

## Birth-Factors and Success: A Theoretical Perspective

Adedara Oduguwa Ph.D.

School of Management Sciences, Department of Business Administration and Marketing, Babcock University,  
Ilishan-Remo, Ogun state, Nigeria

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### Abstract

What causes success in people? Answering this question, Waterman and Peter (1982) demonstrates that excellence, which the authors equated with success, is dependent on myriads of factors. These factors were conceptually declassified into 7-S model. However, to many, hard work, educational qualifications, luck, prayer and preparedness cause success. These arguments are in contrast to the new theoretical perspective of success. This new paper examined previous theories on human behaviour and introduced 'the birth factor theory of success' as a formidable replacement to the previous theories of success. Major theories examined included: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, diffusion of innovations theory, cognitive developmental theory, relative cohort size theory and human capital theory. However, the researcher categorised these theories as 'previous theories' and introduced a 'new perspective' entitled 'birth factors theory of success. The paper argued that success cannot be caused by a single birth factor, rather by conglomeration of birth factors. Also, the new theory negates arguments of previous theories that success is caused by traits, innovation, gender and cohort or time of birth. The paper concluded that success is caused by where, when, how, and to whom one was born.

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### I. Introduction

The concept of success is old, universal and has distinctive definition depending on people, context, and culture. In similar view, success connotes divergent perspectives such as academic degree(s), power acquisition, money or position, political or social recognition, philanthropic activities, and accomplishing one's passion according to (Seema & Sujatha, 2015). Within this purview, success denotes achievement in the field of one's profession and success as one's accomplishment in life. This concept differs from Dzombak (2015), who saw success as having passion and dedication for something that holds a special place in your heart. However, traditional approaches measure success in terms of knowledge, economic and social pursuit. Scholars have been concerned with critical success factors for individuals and organisations (Grude, Bell, Dodd & Parker, 2002).

The historical thesis of Waterman and Peter (1982) demonstrates that excellence, which the authors equated with success, is dependent on myriads of factors. These factors were conceptually declassified into 7-S model. The debate was scholarly expanded and followed with Collins and Porras (1994), which anchored success on enduring organizational culture. The body of evidence documented in Collins and Porras (1994) was reexamined by Collins and Porras (1997) with profound findings that culture combined with visionary leader separates and defines success and organizational longevity. The works of Schein (1992 & 2013) added empirical and theoretical foundation to the debate that culture is instrumental in the discourse of success. While cultural argument is comprehensive, an encompassing insight was generated by Armstrong (2013), which alluded to the human dimension to success, which, Yesufu (2000) have long orchestrated. However, the new perspective linked success to individual's family background, birth order, socio-economic background of parent, month of birth (birth factors).

### II. Previous Theories

Various theories as they are relevant to individuals and success are examined. However, identified theories include: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, diffusion of innovations theory, cognitive developmental theory, relative cohort size theory and human capital theory.

#### 2.2.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

This theory examines a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1988, 1994, 1995, 2005). Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex "layers" of environment, each having an effect on a child's development (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued “the ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive and mutual understanding between an active growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these setting and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded”p.21. That is, where one was born, how one was born and to whom one was born has significant effect on life outcome. Bronfenbrenner (1979) divided his theory into microsystem and mesosystem. According to him, the microsystem defined as “...a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by developing a person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics” p. 22. This is the immediate environment a person lives and grows in. It includes a person’s family, peers, school and neighbourhood. It is in the microsystem that the most direct interactions with social agents take place, such as with parents, peers and teachers (Christensen, 2010).

While mesosystem “...comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates...” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). Similarly, this refers to the relations between microsystems or connections between contexts. Examples are the relationship of family experiences to school experiences, school experiences to church experiences and family experiences to peer experiences (Christensen, 2010). The next two levels, which influence a person indirectly, have been described as the exosystem and macrosystem. The exosystem “...refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person.” Additionally, this involve links between a social setting in which the individual does not have an active role and the individual’s immediate context. For example, a husband’s or child’s experience at home may be influenced by the mother’s experiences at work (Christensen, 2010). The macrosystem describes the overall societal culture in which individuals live. Cultural contexts include developing and industrialised countries, socioeconomic status, poverty and ethnicity. The boundary is defined by national and cultural borders, laws and rules (Christensen, 2010). Similarly, it “...refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems...that exist or could exist, at level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). The theory was recently renamed “bio-ecologicalsystems theory” to emphasize that a child’s own biology is a primary environment fueling his/her development.

The major criticisms against bio-ecological systems theory is that, although Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of development has proven to be beneficial in providing an insight into all the factors that play a role in the growth and development of individuals (Engler, 2007). It also shows how all the factors are related to each other and impact on the development cycle. Bronfenbrenner does not discuss the factors explicitly as such, but presents a theoretical and analytical framework (Christensen, 2010). Similarly, interaction between individuals is not only through micro, meso, exo and macrosystem but mainly through learning (Gustafsson, 2009). Besides, how can we measure a person’s capacity without resilience? (Engler, 2007).

Resilience is manifested in having a sense of purpose and belief in a bright future, including goal direction, educational aspirations, achievement motivation, persistence, hopefulness, optimism and spiritual charisma (Bernard, 1995). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory should include resiliency if it must be complete and practicable. The theory is lacking as it does not have means of explaining how an individual brought up in a negative environment survives and becomes successful (Christensen, 2010). Paquette and Ryan (2001), opined, the model gives a relatively theoretical framework when starting point is the individual and belief that development cannot exist without the participation of individual influence and willingness to change. Through the development of information technology and access to information, the individual will be given more freedom regarding their space of activity and independence, but also less freedom and space of activity because individuals behave in different ways while some individuals, to a very high extent, see possibilities, some individuals only see difficulties and obstacles (Christensen, 2010).

Supporters of this theory include: Barnes, Katz, Korbin and O’Brien (2006); Brendtro (2006); Cole (1979); Lerner (2005); Moen (1995); Paquette and Ryan (2001) and Pence (1988). They argued that the interaction between factors in the child’s maturing biology, a child’s immediate family/community environment, and the societal landscape fuels and steers his/her development. Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers (Moen, 1995). To study a child’s development then, one should look not only at the child and his/her immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment that is, behaviour at home, in school and at work (Barnes et al, 2006). However, the ecological systems theory holds that human beings encounter different environments throughout human’s lifespan that may influence human behaviour in varying degrees. These systems include the micro system, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macro system, and the chrono-system (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). More so, Individuals move through a series of life transitions, all of which necessitate environmental support and coping skills. Social challenges involving health care, family relations, inadequate income, mental health difficulties, conflicts with law enforcement agencies, unemployment, and educational difficulties and so on, can all be subsumed under the ecological model, which would enable practitioners to assess factors that are relevant to such problems (Brendtro, 2006).

For instance, in a society where the family plays crucial role in child's upbringing. The family decides the kind of school a child attends, the kind of cloths s/he wears and the kind of career and or even success such attains. It is perhaps impossible for a child to achieve anything without partial or full support of his/her immediate family, peers, school, or religion. The child's environment includes the immediate (internal) and the larger (external) environment. While the internal environment provides for a child's early life upbringing, the external environment molds a child's character and altitude. It is believed that these set of people are first product of both internal and external environment before attaining career peak. Also, getting to the peak, it is assumed that they must have been influenced by a number of environmental factors most especially 'agent of political socialization' (family, school, peer group and religion).

### **2.2.2 Diffusion of Innovations Theory**

Everett Rogers first introduced diffusion of Innovations Theory in 1962. The Theory seeks to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread. Roger's (1962) diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. Diffusion is a special type of communication concerned with the spread of messages that are perceived as new ideas (Rogers and Valente, 1995). In addition, four elements are identified in the process of diffusion; they are, the innovation, communication channels, time and the social system (Rogers and Valente, 1995). This process relies strongly on human resources. An innovation may have been invented a long time ago, but if individuals perceive it as new, then it may still be an innovation for them (Rogers, 2003). The newness characteristic of an adoption is more related to the three steps (knowledge, persuasion, and decision) of the innovation-decision process (Sahin, 2006). In addition, Rogers claimed there is a lack of diffusion research on technology clusters.

In addition, uncertainty is an important obstacle to the adoption of innovations. An innovation's consequences may create uncertainty (Sahin, 2006). "Consequences are the changes that occur in an individual or a social system as a result of the adoption or rejection of an innovation" (Rogers, 2003, p. 436). To reduce the uncertainty of adopting the innovation, individuals should be informed about its advantages and disadvantages to make them aware of all its consequences. Moreover, Rogers claimed that consequences can be classified as desirable versus undesirable (functional or dysfunctional), direct versus indirect (immediate result or result of the immediate result), and anticipated versus unanticipated (recognized and intended or not) (Sahin, 2006).

Communication channels, for Rogers (2003), communication is "a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding" (p. 5). This communication occurs through channels between sources. Rogers states that "a source is an individual or an institution that originates a message. A channel is the means by which a message gets from the source to the receiver" (Rogers, 2003, p.204). Rogers states that diffusion is a specific kind of communication and includes these communication elements: an innovation, two individuals or other units of adoption, and a communication channel. Mass media and interpersonal communication are two communication channels. While mass media channels include a mass media such as TV, radio, or newspaper, interpersonal channels consist of a two-way communication between two or more individuals (Sahin, 2006). On the other hand, "diffusion is a very social process that involves interpersonal communication relationships" (Rogers, 2003, p. 19). Thus, interpersonal channels are more powerful to create or change strong attitudes held by an individual. In interpersonal channels, the communication may have a characteristic of homophily, that is, the degree to which two or more individuals who interact are similar in certain attributes, such as beliefs, education and socioeconomic status. However, the diffusion of innovations requires at least some degree of heterophily, which is the degree to which two or more individuals who interact are different in certain attributes. In fact, "one of the most distinctive problems in the diffusion of innovations is that the participants are usually quite heterophilous" (Rogers, 2003, p. 19).

Communication channels also can be categorized as localite channels and cosmopolite channels that communicate between an individual of the social system and outside sources (Sahin, 2006). While interpersonal channels can be local or cosmopolite, almost all mass media channels are cosmopolite. Because of these communication channels' characteristics, mass media channels and cosmopolite channels are more significant at the knowledge stage and localite channels and interpersonal channels are more important at the persuasion stage of the innovation-decision process (Rogers, 2003). Time, according to Rogers (2003), is ignored in most behavioral research. He argues that including the time dimension in diffusion research illustrates one of its strengths. The innovation-diffusion process, adopter categorization, and rate of adoptions all include a time dimension (Sahin, 2006).

The social system is the last element in the diffusion process. Rogers (2003) defined the social system as "a set of interrelated units engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal" (p. 23). Since diffusion of innovations takes place in the social system, it is influenced by the social structure of the social system. For Rogers (2003), structure is "the patterned arrangements of the units in a system" (p. 24). He further claimed that the nature of the social system affects individuals' innovativeness, which is the main criterion for categorizing adopters (Sahin, 2006).

Nonetheless, the theory has been heavily criticised based on the following grounds: Diffusion is difficult to quantify because human beings are complex. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible; to measure what causes adoption of an innovation (Damanpour, 1996). In addition, Diffusion theories can never account for all variables, and therefore might miss vital predictors of adoption (Plsek & Greenhalgh, 2001). More so, this variety of variables has also led to inconsistent results in research and reducing heuristic value (Downs & Mohr, 1976).

Despite high level of criticisms leveled against the theory, the theory has won admiration of writers such as Bennett and Bennett, (2003); Blankenship (1998); Carter (1998); Dooley (1999); Jabareen (2006); Less (2003); and Zakaria (2001). These researchers argued that adoption of innovation will lead to knowledge acquisition, increased performance, productivity and adoption of innovation is completely measurable.

### **2.2.3 Cognitive Developmental Theory**

According to cognitive developmental theory, gender identity is postulated as the basic organizer and regulator of children's gender learning (Kohlberg, 1966). Children develop the stereotypic conceptions of gender from what they see and hear around them. Once they achieve gender constancy; the belief that their own gender is fixed and irreversible, they positively value their gender identity and seek to behave only in ways that are congruent with that conception (Kohlberg, 1966). Gender constancy is the realization that one's sex is a permanent attribute tied to underlying biological properties and does not depend on superficial characteristics such as hair length, style of clothing or choice of play activities (Kohlberg, 1966). Development of gender constancy is not an all or none phenomenon. Three discrete levels of gender understanding comprise gender constancy (Kohlberg, 1978).

From least to most mature forms of gender understanding, these are designated as the gender identity, stability, and consistency components of gender constancy. 'Gender identity' requires the simple ability to label oneself as a boy or girl and others as a boy, girl, man, or woman. 'Gender stability' is the recognition that gender remains constant over time - that is, one's sex is the same now as it was when one was a baby and will remain the same in adulthood. The final component of gender constancy, 'gender consistency', is mastered at about age six or seven. The child now possesses the added knowledge that gender is invariant despite changes in appearance, dress or activity. Children are not expected to adopt gender-typed behaviours consistently until after they regard themselves unalterably as a boy or a girl, which usually is not achieved until about six years of age (Kohlberg, 1966).

Although Kohlberg's theory attracted much attention over the decades, its main tenets have not fared well empirically. Studies generally have failed to corroborate the link between children's attainment of gender constancy and their gender-linked conduct (Hudson, 1990). Long before children have attained gender constancy, they prefer to play with toys traditionally associated with their gender (Emmerich, 1982; Emmerich, 1972; Emmerich, Sharabany, 1977; Lobel & Menashri, 1993; Marcus & Overton, 1978; Martin & Little, 1990), to model their behaviour after same-sex models (Bussey & Bandura, 1984) and to reward peers for gender-appropriate behaviour (Bussey & Bandura, 1992; Lamb & Roopnarine, 1979). Moreover, growing awareness of gender constancy does not increase children's preferences for same-gender roles and activities (Marcus & Overton, 1978; Smetana & Letourneau, 1984).

Despite these sets of growing counter-arguments, the theory is heavily supported by writers such as: Emmerich, Goldman, Kirsch and Sharabany (1977); Emmerich (1984); Gouze and Nadelman (1980); Kohlberg and Zigler (1967); Marcus and Overton (1978). These researchers argued that the appearance of gender constancy in young children is related to their general level of cognitive development and acquisition of conservation skills, which often dictates the gender role they take in adulthood. Perhaps, this gender role predicts their life-outcomes (Gouze & Nadelman, 1980). In the same vein, a large amount of researches have demonstrated that gender-role knowledge is quite high among pre-gender constant children. In addition, it is clear that the acquisition of gender constancy is related to the acquisition of other cognitive skills and pre-gender constant children have substantial knowledge of gender-role stereotypes, the factors influencing the early acquisition and use of gender-role stereotypes remain uncertain.

In contrast, the main thrust of Kohlberg's theory is that gender is all about perception and self believe. But how can success be caused or influenced only through perception and self believe? What about birth position, family background, month of birth, or the aggregate of the birth factors?

### **2.2.4 Human Capital Theory**

The human capital theory was pioneered by Theodore Schultz (1961), Gary Becker (1962, 1994) and Jacob Mincer (1993). The postulators opined that human capital is a collection of traits – all the knowledge, talents, skills, abilities, experience, intelligence, training, judgment, and wisdom possessed individually and collectively by individuals in a population, community, company, industry and nation. These resources are the total capacity of the people that represents a form of wealth or asset which can be directed to achieve the goals

and aspirations of a nation, an industry, a firm or a community (Becker, 1962; Mincer, 1993). In addition, the stock of knowledge, skills and abilities embedded in an individual that result from natural endowment and subsequent investment in education, training and development (Becker, 1964).

Moreover, human capital is the abilities and know-how of men and women that have been acquired at some cost and that can command a price in the labour market because they are useful in the productive process (Parnes, 1984). Similarly, the skills that people acquire are a form of capital, human capital; this capital is acquired through deliberate investments in education; more so, the skills are the capacities that contribute to economic production; and the earnings in the labour market are the means by which a person's productivity is rewarded (Little, 2002). It is an aggregate economic view of the human being acting within economies, which is an effort to capture the social, biological, cultural and psychological complexity as they interact in explicit and/or economic transactions (Becker, 1962; Mincer, 1993).

More so, the human capital theorists view the human resources (people) element as capital or wealth only if they are productive, efficient and effective (Schultz, 1961 & Becker, 1962). It is this efficiency, creativity, talents, intelligence, knowledge, skills, abilities and productivity in them that make them capital (Schultz, 1961). In addition, many theories explicitly connect investment in human capital development to education and the role of human capital in economic development, productivity growth and innovation has frequently been cited as a justification for government subsidies for education and job skills training (Simkovic, 2013).

Despite the popularity of the human capital theory, the theory have been heavily criticised by writers such as Ashton and Green (1996); Bowles, Gintis and Osborne (2001); Little (2002); Little & Singh (1992); Little (1992); Psacharopoulos (1994, 1996); Wolf (2002) and Woodhall (2001). According to them, human capital is a redefined concept without sufficient explanatory power. In addition, Bowles and Gintis (1975) argued that the theory is misleading both as a framework for empirical research and as a guide to policy making. First, they view production as social as well as technical process; secondly, they viewed production as joint dimension, constituting a transformation of raw material into finished product and of workers with given skills and type of consciousness into workers with altered skills and consciousness; Thirdly, labour is not a commodity but a resource whose effort must be channeled and used in order to make profit; Lastly, the structure of wage rate is not exogenous to the firm but of the instrument used to maximize profit (Bowles & Gintis, 1975).

Similarly, Winkler (1987) criticised the theory using the concept of screening theory. According to him, "Screening is the process by which the productive abilities of individuals are ascertained. Education serves as one mechanism which sorts individuals by their abilities and labels those abilities with educational credentials" (Winkler, 1987, 287). But can we say these credentials reflect the productivity-enhancing effects education, or, rather, represent some innate productive ability of the individual? (Psacharopoulos, 1994). In addition, another criticism is methodological. This critique emanated from concerns about the techniques, data reliability and an exaggerated reporting of the result of rates of return analysis ( Psacharopoulos, 1994, 1996).

Moreover, indirect benefits, that is, the effects on family health, fertility and child mortality deserve more attention than direct benefits of investment in education to both the individual and society (Woodhall, 2001; Lewin, Little & Colclough, 1983 a, b). Ashton and Green (1996) suggested that the link between skill formation and economic performance is far from automatic and that it should be seen in social and political context. National, international and local politics surrounding education and training - all can affect the strength and nature of the relationship between skills and economic performance. Besides, given the ways in which persons are recruited and promoted to jobs, and the link between educational levels and earnings implicit in many institutionalised salary scales, nonetheless, it hardly surprising that education and earnings are correlated, and in ways that do not necessarily reflect the individual's performance on the current job (Little, 1984 & Wolf, 2002). Lastly, not only is progress in measurement of the returns to education being made but that more comprehensive measures of both non-monetary and monetary benefits are being developed.

Supporters of the theory include Crossley (2000); Galunic and Anderson (2000); Kolomiiets and Petrushenko (2017); Nerdrum and Erikson (2001); Seligman, Kress, Winfrey, Feranil and Agarwal (1997). According to Galunic and Anderson (2000) human capital is acquired through schooling and experience on the job, which adds value to the individuals and affects their earnings differences. That is, employees who invest in education to leverage their skill level can justify higher earnings as a result of their investment in different organizations (Nerdrum & Erikson, 2001). Similarly, Crossley (2000) states "while any capability produced by human investment becomes a part of the human agent and hence cannot be sold, it is nevertheless in touch with the marketplace by affecting the wages and salaries the human agent can earn. The resulting increase in earnings is the yield on the investment" p. 36. Further, human capital mechanisms can be viewed as levers through which the values of the firm are internalized in employees, who perhaps exercise a form of self-control in alignment with the interests of the senior management (Kolomiiets and Petrushenko, 2017).

The human capital theory major premise is on collection of traits; knowledge, talents, skills, abilities, experience, intelligence, training, judgment, and wisdom possessed individually and collectively by individuals in a particular environment. The theory argued that without this collection of traits, success cannot be achieved. In contrast, without birth, can a child exist, not to talk of having a collection of traits? In trust, traits are subset of birth and not the other way round. It is when a child is born, that we start talking of traits, behaviour and attitude of the child (Seligman et al., 1997).

### **2.2.5 Relative Cohort Size Theory**

Easterlin (1987b) defined his hypothesis in The New Palgrave as follows: The Easterlin, or "cohort size", hypothesis posits that, other things constant, the economic and social fortunes of a cohort (those born in a given year) tend to vary inversely with its relative size, approximated by the crude birth rate in the period surrounding the cohort's birth. That is, persons born in a low birth rate period can anticipate an open and easy job market, relatively good wages, and rapid career advancement. On the other hand, persons born in large birth cohorts will experience less favourable economic consequences. There are two parts to this theory: the effect birth rates have on the relative number of young adults to older adults; and the effect of relative numbers on earnings and unemployment. The linkage between higher birth rates and adverse economic and social effects arises from what might be termed '*crowding mechanisms*' operating within three major social institutions- the family, school and labour market. Evidently, the babies of the 1930s found that they were scarce compared to older and younger workers and thus experienced little unemployment and advanced quickly in their careers. In addition, the babies of the 1950s were in abundance relative to older workers and therefore met with unfavourable labour market conditions (Macunovich, 2000). Easterlin (1978a) introduced relative income concepts into his discussion of the fertility transition as follows:

Because of the substantial upward trend in living levels during economic development, each generation typically comes from a more prosperous background than that of the preceding generation. Because of this, the views of each successive generation as to the material requisites of the "good life" tend to be progressively higher. Goods which to one generation may have been luxuries become necessities to the next- the automobile is a case in point. This "inter-generation taste effect," as it might be called, tends to raise the minimum living level which parents feel is necessary before they can "afford" to have children... There is a floor to the curvilinear indifference map at the minimum required living level. Below this floor the indifference lines become horizontal, signifying that welfare depends only on the parents' goods and having children adds nothing to satisfaction. With the progress of economic growth this "subsistence" floor shifts upward and the marginal rate of substitution decreases at any given point above the floor, indicating that children are becoming less attractive relative to goods (p. 115).

However, the theory have been heavily criticised by different researchers. For instance, the potential connection between relative cohort size and relative income and hence fertility- has been applied only in the post-transition context (Macunovich, 1998a). It has not been used to explain the fertility transition itself. Easterlin (1978a) argued that countries with strong collectivist support systems tend to have a more limited effect of relative cohort size on fertility, as the negative economic situations associated with large cohort sizes and their oversupply of workers at young adult age may be limited due to policies that keep unemployment to a minimum and guarantee jobs. In other words, the relative cohort size theory cannot be generalized. Similarly, Oppenheimer (1979) criticised Easterlin for comparing relative economic status between father and son, while estimating the changes in their market positions over time though a general – and not male-specific - unemployment rate. She added, that when Easterlin talked about material aspirations as derived from a comparison of own income relative to parents' income at the time of their own childhood years; it is family income rather than only father's income that is considered.

Oppenheimer's (1979) contribution also spurred an inclusion of a female labour force participation variable among scholars, arguing that as wives' participation in the labour force can compensate for low male incomes among large cohorts, the measure indicates women's position in society and may have an impact on relative cohorts' effect on fertility. In addition, Emmerich (1979) argue that Easterlin's theory cannot be applicable in every country but only to Europe and America. He opined that culture and norms of people also shapes their thinking on how many children to give birth to and not to.

Despite the heavy criticisms leveled against this theory, the theory has grossly been supported by scholars such as; Baird (1987), Berger (1984), Bourgeois-Pichat (1967b), Emmerich (1979), Freeman (1979), Lee (1976) and Watkins (1990). These researchers argued that age and year of birth does have significant effect on life outcome and success. They added cohort size effect is everything. People who are favoured by relatively small cohort size find it easy in their life's endeavor when compared to those born in large cohorts. For instance, Generation X (Nigerians born before 1940) remains the greatest generation. This was when population of Nigeria was not up to 30 million, educated Nigerians were relatively little and job opportunities were relatively high when compared with the population. Today, the story is other way round. There are 192 million Nigerians

(World Bank, 2011), with several people jostling for limited available jobs. This analogy validates the Easterlin's Relative Cohort Size Theory.

More so, Relative Cohort Size Theory provides a comprehensive understanding on how relative birth rate affects individual success and or life outcome. The theory added that the higher the number of people born in a particular year, the lesser their chances of becoming successful while the lesser the population of birth the higher the chances of becoming successful. Conversely, the theory view success from single perspective (individual cohort). Although, the generation one was born continually dictates whether a person will be successful or not, such interconnectedness could not be proved and established by the present study. Thus, a need to introduce a new theory that will establish such interconnectedness becomes inevitable.

### **III. New Perspective**

#### **3.1 Birth Factors Theory of Success**

Having reviewed several theories on human resources and success, the researcher found that none of the theories comprehensively explain how unilateral factors (gender, traits, family background) cause success in people. Perhaps, a more holistic approach might be employed to examine success. Therefore, in closing this theoretical gap, the researcher developed the 'Birth Factors Theory of Success'.

The researcher came up with this new perspective based on experience and review of several literature (conceptual, theoretical and empirical) on individual birth and empirical studies on what causes success outside traits, innovation, luck and or another unilateral factors. Answer to this was found in birth factors. However, the researcher negates the argument of Du, Gao and Levi (2009, 2012) that success is determined by one birth factor, that is, month of birth. Further, the researcher do not disagrees that success is partly determined by the month in which one was born, but attempt to add other quintessential factors, that is, family background, cohort size, socio-economic status, gender, and birth order as success determinant.

#### ***Theory's Proposition***

Birth Factors Theory of success is based on the logic that success in life or life outcome (business, education, career, marriage, sport, politics and so on) is dependent on where and to whom one was born (family background), when one was born (month and cohort size), how one was born (socio-economic status of parents) and whether one is first born or last born and or whether one is male or female (birth-order and gender). That is, the birth factors are key success factors. More so, the presence of these factors lead to "birth productive effect" while absence of all these factors lead to "birth unproductive effect."

#### ***Theory's Assumption***

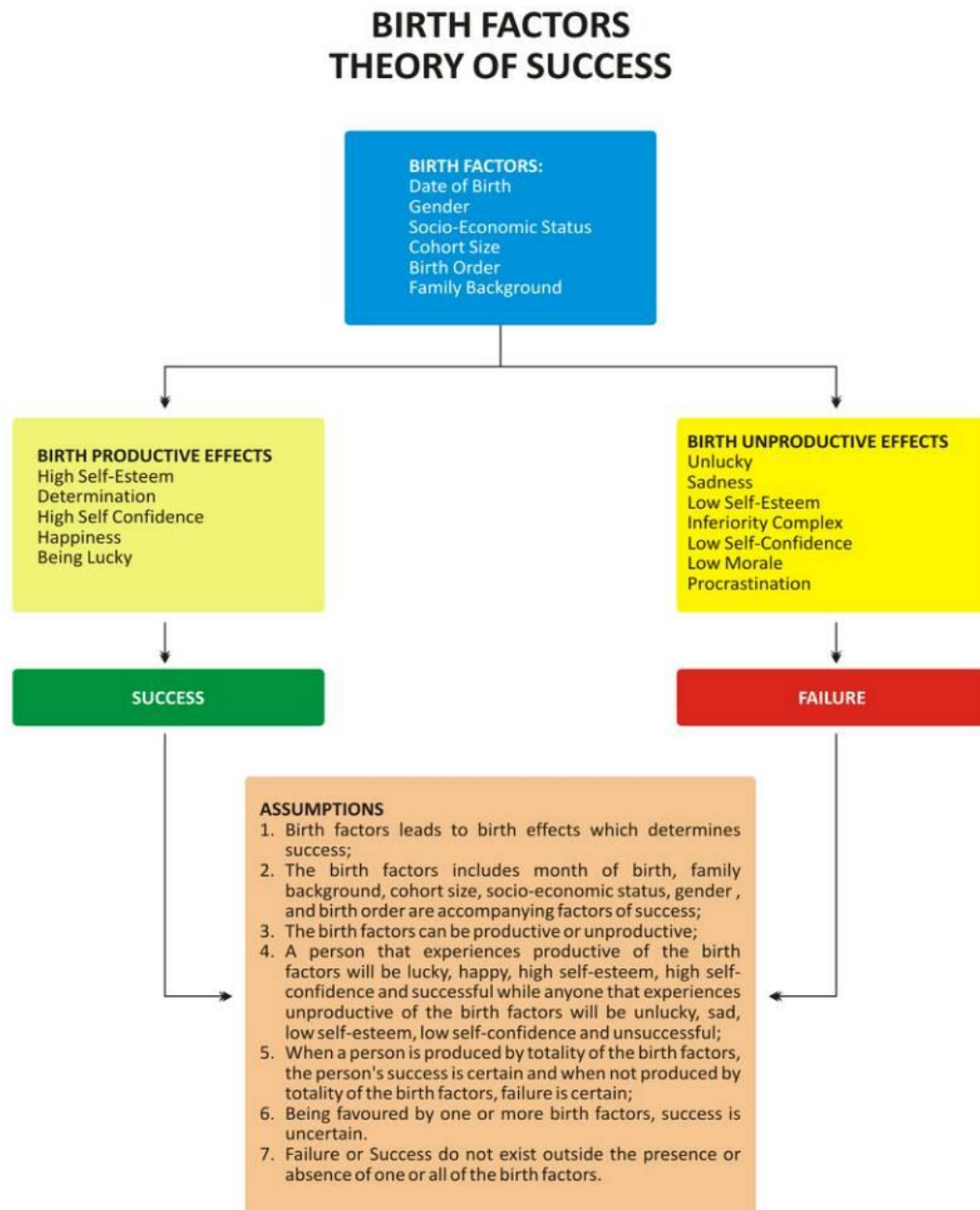
The following assumptions were identified and examined:

1. Birth factors lead to birth-effect which determines success or failure;
2. The birth factors include: month of birth, family background, cohort size, socio-economic status, gender, and birth order, as accompanying factors of success;
3. Birth factors can be productive or unproductive; a person that experiences productivity of the birth factors will be lucky, happy, have high self-esteem, have high self-confidence and become successful while anyone that experiences 'unproductive birth factors' will be unlucky, sad, have low self-esteem, have low self-confidence and become unsuccessful;
4. When a person is favoured by totality of the birth factors, the person's success is certain and when not favoured by totality of the birth factors, failure is certain;
5. Being favoured by one or more birth factors, success is uncertain and failure not guaranteed;
6. Failure or success does not exist outside the presence or absence of one or all of the birth factors.

**3.1.1 Birth Productive Effect:** These are the totality of all the advantages provided by someone's favourable birth factors, that is, wealthy and well educated family background; being born as first born, male child, only child, or twins; being born in the first quarter of the year; being born into the family of highly influential parents; and being born into a small cohort size which attracts success and so on. These factors when present will make a child to become whatever he or she chooses to become without any form of delay. For instance, a child whose parents are well educated and wealthy will not have problem with paying school fees or problem of capital when such decides to own a business.

**3.1.2 Birth Unproductive Effect:** This is a reversal of birth productive effect. It is the totality of all the disadvantages caused by someone's unfavourable birth circumstances that is, being born into a wretched or poor and uneducated family; being born as last born, female child, or orphan; being born in the third or last quarter of the year; being born into the family of low-class parents; and being born into a large cohort size which attracts high competition for survival and so on. These factors when present will delay or debar a child from becoming

whatever he or she chooses to become. For instance, a child whose parents are uneducated and wretched will not think of going to school or owing a business since eating alone is problem. Perhaps, such will first look for a job before thinking of schooling or starting a business even if his or her passion for such endeavour is at the apex.



**Figure 1.1: Birth Factors Theory of Success Model, (2020)**

Also, persons that experience birth productive effect (as described above) will be successful while birth unproductive effects experience will be unsuccessful. Additionally, when someone experiences one or some of the birth factors, success or failure is uncertain. Similarly, any person that experiences birth productive effects will be happy, lucky, have high self-esteem, have high self-confidence and become successful while experience of birth unproductive effects will lead to unhappiness, low self-esteem, low self-confidence, unluckiness and failure. Finally, there is no such thing as success or failure without the presence or absence of birth factors.



#### IV. Conclusions

This theoretical review examined various human resources theories as they affect individual success and also introduced a new perspective to the reasoning. Major theories examined included: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, diffusion of innovations theory, cognitive developmental theory, relative cohort size theory and human capital theory. However, the researcher categorised these theories as 'previous theories' and introduced a 'new perspective' entitled 'birth factors theory of success. The paper argued that success cannot be caused by a single birth factor, rather by conglomeration of birth factors. Also, the new proposition negates arguments of previous theories that success is caused by traits, innovation, gender and cohort or time of birth. The paper concluded that success is caused by where, when, how, and to whom one was born. In other words, a unification of birth factors.

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