



## Exploring links between career adaptability, work volition, and well-being among Turkish students



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### ABSTRACT

The present study examined how the four components of career adaptability (concern, confidence, control, curiosity; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) related to life satisfaction and the degree to which life meaning and work volition mediated these relations. In Study 1, scores from the Work Volition Scale–Student Version was validated with a sample of Turkish undergraduate students. In Study 2, with a new sample of Turkish students, all four components of career adaptability were found to significantly correlate with life satisfaction. Structural equation modeling revealed that life meaning and work volition each served as significant mediators between concern, control, and life satisfaction. Additionally, in the full mediation model, none of the adaptability components significantly related to life satisfaction. These findings suggest that concern and control over one's career may link with greater life satisfaction due, in part, to an increased sense of control in career decision making and increased life meaning.

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### 1. Introduction

Grounded in Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 1997, 2002, 2005), career adaptability pertains to the levels of concern, confidence, control, and curiosity people feel about making career choices and transitions. Strong adaptability is linked with a host of positive work-related outcomes, including indicators of career maturity for college students and indicators of work well-being for employed adults (e.g., Douglass & Duffy, 2015; Rottinghaus, Day, & Borgen, 2005; Tolentino, Garcia, Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2013; Zacher, 2014). However, research is limited on how adaptability links with general indicators of well-being, such as life meaning and life satisfaction, with only a small handful of studies published on the topic (Hirschi, 2009; Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013; Praskova, Hood, & Creed, 2014). Understanding these links is important given the longstanding relation between positive feelings about work and positive feelings about life in general (Judge & Watanabe, 1993; Rode, 2004). In the current study, we explored the links between the four components of career adaptability and life satisfaction among Turkish college students, examining the degree to which these relations are mediated by life meaning and work volition. It is proposed that feeling adaptable in one's career will link with increased life satisfaction due to an increased sense that one's life is meaningful and increased feelings of control in one's career decision making.

The investigation used a multi-study approach. Specifically, in Study 1 we sought to validate the Work Volition Scale–Student Version (WVS–SV; Duffy, Diemer, & Jadidian, 2012) by examining its reliability and factor structure among a large sample of Turkish students. Apart from the WVS–SV, all other instruments have been previously validated among Turkish samples (Boyras, Lightsey, & Can, 2013; Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2014; Köker, 1991). In Study 2, with a new sample of students, we examined how the four components of

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career adaptability (concern, confidence, control, and curiosity; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) linked with life satisfaction and the degree to which life meaning and work volition mediated the relations of each of these four components to life satisfaction.

## 2. Career Construction Theory

Career Construction Theory (CCT; Savickas, 1997, 2002, 2005) provides a lens on vocational development across the life-span. A key component of CCT is career adaptability, regarded as an, “individual’s resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks, transitions and traumas in their occupational roles that, to some degree large or small, alter their social integration” (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 662). Put another way, career adaptability refers to self-regulatory strengths that people possess and use in response to present or future vocational tasks (Savickas, 2002).

Career adaptability, as defined in CCT (Savickas, 1997), is an overarching construct that is comprised of four dimensions – concern, confidence, control, and curiosity. Concern refers to one’s ability to look ahead and prepare for a vocational future. Confidence pertains to one’s feelings of efficacy in overcoming possible occupational constraints. Control explains how responsible and conscientious people feel about shaping their vocational future. Lastly, curiosity speaks to a person’s examination of their environment including future vocational opportunities. According to Savickas (2005), these self-regulatory strengths may be utilized in response to everyday life challenges, underscoring the relevance of career adaptability both in and out of the workplace. Building from this assertion, we propose that the four components of career adaptability can influence a person’s well-being.

## 3. Career adaptability and well-being

CCT (Savickas, 1997) emphasizes the importance of viewing the role of work in relation to other life roles. Savickas suggested that by viewing work in this context, counselors are more able to focus on a client’s development and well-being – of which life satisfaction and life meaning are a large component. It was also suggested that planning attitudes – known as the career adaptability component of concern – are vital in experiencing satisfaction in all life roles. Additionally, in a review of CCT and counseling – centered on the tenets of CCT – Hartung and Taber (2008) suggested that a key aim of CCT is to help foster a sense of meaning and increase life satisfaction.

Aside from the theoretical link of career adaptability to well-being, several quantitative studies have demonstrated positive relations between these two variables. In a longitudinal study with 330 Swiss adolescents, Hirschi (2009) found that career adaptability predicted life satisfaction over time. Another study with over 2000 Swiss adults found that all four components of career adaptability positively predicted life satisfaction (Maggiori et al., 2013). Maggiori et al. noted that these findings were consistent with past research that has found career adaptability to have a positive impact not only on work-related well-being, but personal well-being as well (Brown, Bimrose, Barnes, & Hughes, 2012; Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori, & Dauwalder, 2012). Building from these findings, Santilli, Nota, Ginevra, and Soresi (2014) examined the relation of career adaptability to life satisfaction and found all four career adaptability components to have moderate positive correlations with life satisfaction. In sum, career adaptability has consistently been linked with increased life satisfaction. Namely, people who feel more adaptable in their careers tend to be more satisfied with life in general. Consistent with these results, we hypothesize that all four components of career adaptability will significantly correlate with life satisfaction (*Hypotheses 1–4*).

However, despite these consistent positive findings between career adaptability and life satisfaction, relatively little is known regarding why this relation exists. Many of the above studies have simply looked at correlations between career adaptability and life satisfaction, failing to examine the reason why these relations may exist. Also, given that each component of career adaptability serves a unique function, it is important to study mediators in the life satisfaction relation for each of these components.

## 4. Mediator variables

### 4.1. Work volition

As noted above, the components of career adaptability provide people with self-regulatory resources to help overcome vocational obstacles. As such, we propose that feelings of career adaptability may promote work volition – defined as one’s perceived capacity to make occupational choices despite constraints (Duffy, Diemer, Perry, Torrey, & Laurenzi, 2012) – which in turn contributes to life satisfaction. Although no known study has directly examined the relation of career adaptability to work volition, the fact that career adaptability resources help people to overcome vocational challenges makes this link logical. By utilizing their career adaptability resources, individuals may be able to reduce the number of vocational obstacles they face, in turn allowing them to feel more in control of their occupational choices. Some studies have found positive links between career adaptability and constructs similar to work volition such as sense of control (Duffy, 2010), career decision self-efficacy (Douglass & Duffy, 2015), and job search self-efficacy (Guan et al., 2013), and one recent study found all four components of career adaptability to significantly correlate with work volition (Duffy, Douglass, & Autin, 2015).

Positioning work volition as a mediator between career adaptability and life satisfaction implies a link from work volition to life satisfaction. Given that working helps people to experience satisfaction (Blustein, 2006), being able to freely make occupational choices likely contributes to this sense of satisfaction. Duffy, Bott, Torrey, and Webster (2013) found that work volition positively correlated with positive affect and, moreover, Duffy, Bott, Allan, and Torrey (2013) found work volition to have a moderate positive correlation with life satisfaction. A major limitation of the above studies is that work volition has only been examined among American

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