

The relation of career adaptability to satisfaction and turnover intentions



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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to investigate the linkage between career adaptability (CA), turnover intentions (TI), and career satisfaction (CS). It also examines the factor structure and psychometric properties of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) for low-ranking employees. The findings provide further support for the incremental validity of the CAAS. CA positively predicted CS and negatively predicted TI of low-ranking employees. CS is negatively related to TI, and it mediated the association between CA and TI. CA does not mediate the relation between CS and TI. Overall, a deeper understanding of the linkage between CA and TI can help us to find ways to assist employees to navigate the increasingly complex career path, thereby preventing TI.

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1. Introduction

Despite the increasing prevalence of career literature inspiring employees to be more career-resilient and to be more involved in career development activities to facilitate their mobility (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005), research linking career adaptability, career satisfaction, and turnover is not well integrated. While the positive association between career adaptability and turnover intentions (TI) appear to be well documented (e.g., Ito & Brotheridge, 2005; Yu & Zheng, 2013), the association between career satisfaction and turnover intentions has not received as much attention. Thus, the impact of career satisfaction on the relationship between career adaptability and turnover remains unclear.

The existing literature includes very few studies in which the participants are of lower wage, low-skilled employees (Casper & Swanberg, 2011). No empirical studies specifically associate low-ranking employees' career adaptability with turnover. Their career adaptability, satisfaction and intention to stay might not be the same as other employed adults or professionals. At the same time, the validity of the popular Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS), which has demonstrated excellent reliability in numerous countries (e.g., Porfeli & Savickas, 2012; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Tien, Wang, Chu, & Huang, 2012), requires further psychometric analyses with regard to low-ranking employees. Although the Chinese version of CAAS shows strong psychometric features, Tien et al. (2012) suggest that further research to examine the scale is needed.

This study assessed the validity of the CAAS in the context of China involving the low-ranking workforce. Recognizing the importance of low-ranking employees and low-paid employees' contribution in various industries, we empirically tested five hypotheses regarding how employees' career adaptability may predict employees' turnover. The proposed framework is shown in Figs. 1a and 1b.

This article reports the psychometric properties of the CAAS for low-ranking employees. We then report findings on the relationship of career adaptability to turnover intentions, and career satisfaction as well as turnover intentions. We also examined whether career satisfaction mediates the relationship between career adaptability and turnover intentions, and whether career adaptability

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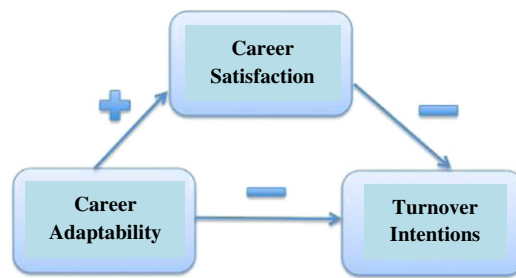


Fig. 1a. Conceptual framework with career satisfaction as mediator.

mediates the relationship between career satisfaction and turnover intentions. The study contributes to the current literature in three ways. First, we answered the call by [Porfeli and Savickas \(2012\)](#) to further examine the CAAS's validity for use with employed adults by expanding its application to low-ranking employees. Second, we empirically demonstrate the usefulness of the CAAS to the study of Chinese employees. Little research has empirically tested the CAAS with employees, as most of the current researches on career adaptability in China targeted students (e.g., [Guan et al., 2013](#); [Tien et al., 2012](#)), hence the information collected might not fully explain the concept of career adaptability of regular employees. More importantly, the study adds to the broader career literature by pinpointing the impact of career satisfaction on the career adaptability–turnover intentions relationship. As a whole, this study provides deeper insights into the career satisfaction of low-ranking employees. In this paper, turnover intentions refers to the three elements in the withdrawal cognition process, covering the thoughts of quitting, the intention to search for another job, and the intention to quit but not the element to turnover itself (e.g., [Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006](#)).

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Career adaptability

Numerous career models have essentially stressed the importance of career adaptability (CA) to facilitate career mobility (e.g., [Ito & Brotheridge, 2005](#); [Klehe, Zikic, Van Vianen, & De Pater, 2011](#); [Savickas, 1997](#); [Savickas & Porfeli, 2012](#)). CA means “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” ([Savickas, 1997, p. 254](#)). CA is also theorized as an array of behaviors, competencies, and attitudes that people use in matching themselves to a job that fits them as well as the ability of a person to navigate career role transitions ([Tolentino, Garcia, Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2013](#)). The CA construct is used to evaluate an individual's strength, which enables self-preparation for future occupational changes ([Savickas & Porfeli, 2012](#)).

CA is essential during a person's career ([Flum & Blustein, 2000](#)) in order for them to deal proactively and adjust to their careers. Research shows CA could influence the retention or turnover of employees ([Ferreira, Coetzee, & Masenge, 2013](#); [Savickas et al., 2009](#)), assisting employees to outline lifelong plans for career developments, as well as to set and pursue career goals—whether in a particular job or organization ([Gould, 1979](#); [Klehe et al., 2011](#); [Saks & Ashforth, 2002](#)), or career transitions ([Ashforth & Saks, 1995](#); [Latack & Dozier, 1986](#)). CA is also related to many work and life outcomes including CS and work engagement ([Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori, & Dauwalder, 2012](#)), promotability ([Tolentino et al., 2013](#)), career-related skills ([de Guzman & Ok, 2013](#); [Guan et al., 2014](#)), self-esteem ([Van Vianen, Klehe, Koen, & Dries, 2012](#)), career commitment ([Porfeli & Savickas, 2012](#)), and quality

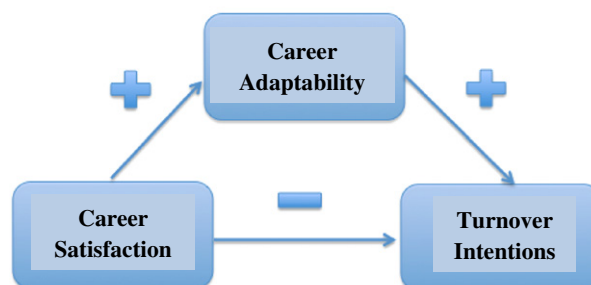


Fig. 1b. Conceptual framework with career adaptability as mediator.

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