

## Appendix C: Interview Questions Aligned with Conceptual Framework

This appendix shows interview questions aligned with the ATD’s (2013) six Foundational Competencies (Business Skills, Interpersonal Skills, Global Mindset, Personal Skills, Industry Knowledge, and Technology Literacy) for HRD professionals.

Research Question	Interview Question	Conceptual Framework (Six Components)
How do HRD professionals define and experience career success?	What does career success mean to you?	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p> <p><b>HRD professional.</b> Those who enhance the performance of individuals, groups, and organizations as well as processes by expanding expertise (Swanson, 2022).</p>
	<p>Do you think you have had career success?</p> <p>If so, please explain. If not, why not?</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p> <p><b>HRD professional.</b> Those who enhance the performance of individuals, groups, and organizations as well as processes by expanding expertise (Swanson, 2022).</p>
	<p>External career success includes indicators of career success that individuals experience externally.</p> <p>What external career success have you had?</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng, et al., 2005).</p> <p><b>Other-perceived/other-referent career success.</b> The status of one’s career success as compared to others (Guan et al., 2017).</p> <p><b>External/extrinsic factors of career success.</b> Markers of career success that individuals experience externally (Sullivan &amp; Arthur, 2006).</p> <p><b>Objective career success.</b> Another’s evaluation of an individual’s career success (Ng et al., 2005).</p>
How do HRD professionals define and experience	Internal career success includes indicators of career success that	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p>

<p>career success?</p>	<p>individuals experience internally.</p> <p>What internal career success have you had?</p>	<p><b>Self-referent/self-perceived career success.</b> The status of one’s career success containing criteria set by themselves (Heslin, 2003).</p> <p><b>Internal/intrinsic factors of career success.</b> Markers of career success that individuals experience internally (Sullivan &amp; Arthur, 2006).</p> <p><b>Subjective career success.</b> A person’s own evaluation of their career success (Ng &amp; Feldman, 2014).</p>
	<p>What do competencies mean to you?</p> <p>What competencies do you think have contributed to your career success?</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p> <p><b>Competencies.</b> Knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, and values that lead to high performance necessary for creating career success intended to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations (Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase &amp; Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014).</p>
	<p>Business competencies are the ability to analyze needs and propose solutions, apply business skills, drive results, plan and implement assignments, think strategically, and apply innovation.</p> <p>What business competencies have contributed to your career success?</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p> <p><b>Competencies.</b> Knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, and values that lead to high performance necessary for creating career success intended to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations (Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase &amp; Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014).</p> <p><b>Business competencies.</b> The ability to analyze needs and propose solutions, apply business skills, drive results, plan and implement assignments, think strategically, and apply innovation (Rothwell et al., 2013).</p>
<p>How do HRD professionals define and experience career success?</p>	<p>Interpersonal competencies are the ability to successfully communicate, build trust, leverage diversity, network,</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p>

	<p>partner, and influence stakeholders.</p> <p>What interpersonal competencies have contributed to your career success?</p>	<p><b>Competencies.</b> Knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, and values that lead to high performance necessary for creating career success intended to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations (Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase &amp; Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014).</p> <p><b>Interpersonal competencies.</b> The ability to successfully communicate, build trust, leverage diversity, network, partner, and influence stakeholders (Rothwell et al., 2013).</p>
	<p>A global mindset is the ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences, worldwide traditions, and norms.</p> <p>In what way has a global mindset contributed to your career success?</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p> <p><b>Competencies.</b> Knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, and values that lead to high performance necessary for creating career success intended to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations (Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase &amp; Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014).</p> <p><b>Global mindset.</b> The ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences, worldwide traditions, and norms (Rothwell et al., 2013).</p>
How do HRD professionals define and experience career success?	<p>Personal competencies are the ability to demonstrate adaptability and personal development.</p> <p>What personal competencies (TBA) have contributed to your career success?</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p> <p><b>Competencies.</b> Knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, and values that lead to high performance necessary for creating career success intended to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations (Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase &amp; Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014).</p> <p><b>Personal competencies.</b> The ability to demonstrate adaptability and personal development (Rothwell et al., 2013).</p>
	<p>Industry knowledge-related competencies include understanding your organizations' pressures, competitors,</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p>

	<p>regulations, and their primary product or service.</p> <p>What industry-related competencies have contributed to your career success?</p>	<p><b>Competencies.</b> Knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, and values that lead to high performance necessary for creating career success intended to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations (Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase &amp; Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014).</p> <p><b>Industry knowledge-related competencies.</b> Understanding your organizations' pressures, competitors, regulations, and their primary product or service (Rothwell et al., 2013).</p>
<p>How do HRD professionals define and experience career success?</p>	<p>Technology competencies include participating in a cooperative culture that promotes talent management, learning analytics, and mobile and social technology.</p> <p>What technology competencies do you have?</p> <p>How have your technology competencies contributed to your career success?</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p> <p><b>Competencies.</b> Knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, and values that lead to high performance necessary for creating career success intended to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations (Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase &amp; Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014).</p> <p><b>Technology competencies.</b> Participating in a cooperative culture that promotes talent management, learning analytics, and mobile and social technology (Gauld, 2014).</p>
	<p>I have asked about different competencies that might have contributed to your career success.</p> <p>What competencies have contributed the most to your career success?</p> <p>Why do you think so?</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p> <p><b>Competencies.</b> Knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, and values that lead to high performance necessary for creating career success intended to benefit individuals, groups, and organizations (Dumitrescu et al., 2014; Hase &amp; Davis, 1999; Reio, 2020; Smits, 2014).</p>
<p>How do HRD professionals define and experience competencies</p>	<p>In what ways would your experiences with career success contribute to the field of HRD?</p>	<p><b>Career success.</b> The psychological outcomes and perceptions of others such as organizations and peer groups resulting from accumulated work experiences (Ng et al., 2005).</p>

leading to career success?		
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## VITA

### CHERYL DEPONTE

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Tomball, Texas 77375  
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#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2017-2020 Organization & Talent Development Manager, Whataburger, Houston, TX  
2014-2016 Talent Management Consultant & Leadership Coach, Right Management, Houston, TX  
2010-2013 Human Resources Development, Learning & Performance Specialist, The Ken Blanchard Companies, Escondido, CA  
2005-2013 Certified Advanced Facilitator - HRM, Organizational Behavior, & Supervision & Leadership, Apollo Education Group, Houston, TX & Escondido, CA  
2002-2005 Human Resources Generalist, Assistant Vice President, Citigroup, Inc., Houston, TX  
2000-2001 Human Resources, Staffing Consultant & Advisor, Hewlett-Packard, Houston, TX  
1996-1998 Employment Development Director, Technical Standards, Inc., San Marcos, CA  
1991-1996 Private Tutor and Instructional Aid, Palomar College, San Marcos, CA

#### EDUCATION

2013 Master of Arts, Industrial Organizational Psychology, Alliant International  
2002 Master of Arts, Organizational Management, University of Phoenix  
1999 Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, California State University, San Marcos  
1993 Associates of Arts, Liberal Studies & Sciences, Palomar College

#### SELECTED AWARDS & HONORS

2018 “Support Professional of the Quarter, Houston Region”, Whataburger, Texas  
2013 Magna Cum Laude, Alliant International University  
2002 Summa Cum Laude, University of Phoenix  
1993 Cum Laude, Palomar College

#### SELECTED TALKS & PRESENTATIONS

- “HRD Programs in the US” – presented as a student co-presenter at a private university round table at AHRD, Jacksonville, Florida, February 17, 2016
- “I/O Psychology Career Panel” – presented as co-presenter in a professional panel at SIOP, San Diego, CA, April 26, 2012

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- Professional Workshop & Certification: “The MBTI Certification Program,” Irving, TX, 2018
- Professional Workshop: “FranklinCovey – The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”, Houston, TX, 2018
- Professional Workshop & Certification: “Extended DISC Certified Professional,” Magnolia, TX, 2017
- Professional Certification: “PHR Professional in Human Resources Certification,” Houston, TX, 2004

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

- Academy of Human Resource Development
- Association of Talent Development
- Society for Human Resources Management
- Society for Industrial Organizational Psychology
- Society for Technical Communication