



Linking dimensions of career adaptability to adaptation results: A meta-analysis



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ABSTRACT

As the work environment becomes more dynamic, adaptability is becoming increasingly important. Career adaptability refers to a set of psychosocial resources that help individuals successfully manage career-related tasks and transitions. The number of publications on career adaptability has increased rapidly over the past five years. Grounded in career construction theory, the current study provides a dimension-level meta-analysis of 76 career adaptability studies, examining relationships among four career adaptability dimensions (i.e., concern, control, curiosity, and confidence), as well as relationships between these dimensions and several adaptation results (e.g., job performance, job satisfaction, turnover intentions). A meta-analytic confirmatory factor analysis supported the underlying structure of career adaptability. In addition, meta-analytic relative weights analysis was conducted to test hypotheses about the unique and relative contributions of each career adaptability dimension to the prediction of adaptation results. Findings suggest that researchers should begin to refocus research questions and modify methodologies to better accommodate variations in dimension-level career adaptability relationships.

1. Introduction

Career adaptability is a multi-dimensional psychosocial resource that manifests as a set of four transactional competencies (i.e., concern, control, curiosity, and confidence) that help individuals effectively manage career-related tasks and transitions across the working lifespan (Savickas, 1997, 2002, 2005). According to career construction theory (Savickas, 2002, 2005), career adaptability reflects a diverse array of attitudes, behaviors, and competencies that aid in the proactive adaptation to changing work situations (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Today's employees face transitions between jobs, organizations, and occupations more frequently than ever before. In response to these developments, vocational and organizational psychologists have focused increasing empirical attention on the career adaptability construct, as is evidenced by the recent publication of the first qualitative systematic review (Johnston, 2016) and the first quantitative meta-analytic review of this literature (Rudolph, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017).

The rapid increase in research on career adaptability over the past five years is in large part due to the development and global validation of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Using the CAAS to operationalize career adaptability, the recent Rudolph et al. (2017) meta-analysis represents an important contribution to our understanding of the operation of the career adaptability construct. However, because most studies report an overall score reflecting a global index (i.e., mean or sum) of the four component scores, the Rudolph et al. (2017) meta-analysis focused solely on overall career adaptability relationships (i.e.,

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aggregated across the four career adaptability dimensions). Given that career construction theory suggests unique dimension-level relationships for each of the career adaptability dimensions with adaptation results (e.g., Savickas, 2002), this presents an important opportunity for an enhanced meta-analytic synthesis of this literature at the dimension level.

We address this opportunity in the current work by focusing our attention upon dimension-level career adaptability relationships. More specifically, we contribute to an enhanced understanding of career adaptability as operationalized by the CAAS in three important ways. First, we offer the results of a dimension-level meta-analysis of the career adaptability construct. The Rudolph et al. (2017) meta-analysis focused exclusively on aggregated overall career adaptability relationships, and we focus more broadly here on the four career adaptability dimensions (i.e., the disaggregated individual constructs of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence as measured by the CAAS). The broader focus that we adopt here is important, because Savickas (2002) has suggested that these dimensions may have different antecedents and unique consequences. Second, we offer confirmatory support for career adaptability as a latent, higher-order factor comprised of these four dimensions. Specifically, and in support of a great deal of primary evidence, we offer a meta-analytic test of the overarching latent variable factor structure of the four dimensions of career adaptability using confirmatory factor analysis. These results are important in that they validate this overall construction of the CAAS with meta-analytic data. Because meta-analysis provides for optimized estimates of population parameters, this confirmatory factor model serves as an important triangulation of evidence from the large-scale cross-cultural validation of the CAAS offered by Savickas and Porfeli (2012).

Finally, we develop a set of theoretically grounded hypotheses regarding the relative contributions of each career adaptability dimension to various adaptation results (e.g., job performance, job satisfaction, turnover intentions; for an overview of adaptation results considered, please see Table 1). These hypotheses are then tested via a novel multivariate procedure (i.e., relative weights analysis) that parses variance explained in adaptation results into the unique contributions of each individual career adaptability dimension, when controlling for the influence of every other dimensions. Such analyses reveal how different dimensions of career adaptability work in tandem to influence these adaptation results, and allow us to isolate estimates of the magnitude of these unique relationships from one-another. Isolating these effects is important for establishing evidence for the unique consequences of career adaptability that are suggested by career construction theory (Savickas, 2002). Beyond these empirical contributions, our findings should also serve to catalyze new theoretical developments and refinements regarding career adaptability, its dimensions, and career construction theory more broadly. With these contributions in mind, we now turn our attention to a description of career construction theory as an overarching theoretical framework that has guided this work.

2. Career construction theory

At its core, career construction theory (Savickas, 2002, 2005) is a lifespan model of career development that explains how individuals integrate their vocational self-concepts into their work roles. Career adaptability is a multidimensional construct that is firmly grounded within this theoretical framework (Savickas, 1997, 2002, 2005), because it plays an integral role in the development and integration of one's vocational self-concept. More specifically, career construction theory posits that individuals differ in their willingness (i.e., adaptivity) and ability (i.e., adaptability) to engage in positive career-related behaviors (i.e., adapting). These adapting behaviors, in turn, allow for the successful integration of the self into the work role (i.e., adaptation results). As alluded to, the current meta-analysis focuses on the adaptability and adaptation constructs represented within this model, and in particular the unique relationships of career adaptability dimensions (i.e., as measured by the CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) with adaptation results.

2.1. Adaptability

The CAAS (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) measures four distinct dimensions of career adaptability: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. *Concern* refers to an individual's interest in, and preparation for, their future. *Control* entails the degree of responsibility an individual takes for their future. *Curiosity* motivates individuals to explore many alternative futures and the possible actions that may lead them to these futures. Lastly, *confidence* is an individual's belief in themselves and their abilities to attain their career goals (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Savickas and Porfeli (2012) consider these four dimensions to be lower-order dimensions comprised of attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that are necessary to successfully adapt to, or cope with, career-related tasks and changes.

2.2. Adaptation results

Career construction theory portrays *adaptation results* as indicators of the degree of alignment of one's personal needs and their corresponding environmental conditions, with career adaptability being the self-regulatory resource that facilitates successful alignment (Savickas, 2002, 2005). These “goodness of fit” indicators of adaptation include job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions), subjective wellbeing, career identity and calling, employability and promotability, job performance, work engagement, and entrepreneurship (Rudolph et al., 2017).

This characterization of adaptation results is consistent with past research (e.g., Hirschi, Herrmann, & Keller, 2015; Rudolph et al., 2017) and associated typologies of adaptation results (Johnston, 2016). More specifically, Hirschi and colleagues define adaptation results as “...outcomes of adapting behaviors, often measured in terms of career decidedness, career commitment, job satisfaction, and work success” (p. 2). Similarly, Johnston (2016) describes adaptation results as “the successful outcomes of adapting” (p. 3) and further suggests that career satisfaction, promotability, entrepreneurial intentions, organizational loyalty, turnover, academic

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