

Personality Traits and Career Adaptability in Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Core Self-Evaluations*

Mara Šimunović

Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia

The aim of this study was to extend previous findings on antecedents of career adaptability in adolescence. Drawing on career construction theory and the distal-proximal theory of motivation, we investigated the mediating role of core self-evaluations in the relationship between basic personality traits and career adaptability in adolescence. The study included 1793 Croatian high-school students from 18 high schools who attended first to third grade. Path analysis revealed that adolescents' higher core self-evaluations partially accounted for the predictive effects of extraversion and conscientiousness on their career adaptability. Conscientiousness and extraversion were positively related to core self-evaluations, which, in turn, were related to higher career adaptability. There was also a very small but significant indirect effect of students' openness to experience on their career adaptability via core self-evaluations. Conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to experience were directly and positively related to career adaptability. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: career adaptability, personality traits, core self-evaluations, career construction

Highlights:

- The aim of the study was to explore antecedents of career adaptability in adolescence.
- Findings support the distal-proximal framework of motivation.
- Extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness predicted higher career adaptability.

Author note. Furthermore, my institution has legal rights for a statistical software that was used for data analysis. The research was fully supported by Croatian Science Foundation under project number IP-2019-04-7537 (Free Career Choice).

Corresponding author: mara.simunovic@pilar.hr

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- Core-self evaluations partially mediated these effects.
- Findings can help in counselling students with low adaptive readiness.

Career adaptability is a core construct in career construction theory (CCT; Savickas, 2013) which is defined as the individual's resources for coping with career-related tasks, transitions, and traumas. Career adaptability includes four psychological resources: the ability to consider and prepare for future career-related opportunities (concern), the self-discipline in the process of accomplishing vocational development tasks (control), having an attitude of curiosity towards future occupational selves (curiosity), and holding positive beliefs concerning one's problem-solving abilities in different vocational and educational situations (confidence). Numerous studies have shown that career adaptability positively predicts successful career adaptation. Higher levels of career adaptability predicted greater levels of job performance, career satisfaction and job engagement (Ohme & Zacher, 2015; Rossier et al., 2012; Tolentino et al., 2013), and greater promotability at work (Sibunruang et al., 2016; Tolentino et al., 2013).

Another important construct in the CCT is *career adaptivity* which refers to one's willingness and flexibility to take actions needed to cope with career transitions and tasks. Career adaptivity is outlined as the crucial antecedent for career adaptability (Savickas, 2013). Career adaptivity has been operationalized in multiple ways, but mostly as the basic traits depicted in personality theories (Guan et al., 2017). Research has found the traits from the Big Five (B5) model of personality (Teixeira et al., 2012; Van Vianen et al., 2012; Zacher, 2014) and the approach-avoidance traits (Li et al., 2015; Van Vianen et al., 2012; Tolentino et al., 2014) to be important antecedents of career adaptability. In addition to personality traits, higher levels of self-esteem (Cai et al. 2015), emotional intelligence (Coetzee & Harry, 2014), a sense of control (Duffy, 2010), core-self-evaluations (Hirschi et al., 2015; Öncel, 2014), proactive personality (Cai et al. 2015; Tolentino et al. 2014; Van Vianen et al., 2012), and hope and optimism (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2016; Wilkins et al., 2014) have also been used to measure career adaptivity and have been established as predictors of career adaptability resources. However, knowledge as to how these different components of career adaptivity together explain career adaptability is limited (Cai et al., 2015). Namely, there is a need to understand underlying mechanisms that can explain how basic personality traits affect one's career adaptability (Guan et al., 2017).

In inspecting possible underlying mechanisms linking basic personality traits and career adaptability, we drew on the distal-proximal framework of motivation (Barrick & Mount, 2005). This framework states that personality traits are distal motivational forces that influence career-related behaviours and that different mediating and moderating variables must be considered to fully explain the effects of personality on career-related behaviour. Accordingly,

the objective of the present research was to test the mediating effect of core self-evaluations on the relationship between basic personality traits and career adaptability in Croatian adolescents attending high school.

Core self-evaluations are a trait-like construct proposed by Judge et al. (1997) which refers to fundamental evaluations that a person holds about themselves and may serve as indicators of career adaptivity (Hirschi et al., 2015). By integrating basic personality traits and core self-evaluations into one model we are aiming to contribute to limited research on antecedents of career adaptability in adolescence. Career adaptability has been found to positively predict adolescents' mastery in handling vocational transitions (Germeijs & Verschueren, 2007; Neuenschwander & Garrett, 2008) but also their positive development (Hirschi, 2009) and overall life satisfaction (Ginevra et al., 2018). Thus, a better understanding of antecedents of career adaptability in adolescence is also important for practical interventions in which proximal aspects of career adaptivity can be targeted to facilitate successful career adaptation and positive youth development (Guan et al., 2017).

Basic Personality Traits and Career Adaptability

Using different cultural and age samples and different statistical analyses, previous studies have linked basic personality traits included in the B5 Model (conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness to experience; McCrae & Costa, 1987) to career adaptability. Teixeira et al. (2012) inspected the bivariate correlations between career adaptability and B5 traits among Brazilian adults. They found that among all traits, conscientiousness showed the strongest and most positive correlation with career adaptability. Openness to experience, extraversion, and agreeableness were also positively correlated with adaptability, while neuroticism was negatively correlated with adaptability. Similarly, Van Vianen et al. (2012) found that in a sample of university students in the Netherlands, career adaptability correlated most strongly and positively with conscientiousness and openness to experience, followed by extraversion and agreeableness. They also found a negative correlation between adaptability and neuroticism. However, when they considered all personality traits together in a regression model, along with self-esteem, promotion focus, and prevention focus they found that extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience positively predicted adaptability, while neuroticism and agreeableness were not significant predictors of adaptability. Li et al. (2015) found the same pattern of bivariate correlations between B5 traits and career adaptability in Chinese university students. However, in a regression model, career adaptability was predicted only by higher openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. These results indicate that when considering the relationship between personality traits and career adaptability, it is necessary to consider the unique contribution of individual personality traits. Furthermore, it is possible that the pattern of association between personality traits and career outcomes

may also depend on the specifics of the culture from which the sample comes, which calls for more cross-cultural research on this topic. Finally, the previously described research did not include high school students, so the added value of our study is the investigation of this group. Namely, adolescents in high school face the important career construction challenge of choosing a university program or entering the labor market. Thus, it is necessary to better understand the antecedents of career adaptability in adolescence.

A viable alternative to the widely established B5 model of personality structure (Ashton & Lee, 2007) is the HEXACO model of personality. This model proposes six personality dimensions – Honesty-Humility (H), Emotionality (E), eXtraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), and Openness to Experience (O). HEXACO dimensions have been more widely replicated than the B5 structure across diverse cultures and languages. An important strength of the HEXACO model as compared to the B5 model is the theoretical framework associated with this model (Ashton & Lee, 2007). Honesty-humility, agreeableness, and emotionality can be interpreted as tendencies underlying altruism. Both honesty and agreeableness are related to reciprocal altruism and refer to one's tendency to be fair and cooperate with others, even when faced with the risk of losses because of being exploited by others. Emotionality represents tendencies related to kin altruism which refers to emotional attachment, empathic concern, and help-seeking behaviours toward close others. On the other hand, conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to experience represent tendencies to become engaged in three areas of endeavour. Extraversion is related to engagement in social endeavours (e.g., leading, socializing, entertaining). Conscientiousness is related to engagement in task-related areas (e.g., working, planning, organizing). Openness to experience is associated with engagement in idea-focused endeavours (i.e., thinking, learning, imagining). High levels of these three dimensions are hypothesized to be associated with gains resulting from the investment of effort and time in those specified areas of endeavour.

This theoretical framework associated with the HEXACO model can capture conceptual parallels among personality factors and can predict other phenomena in the personality domain that are not explained by interpretations proposed for the B5 framework (Ashton & Lee, 2007). Following the presented strengths of the HEXACO model, in this study, we used the HEXACO representation of personality structure. We measured five personality dimensions (i.e., emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience). The sixth HEXACO factor (i.e., honesty-humility) was not included in the study since it was previously found that this dimension was not related to career adaptability (Avram et al., 2019).

Hypothesis 1. Adolescents' career adaptability will be positively correlated with conscientiousness (H1a), openness to experience (H1b), agreeableness (H1c), and extraversion (H1d), and negatively correlated with neuroticism (H1e).

The Mediating Role of Core Self-Evaluations

Previous research under the CCT framework has not established how basic personality traits drive people's efforts in developing career adaptability (Savickas, 2013). One of the possible mechanisms for this relationship are core self-evaluations. Judge et al. (1997) first introduced the concept of core evaluations as a principle for understanding the dispositional bases of job satisfaction. They defined core evaluations as people's fundamental appraisals of themselves, others, and the world. These evaluations were said to influence the appraisals of specific situations on a subconscious level. Although people can have core evaluations related to different areas, it has been shown that those related to oneself are the most important (Judge et al., 1998).

In defining core self-evaluations, Judge et al. (1997) searched for traits that met three criteria – they are self-evaluative (i.e., refer to the assessment of oneself and not to the description of oneself or others), they are fundamental (i.e., not surface traits), and they are wide in scope. Thus, core self-evaluations refer to one's general assessment of their self-worth and capabilities and they consist of four dimensions: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control. Self-esteem refers to how much one approves of oneself and sees oneself as capable, valuable, and important (Coopersmith, 1967). Generalized self-efficacy refers to how successful a person believes they can be in performing in various areas of achievement (Chen et al., 2001). Locus of control refers to a person's belief to what degree they can control their environment to achieve desired outcomes (Rotter, 1966). Finally, emotional stability refers to a person's tendency to feel calm, stable, and secure (Eysenck, 1990). Research has shown that these four dimensions are highly intercorrelated (Judge et al., 2002), they load on one factor (Judge et al., 2000) and have similar relationships with job satisfaction and performance (Judge & Bono, 2001). Furthermore, core self-evaluations better predict career-related outcomes as a single higher-level factor than as separate dimensions (Judge et al., 2003).

Studies on the relationship between B5 traits and core self-evaluations showed that this construct has a negative relationship with neuroticism (Bipp, 2010; Bono & Judge, 2003; Guan et al., 2017) and correlates positively with conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience (Bono & Judge, 2003; Guan et al., 2017). Furthermore, research has shown that core self-evaluations are a positive predictor of career adaptability (Chen et al., 2022; Guan et al., 2017; Yoo & Lee, 2019). These findings can be explained by the fact that individuals who have more positive core self-evaluations are more likely to set ambitious career goals and are able to successfully regulate themselves in achieving these goals (Chang et al., 2012). In addition, these individuals show more initiative, persistence, and commitment in pursuing their goals (Gagné & Deci, 2005) and more confidence in tackling difficulties in pursuing their career goals (Erez & Judge, 2001).

Following previously discussed findings that have shown that core self-evaluations are related to basic traits and career adaptability and serve as driving

forces in setting and pursuing career-related goals, we proposed core self-evaluations as a potential mediator between basic personality traits and career adaptability in Croatian adolescents.

Hypothesis 2. Adolescents' core self-evaluations will partially mediate the relationship between adolescents' basic personality traits and career adaptability. Conscientiousness (H2a), extraversion (H2b), agreeableness (H2c), and openness to experience (H2d) will be positively related to core self-evaluations and emotionality (H2e) will be negatively related to core self-evaluations, which will, in turn, be positively related to career adaptability (H2f).

Method

Participants and Procedure

The participants in this study were 1793 Croatian high-school students (62.1% females) aged between 15 and 19 years ($M = 16.68$ years, $SD = 0.98$ years). Students came from 18 different high schools (four grammar schools and 14 vocational training schools). Around 42.3% of students attended grammar schools and 57.7% attended vocational schools. Schools were chosen to include different areas of work and different levels of educational prestige. Students attended first (28.2%), second (30.1%), and third (41.7%) grade. The data came from the research project Free Career Choice which explores adolescent career development. The study was conducted in the spring of 2021. Prior to implementation, the study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the author's institution (approval number removed for anonymization) and by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education. Students were reached by their schools and invited to participate in the research. Participation in the study was voluntary and signed parental consents were obtained for all students.

The data were collected via an online survey. Students completed the survey during regular classes in their computer classroom and were supervised by one of the researchers. There was no missing data since in the online survey responses were automatically checked and students were required to answer a question before continuing.

Instruments

HEXACO-60 Personality Inventory. The 60-item version of the HEXACO Personality Inventory (Ashton & Lee, 2009) measures six personality dimensions: honesty, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Each dimension is represented by ten items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Ashton and Lee (2009) found good reliability and validity evidence of HEXACO-60. Furthermore, the Croatian translation of this instrument showed good reliability and construct validity on a similar sample of high-school students (Šverko & Babarović, 2016). In this study, we applied emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience scales and observed adequate internal reliabilities of .77, .74, .74, .73 and .78, respectively.

Career Adapt-Abilities Scale. Students' career adaptability was measured with the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). This instrument consists of 24 items measuring four career adaptability resources (i.e., concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). Each subscale is measured by six items. Students responded on a scale from 1 (*not strong*) to 5 (*strongest*). The result can be calculated as the global indicator of career

adaptability (total score for the 24 items) and as the result on each of the four subscales. In the current study, the total score of this scale was used. The instrument showed good validity and reliability estimates on a similar sample of high-school students (Babarović & Šverko, 2016). The internal reliability estimate for the global indicator of career adaptability was .93.

Core Self-Evaluation Scale. Students' core self-evaluations were measured with Core Self-Evaluation Scale (Judge et al., 2003). This scale has a total of 12 items and reflects four aspects of core self-evaluations (i.e., self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control). Students responded on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scale has demonstrated good psychometric characteristics in its original version (Judge et al., 2003) and in previous studies with Croatian samples (Černja Rajter et al., 2019; Mazalin & Parmač Kovačić, 2016). In the present study, the scale showed adequate internal reliability of .85.

Control Variables. We also recorded other information from students (i.e., gender, school grade, and school achievement) that served as control variables. Students' gender was coded as 1 for males and 2 for females. School achievement was operationalized as a self-reported grade point average obtained in the school year. The grade point average ranged from 2.1 to 5.0.

Data Analysis. In the first step, bivariate correlations among five basic traits, core self-evaluations, and career adaptability (total adaptability score) were calculated. We also calculated descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha measures of internal consistency for all variables. These analyses were computed using SPSS 20. Next, we used path analysis to examine how students' basic personality traits and core self-evaluations are related to career adaptability. Path analysis was carried out with the lavaan package (version 0.6–3) using R software (Rosseel, 2012). There was a violation of the multivariate normality, which was indicated by the Mardia test. Thus, we used a robust maximum likelihood estimator (MLR) which corrects model estimates for non-normality (Brown, 2015). In testing the path model, model fit indices were inspected to evaluate the overall model fit to the data. We inspected the chi-square test (χ^2) which should be insignificant if a model describes the data well. However, other indices should also be inspected since the chi-square test is influenced by large sample sizes (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Among these indices, the value of the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the value of the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) should be under .08 to indicate an adequate fit. The value of the comparative fit index (CFI) should be above .90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2005). We reported robust Yuan–Bentler scaled χ^2 , robust RMSEA, and robust CFI indices since we used the MLR estimator. When calculating indirect effects, 1000 bootstrap samples were used to produce bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients are presented in Table 1. Career adaptability was found to be positively related to extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. It was also positively correlated with core self-evaluations. Core self-evaluations were positively related to extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness, and negatively related to emotionality, and openness to experience. Older students and students who had better school achievement reported higher career adaptability. A small correlation was found between the female gender and higher career adaptability, which may be attributed to the large statistical power due to the big sample size.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Gender ¹	-	-.02	.10***	.05*	.35***	-.07**	-.08***	.04	.14***	-.18***
2. School grade		-	-.29***	.09***	.01	.03	-.01	.03	.07**	-.02
3. School achievement			-	.08***	.10***	-.04	.02	.19***	.09***	.07**
4. Career adaptability				-	.01	.37***	.03	.45***	.15***	.42***
5. Emotionality					-	-.12***	.05*	-.02	.02	-.31***
6. Extraversion						-	-.02	.21***	-.08**	.64***
7. Agreeableness							-	.08**	.05	.07**
8. Conscientiousness								-	.11***	.37***
9. Openness									-	-.11***
10. Core self-evaluations										-
M	-	2.14	4.30	3.93	3.13	3.18	2.98	3.24	3.16	3.25
SD	-	0.83	0.55	0.52	0.65	0.65	0.58	0.55	0.69	0.60

Note. ¹coded: 1 = male, 2 = female; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Testing the Mediation Model

To establish which paths between basic traits and career adaptability may be mediated by core self-evaluations, we first ran hierarchical regression in which we controlled for students' gender, age, and school achievement in the first step and in the second step entered all five traits as predictors of career adaptability. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Hierarchical Regression Predicting the Student Career Adaptability

Predictors	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1					.15***	.023	.023
Grade	.08	.02	.12	< .001			
Gender	.05	.03	.05	.052			
School achievement	.11	.02	.11	< .001			
Step 2					.56***	.308	.285
Grade	.04	.01	.07	.001			
Gender	.03	.02	.03	.169			
School achievement	.03	.02	.03	.159			
Emotionality	.03	.02	.03	.116			
Extraversion	.25	.02	.31	<.001			
Agreeableness	.01	.02	.01	.718			
Conscientiousness	.34	.02	.36	<.001			
Openness	.09	.02	.12	<.001			

Note. *** $p < .001$.

In the first step of hierarchical regression, control variables explained around 2% of career adaptability variance. Higher years of schooling and

better school achievement predicted higher career adaptability. In the second step, we added basic traits and this model explained around 30% of career adaptability variance. Students in upper grades express slightly higher career adaptability than students in lower grades. Better school achievement was no longer a significant predictor of career adaptability. Career adaptability was most strongly and positively predicted by extraversion and conscientiousness. It was also positively predicted by openness. When all five traits were taken together in the regression model, emotionality and agreeableness did not predict career adaptability. Thus, we can conclude that we found the support for hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1d, but not for hypotheses H1c, and H1e.

We next used path analysis to test if core self-evaluations mediate the regression paths between traits and adolescents' career adaptability. Since emotionality and agreeableness did not predict career adaptability, these traits were omitted from the model. We entered all the expected paths between the variables. We also linked traits directly to career adaptability, to test whether there is a direct relationship between these variables, or whether it is completely mediated through core self-evaluations. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3 and Figure 1. Figure 1 shows the final path model with nonsignificant paths removed. The model showed good fit to the data: $\chi^2(8) = 34.47$, $p < .001$, R-CFI = .99, R-RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .02.

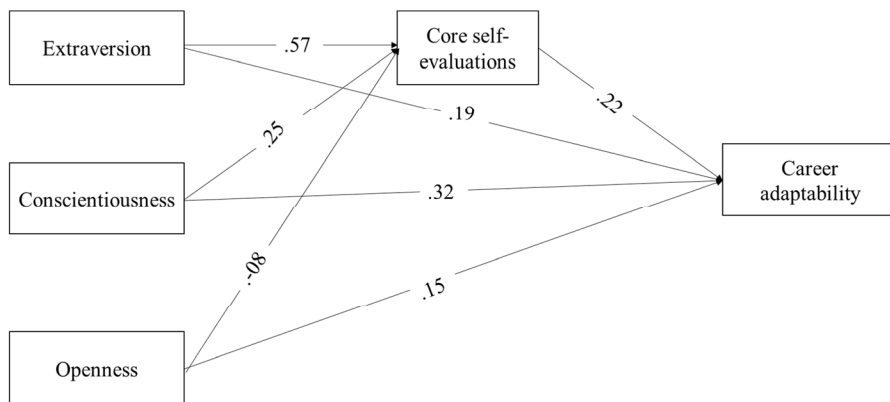
Figure 1 shows that after controlling for students' gender, grade, and school achievement, core self-evaluations were predicted by higher extraversion ($\beta = .57$, $p < .001$), and conscientiousness ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$), but lower openness to experience ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .001$). Career adaptability was directly positively predicted by all three traits: extraversion ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$), conscientiousness ($\beta = .32$, $p < .001$), and openness to experience ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$). It was also positively predicted by core self-evaluations ($\beta = .32$, $p < .001$). The final model accounted for 32.2% of career adaptability variance and 50.9% of core self-evaluations variance.

Table 3
Summary of Path Analysis Predicting Adolescents' Career Adaptability

Hypothesis	Path		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>
	From	To				
H1a	Conscientiousness	Career Adaptability	.30	.02	.32	<.001
H1b	Openness	Career Adaptability	.11	.02	.15	<.001
H1d	Extraversion	Career Adaptability	.15	.02	.19	<.001
H2a	Conscientiousness	Core Self-Evaluations	.28	.02	.25	<.001
H2b	Extraversion	Core Self-Evaluations	.53	.02	.57	<.001
H2d	Openness	Core Self-Evaluations	-.07	.02	-.08	<.001
H2f	Core Self-Evaluations	Career Adaptability	.17	.02	.22	<.001

Figure 1

Final path model predicting adolescents' career adaptability, with standardized coefficients shown



Note. All coefficients are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 4 shows the indirect effects for all three traits included in the path model. The significance of the indirect effects was determined using a 95 % confidence interval. The indirect effect is considered significant if the CI of the unstandardized mean beta weight does not include a value of zero. As can be seen, all three indirect effects were significant which confirms that core self-evaluations partially mediated the relationship between students' traits and their career adaptability. Students' extraversion and conscientiousness predicted higher core self-evaluations, which in turn predicted higher career adaptability. Core self-evaluations also partially mediated the relationship between openness to experience and career adaptability but in an unexpected way. More specifically, higher openness to experience was related to lower core self-evaluations, which was in turn related to higher career adaptability, producing a very small and negative but significant indirect effect. Obtained results fully support hypotheses H2a, and H2b. Even though agreeableness and emotionality were related to core self-evaluations in an expected way, these traits did not predict career adaptability, so hypotheses H2c and H2e are not fully supported. Finally, H2d is also only partially supported since openness to experience predicted core self-evaluations in an opposite direction than expected.

Table 4

Standardized Indirect Effects and Respective Confidence Intervals for Basic Traits Variables

Path	β	SE	95% bias-corrected C.I.
Extraversion $\rightarrow$ CSE $\rightarrow$ CA	.11***	.01	.068, .114
Conscientiousness $\rightarrow$ CSE $\rightarrow$ CA	.05***	.01	.034, .062
Openness $\rightarrow$ CSE $\rightarrow$ CA	-.02***	.01	-.018, -.001

Note. CSE: Core self-evaluations; CA: Career adaptability; C.I.: confidence interval; *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The Relationship Between Basic Traits and Career Adaptability

The aim of the current study was to extend previous findings on antecedents of career adaptability in adolescence. Through this aim, we also intended to make a theoretical contribution to CCT by exploring underlying mechanisms linking career adaptivity and career adaptability. Most previous research found support for extraversion, openness to experience and conscientiousness as significant predictors of career adaptability (Guan et al., 2017). This is in line with the present results. We found that, when taken together, career adaptability was positively and most strongly predicted by students' conscientiousness, followed by their extraversion. Furthermore, we found a weaker but also positive relationship between career adaptability and students' openness. On the other hand, students' level of agreeableness and emotionality did not predict their career adaptability. Previous research also found that among B5 traits conscientiousness and extraversion had the strongest and positive correlation with career adaptability (Rossier et al., 2012; Šverko & Babarović, 2016; Teixeira et al., 2012; Van Vianen et al., 2012). Extroverted adolescents may have more developed career adaptability since extraversion is associated with assertiveness, dominance, and ambition (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). Furthermore, an extroverted person is more likely to seek stimulation and have a positive and optimistic attitude (Burtăverde et al., 2017). In previous studies conscientiousness has been considered the main motivational component (Zhao et al., 2010). Conscientious individuals are characterized to have stronger work and achievement motivation and assert more organizing, and planning behaviours (Burtăverde et al., 2017; Costa & McCrae, 1992). A positive relationship between career adaptability and openness to experience has also been previously established (Li et al., 2015; Teixeira et al., 2012; Šverko & Babarović, 2019; Van Vianen et al., 2015; Woo, 2018). People who are higher on openness to experience are creative, curious, and open to novel ideas and experiences (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). Within the theoretical framework linked to the HEXACO model (Ashton & Lee, 2007), extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to experiences are outlined as three conceptually parallel dimensions of engagement within a different area of endeavour (i.e., social endeavours, task-related endeavours, and idea-related endeavours). High levels of these dimensions are associated with gains such as social networking, improved use of resources, and new discoveries. Presumably, these gains can help individuals in strengthening their career adaptability resources.

When it comes to control variables, we found that when taken together with personality traits, older students showed higher career adaptability. Past research also found that older adolescents had higher career adaptability (Negru-Subtirica et al., 2015; Skorikov, 2007; Stringer et al., 2011). This can be explained by the fact that with time students are faced with more career-oriented tasks and they need to focus more attention on their career choices.

In summary, adolescents who are extroverted, open to experiences, and conscientious may engage in more behaviours that will lead to developing psychological resources necessary for successful career development. Even though some studies have found positive relationships between career adaptability and agreeableness (Li et al., 2015) and negative relationship between career adaptability and emotionality/neuroticism (Guan et al., 2017; Zacher, 2014), these findings have not been consistent as the findings for extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness, which is in line with the present findings.

The Mediating Role of Core Self-Evaluations

As expected, we found that core self-evaluations positively predicted adolescents' career adaptability. This is in line with previous studies that have also found that career adaptability is positively related to core self-evaluations and with separate constructs that are integrated into core self-evaluations (i.e., self-esteem, locus of control, and self-efficacy; Bocciardi et al., 2017; Guan et al., 2013; Pouyaud et al., 2012; Van Vianen et al., 2012; Tolentino et al., 2013; Zacher, 2014). Our results confirm previous empirical findings that among B5 traits, core-self evaluations show moderate to strong correlations with extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness and weak correlations with openness to experience and agreeableness (Judge et al., 2004). In the present study, extraversion showed the strongest correlation with core self-evaluations which was somewhat higher than the meta-analytic population correlation established in the study by Judge and colleagues (2004). It is possible that in the period of adolescence traits such as sociability, cheerfulness, talkativeness, and assertiveness especially contribute to one's positive self-view which could explain a substantial overlap between extraversion and core self-evaluations found in this study.

Our hypothesis that core self-evaluations will partially mediate the relationship between traits and career adaptability was supported for extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness, but not for emotionality, and agreeableness. Even though core self-evaluations were, as we hypothesized, negatively correlated with emotionality, and positively with agreeableness, mediation could not have been established since these two traits did not predict career adaptability. The unexpected result emerged for openness to experience since we found a negative correlation between this trait and core self-evaluations. Because this correlation was very small, it may be attributed to the large statistical power due to the big sample size. Supporting this explanation, some studies found zero correlation between openness to experience and core self-evaluations (Bipp, 2010; Guan et al., 2017). Another explanation for this very low negative correlation may stem from the fact that the HEXACO model excluded traits that describe intellectual ability from the openness to experience factor, whereas those traits are included within the corresponding B5 factors. It is possible that in the period of adolescence and active schooling, intellectual capacity is a key trait contributing to the expected positive correlation between openness to experience and core self-evaluations.

As far as we know, Guan et al. (2017) were the only ones so far to examine the mediating role of core self-evaluations in the relationship between personality traits and career adaptability and confirmed core self-evaluations as a significant mediator of the relationship between conscientiousness and neuroticism and adaptability. However, we should note that these authors included additional mediating variables in their study but nevertheless established core self-evaluations as the strongest predictor of career adaptability.

In sum, our findings indicate that adolescents' positive self-image accounts for the predictive effects of extraversion and conscientiousness on their career adaptability. This is especially evident for the extraversion dimension, which showed the largest indirect effect on career adaptability through core self-evaluations. Thus, students who are talkative, sociable, and cheerful versus students who are shy, passive, and quiet evaluate themselves more positively, which is in turn related to more developed career-related psychological resources. This can be explained by the fact that extraversion is associated with one's social skills and social orientation (Costa & McCrea, 1992) and peer acceptance and friendships in adolescence (Jensen-Campbell et al., 2002) which is an important factor in adolescents' socio-emotional development, and consequently in forming a positive self-view. Furthermore, students who are hardworking, organized, careful, and thorough also express more positive self-view which leads them to develop better adaptive abilities. With reference to the HEXACO framework, extraversion and conscientiousness are two traits linked to social and task-related endeavour and consequently, increased opportunities for gains of social, material, health, and safety nature (Ashton & Lee, 2007). These gains can help shape youth's positive appraisal of themselves.

Our findings also support the distal-proximal framework of motivation (Barrick & Mount, 2005) which outlines personality traits as distal motivational forces that influence career-related behaviours. We can assume that a positive self-evaluation serves as a driving force in setting and pursuing career-related goals and positively shaping youth's career adaptability. These findings help map pathways between career adaptivity and career adaptability in the model of career construction (Savickas, 2013). More specifically, the results suggest that distal traits can influence the development of career adaptability in adolescence through proximal dispositions that can act as motivational mechanisms.

Practical Implications

Career adaptability is especially important for adaptive results in times of uncertainty and changes in educational and working environments (Johnston et al., 2016; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). These periods are very common during adolescence and young adult years. Present results highlight mechanisms by which personality traits can encourage adolescents' career adaptability. Our findings can help career counsellors and educators in identifying the dispositional profile of students with low adaptive readiness who are at higher risk of poor career adaptation. Since we have shown that core self-evaluations

are an important proximal predictor of students' career adaptability, special interventions may be designed to improve students' self-efficacy, self-esteem, emotional stability, and locus of control to equip them for successfully handling vocational and educational transitions.

Limitations and Future Directions

In this study, we used the HEXACO model of personality which is somewhat different from the Five-Factor model. Extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience are similar to the same B5 dimensions, while agreeableness and emotionality showed weaker relation to their B5 counterparts (Ashton & Lee, 2007). This can make it difficult to fully compare current findings with findings in studies that have used questionnaires developed from the B5 dimensions. Future studies should include personality measures based on both B5 and HEXACO models to capture more variance in personality structure and obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between career adaptability and personality dispositions. Furthermore, we found that core self-evaluations only partially mediated the relationship between traits and career adaptability. Future research should establish additional adapting responses that may serve as mediating mechanisms among high-school students. For example, Guan et al. (2017) found that besides core self-evaluations, proactive personality, and learning goal orientation were significant mediators in the relationship between basic traits and career adaptability among Chinese university students. Additionally, future research should study behavioural mechanisms of career adaptivity such as career exploration and goal-pursuit behaviours. Lastly, it is necessary to have caution when applying mediation analysis to cross-sectional data (Kenny, 2007). The present findings are only an indicator of a possible causal relationship. Future research should test these mechanisms with a longitudinal study design.

Conclusion

In sum, our study emphasized the importance of exploring antecedents of career adaptability in adolescence. The results showed that among examined personality traits conscientiousness and extraversion were positively related to core self-evaluations, which, in turn, were related to higher career adaptability. Conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to experience were also directly and positively related to career adaptability. These results can contribute to a better understanding of underlying mechanisms that can explain how basic personality traits affect one's career adaptability. Understanding these mechanisms can serve as a theoretically and empirically sound basis for interventions in which proximal aspects of career adaptivity can be targeted to facilitate successful career adaptation.

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Osobine ličnosti i prilagodljivost u karijeri kod adolescenata: medijatorska uloga bazičnih samoevaluacija

Mara Šimunović

Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia

Cilj ove studije bio je da proširi prethodna saznanja o antecedentima karijerne adaptacije u adolescenciji. Oslanjajući se na teoriju izgradnje karijere i distalno-proksimalnu teoriju motivacije, istražili smo medijatorsku ulogu bazičnih samoevaluacija u odnosu između osnovnih osobina ličnosti i karijerne adaptacije u adolescenciji. U studiji je učestvovalo 1793 srednjoškolaca, od prvog do trećeg razreda, iz 18 srednjih škola iz Hrvatske. Analiza puta je otkrila da više osnovne samoevaluacije adolescenata delimično objašnjavaju prediktivne efekte ekstraverzije i savesnosti na njihovu prilagodljivost u karijeri. Savesnost i ekstraverzija bile su pozitivno povezane sa bazičnim samoevaluacijama, koje su, zauzvrat, bile povezane sa većom prilagodljivošću u karijeri. Takođe je postojao veoma mali, ali značajan indirektan efekat otvorenosti za iskustvo učenika na njihovu prilagodljivost u karijeri putem bazičnih samoevaluacija. Savesnost, ekstraverzija i otvorenost za iskustvo bili su direktno i pozitivno povezani sa prilagodljivošću u karijeri. Razmatraju se teorijske i praktične implikacije nalaza.

Ključne reči: karijerna adaptabilnost, osobine ličnosti, bazične samoevaluacije, izgradnja karijere

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