



The effects of career adaptability on intended academic persistence: The mediating role of academic satisfaction[☆]

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ABSTRACT

In the current study, we investigated the linkage between career adaptability, academic satisfaction, and intended academic persistence. The psychometric properties of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) in a sample of undergraduate students from Trinidad and Tobago were also examined. The results provided further support for the incremental validity of the CAAS. We also found that career adaptability was significantly and positively related to intended academic persistence and academic satisfaction. Similarly, career adaptability predicted academic satisfaction which in turn predicted sub-dimensions of intended academic persistence. Furthermore, academic satisfaction was found to significantly mediate the relations between career adaptability and intended academic persistence. These results suggest that for undergraduate students, feeling adaptable in one's career links to an enhanced commitment to remain in their chosen academic field, in part due to feeling more satisfied with their chosen academic domain. Implications and future research directions are discussed.

1. Introduction

Career adaptability has garnered significant cross-cultural attention in recent years (Rudolph, Lavigne, Katz, & Zacher, 2017). This proliferation in empirical efforts can be largely attributed to the development of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), a cross-culturally valid and well-established instrument, grounded in the Career Construction Theory (CCT; Savickas, 1997, 2002, 2005). Savickas (1997) defines career adaptability as “the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions” (p. 254). The research to date supports the importance of possessing the necessary adaptive skills. For example, among undergraduates, career adaptability has been linked to variables such as academic satisfaction (Wilkins et al., 2014), career calling (Praskova, Hood, & Creed, 2014), career exploration (Hirschi, Herrmann, & Keller, 2015), work volition (Duffy, Douglass, & Autin, 2015), and career decision making self-efficacy (Douglass & Duffy, 2015). It follows then that emerging adults entering today's rapidly changing economic environment need to be equipped with psychosocial resources critical to adjusting to the changes in the world of work.

Given the evidence supporting the influence of adaptability on vocational outcomes, it follows then that adaptive skills could aid

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in overcoming academic demands and challenges thus increasing the likelihood of persistence among college students. No study to date has examined the relation between career adaptability and intended academic persistence. A lack of empirical evidence renders this claim unfounded and represents a gap in our knowledge. Consequently, the current study examined the relations among career adaptability, intended academic persistence, and academic satisfaction in a sample of undergraduate students from [Trinidad and Tobago \(2016\)](#).

1.1. Brief country portrait of Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago is a twin island republic located at the most southeastern end of the Caribbean, just north of Venezuela. The ethnic composition of the country consists of two groups: *Afro-Trinbagonians* (a term used to be more inclusive of both islands) and East Indians. Given that Trinidad and Tobago was formally a British colony, English is the official language across the nation. Despite being small in size, with just over an estimated 1.3 million people, Trinidad and Tobago is a high-income country, rich in natural resources. It is ranked as having one of the highest Gross National Income (GNI; formerly GNP) per capita in Latin America and the Caribbean ([World Bank, 2014](#)). Due to its heavy reliance on petroleum and petrochemical industries, Trinidad and Tobago's economy was affected by the sharp fall in oil and gas prices. This fall in energy prices resulted in job losses as well as decreased GDP and revenues ([World Bank, 2014](#)). Universities in Trinidad and Tobago are making a concerted effort to restructure their curricula to better prepare students for a workplace that is in flux and require continual adjustments by its human resources.

2. Theoretical background

[Savickas' \(1997, 2002, 2005\)](#) Career Construction Theory (CCT) is the framework on which career adaptability stands. [Savickas \(2002\)](#) posited that vocational development is driven by an adaptation to an environment rather than by maturation over time ([Super, 1990](#)). Consequently, he characterized vocational development as more in line with a contextualistic worldview where careers are constructed rather than an organismic worldview where careers just unfold ([Savickas, 2002](#)). The CCT framework is modeled by a four-part process, one of which incorporates the concept of career adaptability. [Savickas \(2002\)](#) describes this process as including adaptivity, or adaptive readiness, which denotes an individual's willingness to meet unfamiliar and often complex career tasks with fitting responses such as flexibility. Next is the use of adaptability resources, otherwise referred to as psychosocial strengths, that facilitates coping with vocational tasks, transitions, and traumas. Adaptability is followed by adapting, or adapting responses, which refers to the behaviors used to address the changing conditions. Lastly, adaptation results refer to the positive outcomes that come about as a result of the above three steps.

According to [Savickas \(2002\)](#), career adaptability is a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses a variety of attitudes, strengths, behaviors, and competencies that individuals use to adapt to work that is fitting to them. Career adaptability is characterized by four underlying resources that represent coping strategies. These resources are referred to as the 4Cs and include concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. [Savickas \(2005\)](#) defined career concern as “a sense that it is important to prepare for tomorrow” (p. 52). Concern is important because it serves as a foundational catalyst for career success. Control refers to feeling in charge of one's own vocational future. [Savickas \(2005\)](#) defines career curiosity as the “inquisitiveness about and exploration of the fit between self and the work world” (p. 55). By broadening one's knowledge of self through exploration beyond the immediate environment, individuals experience increased realism and objectivity in future choices. The final dimension is confidence, this refers to feeling efficacious about one's ability to execute a course of action that is necessary to one's educational and vocational choices ([Savickas, 2005](#)). According to the CCT, an adaptive individual is one who possesses all four resources.

2.1. Career adaptability and undergraduate students

Given the vocational context of the CCT, most of the extant literature has examined the relation between career adaptability and vocational outcomes among those in the post-graduation phase (i.e., currently employed or seeking employment). For example, [Guan et al. \(2013\)](#) found that career adaptability was positively related to job search self-efficacy and employment status, pre- and post-graduation, respectively. These results indicate that students who felt highly adaptable, felt more confident during the job search process and were more likely to be employed post-graduation. Similarly, [Douglass and Duffy \(2015\)](#) found that students higher in career adaptability felt more efficacious in their career decision making skills. These and other results ([Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015](#); [Tolentino et al., 2014](#)) indicate that undergraduate students with high levels of career adaptability tend to have more positive vocational outcomes.

Recently, researchers have extended their examinations of career adaptability to contexts outside of the workplace. For example, [Wilkins et al. \(2014\)](#) found that career adaptability was positively related to various dimensions of satisfaction such as, satisfaction with the academic experience. Similarly, [Duffy et al. \(2015\)](#) found a positive relation between the four components of career adaptability and academic satisfaction. These results suggest that undergraduate students who feel more adaptable indicated greater levels of satisfaction with their academics. These results support the longstanding belief that the career development process begins long before young people engage in actual work behaviors ([Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005](#); [Negru-Subtirica & Pop, 2016](#); [Savickas et al., 2009](#)).

Another important academic outcome that has garnered significant attention is academic persistence. [Tinto \(1987\)](#) defined this construct as the degree to which an individual chooses to continue in a chosen area of study. [Tinto \(1987, 1993\)](#) is credited with putting forth the most influential model of student persistence to date. He identified several salient predictors of persistence such as

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