



# The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale in Macau: Psychometric characteristics and construct validity



Hsiu-Lan Shelley Tien<sup>a</sup>, Sieh-Hwa Lin<sup>a</sup>, Pei-Jung Hsieh<sup>b</sup>, Shuh-Ren Jin<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan

<sup>b</sup> National Academy for Educational Research, Taiwan

<sup>c</sup> University of Macau, Macau

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine if the CAAS could be used with middle school students. Currently no study has been done for the application of CAAS on middle school students. We examined the reliability and validity of the Career Adapt-Ability Scale (CAAS) in Macau for middle school and high school students. The CAAS consists of four scales, each with six items, which measure concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. We tested the internal consistency and factor structure with 270 middle school students and 188 high school students. We also compared students' performance on CAAS in terms of gender and age. The results indicated that internal consistency estimates for the subscale and total scores were good for both high school and middle school students. The factor structure was quite similar to the one computed for combined data from 13 countries (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). In addition, we found that high school students scored significantly higher than middle school students on the CAAS scales. Based on the results, the CAAS-Macau Form appears ready for use by researchers and practitioners who wish to measure adaptability resources among middle school and high school students in Macau.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Cultural background in Macau

With the progression of economics, technology, and social welfare in Macau, career counselors need to provide students with opportunities for career development. In the past, the meaning of work focused on earning a living. The main task of vocational guidance was simply to help individuals find a job. Now the broadened meaning of career is defined as a lifelong process of learning and work. Career counseling, instead of vocational guidance, is defined as a set of counseling services available for all individuals across the life span. For individuals in growth and exploration stages of career development, we need to help them prepare well for entering the world of work, establish and maintain the careers they love and pursue, and enrich the meaning of life in their personal and professional development. Career adaptability (Savickas, 1997), instead of career maturity is an important issue for understanding and facilitating adolescent career development.

With respect to cultural characteristics, Macau is unique in its mixture of Portuguese and Chinese cultures. You can sense the uniqueness of this mixture from its religious beliefs, buildings, and cuisine. However, most people speak Cantonese, especially when it was handed back to China. Individuals' development in education and career should have its new era (Tien & Jin, 2009). The Macau gaming business liberalization policy was launched in 2003, and since then Macau society has experienced dramatic growth. The growing economy decreases the unemployment rate in general and increases the chance for the youth to get employed in Macau. However, some existing surveys indicated that young Macau people were not equipped with the adaptability to navigate the vocational path in a turbulent environment. Especially, it has been pointed out that Macau youth were not confident in their competencies in an open labor market. They were low in awareness of career planning, vocational information collection, decision-making skills, and ability in constructing new vocational options (Ouyang & Jin, 2012). The recently delivered

official Macau Youth Policy (2012), targeted the age of 13–29, and declared a strong need for effective interventions in facilitating the ability of young people to adapt to the diverse and fast-growing industry in Macau.

In the traditional Chinese cultural context, career counseling at school has often been sacrificed by over-emphases on academic learning. It is necessary to remind counselors/social workers and policy makers with a broadened view of career counseling that students need to be concerned with their future, curious about the world they experience, confident with what they can do, and be able to regulate their future development. Career adaptability is actually a more important issue for them to satisfy the needs of self-realization.

### 1.2. Definition of career adaptability

Savickas (1997) proposed the term “career adaptability” to replace the concept of career maturity. He defined career adaptability as a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual's resources for coping with current and anticipated developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and work trauma, etc. Based on this notation, career adaptation is important for students in addition to working adults. For students, they need to be aware of their ability in adapting to the future world of work. They need to be responsible for the future choices and decisions, open to the new experiences, and be confident of their choices. To be more specific, the meaning of career adaptability on the present study was operationally defined as concern, control, curiosity, and confidence which could be measured by the Career Adapt-Ability Scale (CAAS). The CAAS has been translated, verified, and applied in a variety of countries and cultures. In the current study, we applied the Chinese edition translated by Tien, Wang, Chu, and Huang (2012).

### 1.3. Purpose of the current study

The Career Adapt-Ability Scale—International Form 2.0 (CAAS-International) demonstrates excellent reliability and appropriate cross-national measurement equivalence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), although its validity for use in Macau needs to be addressed by further analysis. The present article describes the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale—Macau Form (CAAS-Macau) and reports its psychometric properties, including item statistics and internal consistency estimates. In addition, we compare the factor structure of the CAAS-Macau to the multi-dimensional, hierarchical measurement model of the CAAS-International. At last, we compare the students' performance in terms of gender and grade level.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Participants

Participants included 270 middle school students and 188 high school students from two different high schools in Macau. They volunteered to complete the CAAS-Macau. For middle school, the sample was composed of 135 boys and 135 girls. For high school, it was composed of 77 boys and 111 girls. In Macau, middle school students are grade 7, 8, and 9 students; while high school students are in grades 10, 11, and 12. To be specific, 28% of the participants were in 7th grade, 31 in 8th grade, and 41 in 11th grade. Their age ranged from 13 to 19 years old ( $M = 14.57$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) in middle school and from 17 to 20 years old ( $M = 17.88$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) in senior high school. They were all registered at school when the research was conducted.

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Career Adapt-Abilities Inventory—Macau Form (CAAS-Macau)

The CAAS-Macau was translated into Chinese by Tien et al. (2012) from the CAAS-International Form 2.0, which contains 24 items that combine to form a total score indicating career adaptability (for the items see Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The 24 items are divided equally into four subscales that measure the adapt-ability resources of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. In the international form, participants responded to each item employing a scale from 1 (not strong) to 5 (strongest).

### 2.3. Procedures

Research fellows collected the data in middle and senior high schools during school hours. Students filled out the survey questionnaire in groups after research fellows explained the purpose. The CAAS was entitled as Career Attitude in the questionnaire survey. All students consented to participate in the survey for the studies. There was no penalty associated with either not participating or not completing the survey. There was no reward for their participation, either. However, the research fellow encouraged them to ask for career information and assistance from the school counselors and social workers.

## 3. Results

Means and standard deviations of the four scales of the CAAS-Macau Form for both middle and high school students are shown in Table 1. Correlation coefficients among the four scales are also indicated with Cronbach's alphas reported in parentheses. For the middle school, the four subscales correlate from .86 to .89 to the total CAAS score. For the high school, the correlations between the four scales and the total score are from .81 to .87. The other correlations among the four subscales, although not as high, are all significant at  $p < .01$  level.

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