

Within-Person Variations in Career Adaptability: Theoretical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have investigated career adaptability at between-person levels and have neglected the possibility that it can vary in a short time period, such as daily. Drawing on the assumptions of Savickas career construction theory-CCT, this research intended to investigate within-person variations in career adaptability and its relation with employees' daily job outcomes such as job performance. The research study has important practical implications for the managers and organizations to ponder over their attention to the important concept of within-person career adaptability to make them adjustable and adaptable according to the dynamic changes happening on daily bases in the organizations.

Keywords: Within-person career adaptability; job performance; career construction theory; flexible competency

The Career Construction Theory-CCT

Savickas career construction theory- CCT (1997) describes how individuals construct their career across the life-cycle. CCT does not only present a model that explains employees' vocational behaviour in dynamic job environments but it also provides methods and tools to the career counsellors which they can use to help their clients for maintaining a successful work life and to make the best vocational choices in their careers. This theory comprehensively discusses employee vocational behaviour by taking three different perspectives that is (a) differential perspective (that talks about what), (b) developmental perspective (that talks about how), and (c) dynamic perspective (that talks about why). Taking differential perspective, Savickas Career construction theory- CCT (1997; 2002) describes the

different types of vocational personality and explains what the different personalities like to do at their vocations. The developmental perspective explains in detail the process of adaptation and examines how people deal with their developmental tasks, work transitions and changing work conditions. From the third perspective i.e., dynamic perspective, CCT explains why individuals adjust work into their lives in different ways. As a whole, all these three different perspectives of CCT help us to understand how people construct their career using themes of life to integrate their self-organization and career adaptability into a self-defining personality that helps them perform their work, direct their vocational choices and form their career adjustment in this dynamic career era. Overall, this theory has remained very popular to study the career construction of employees in organizations as it discusses all the needs and trends of modern era including the frequent changes of jobs and careers by the individuals. Consideration of dynamic changes in the individuals' careers gives this theory an advantage over the other relevant career theories. Career construction theory explains how people use their personality to adapt to several job changes (Savickas, 1997). There are three main components of Savickas career construction theory i.e, (i) life themes, (ii) vocational personality, and (iii) career adaptability.

Vocational Personality

Vocational personality aspect of career construction theory talks about person's needs abilities, values, and interests about the career. Personalities are made at home and developed at school and residential locality before a person enters into vocational life so the characteristics of occupational personalities are rehearsed even before entering into professional careers in the form of activities such as every day working at home, the games and hobbies etc. CCT takes occupational interests and vocational personality types as the related concepts and considers vocational personality as a reputation of an individual among the people. This theory discusses that personality is built while doing work. It takes work in the context of a human development (Savikas, Brown, & Lent, 2005). In CCT, vocational personality is defined as the combination of a person's needs, interests, values, and skills. CCT describes its concept of vocational personality on the theoretical framing of RISEC model which discusses "Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional" types of personalities to define the self-organization of a person's

skills. Savickas career construction theory takes RIASEC just as abstract. This theory describes that vocational personality types are the similarities to attitude and skills. As the career adaptability component of Savickas career construction theory describes the self-regulation of personality skills the vocational personality component talks about the self-organization.

Career Adaptability

The second component of CCT is the career adaptability. Savikas et al. (2005) describe career adaptability as, “the coping processes through which individuals connect to their communities and construct their careers” (p. 48). Life themes discuss how the personality is expressed in work and this expression of personality is guided by the process of career adaptation. Career construction process is comprised of the series of efforts to apply the self-concept in social roles. These attempts are done while going through “transitions from school to work, work to work, and profession to profession”. According to CCT, the adaptation to these transitions is advanced by 5 basic type of vocational behaviours i.e., exploration, orientation, establishment, disengagement, and management.

In the modern world of work individuals do not work for the organization for the whole time of their life rather they are more active in the construction of their career because of many factors including but not limited to globalization, technological changes, and redesigning of the jobs. Now the people change jobs frequently and as a result, they have to repeat the cycle of orientation, exploration, stabilization, management, and disengagement. Human ability to adapt to the new environment is increased by the resources that help him cope with complex, novel, dynamic, and vague problems that occur during job transitions.

Life Themes

As explained by Savikas et al. (2005) the life theme component of CCT focuses on the why of occupational behavior and explains the nature of work life. This component of CCT is related to Super’s theory of vocational development (Super, 1953, 1957) that describes different stages of a career in a person’s life. He explains these stages as growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. He further describes that at the time of occupational choices, an individual considers his

idea of the person he is, when starting an occupation he implements the concept of himself, and once getting stabilized in an occupation he maintains his self-esteem. The life theme perspective of CCT describes that careers are very important in a person's life and explains that how the construction of career is critical at different stages of life. It also highlights what people do and contributes to the society is important not only for them but for other people as well (Savikas, 2002).

One of the major focuses of Savickas career construction theory is on the life stories of that counselors share with their clients. A life theme is the third and the last component of CCT, life themes deal with the life stories of a person. It helps the career counselor to understand the facts that why a person has made some specific career choices. The understanding of life themes subsequently helps the career counselors to realize the meanings behind the specific career choices made by his client. Savickas used "life stories as the crucial threads of continuity that made meaningful the elements of vocational personality and adaptability" (McIlveen & Patton, 2007, p. 227).

Conceptualizing within-person variations in Career Adaptability

Savickas Career construction theory (2013) describes that adaptable individuals better adjust their self to fulfill the demands of social and psychological challenges. Career adaptability helps people to better manage the transitions at work that subsequently enhances their satisfaction (Proyer, Annen, Eggimann, Schneider, & Ruch, 2012).

This theory views career adaptability as a transactional competency or a psychological capital influenced by person-environment fit which helps individuals deal better with workplace transitions (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). CCT proposes a positive relationship between adaptation and job performance in organisations (Savickas, 2013). Job performance refers to "the acts of doing a job and is described as the level of productivity of an individual relative to his/her several job-related behaviours and outcomes" (Busch & Bush, 1978).

Although researchers, as discussed above, have studied relationships between career adaptability and job performance, at between person levels, we theorize that the relationships between these constructs may or may not be same at within-person level. As Savickas and Porfeli (2012) viewed career adaptability as a

transactional competency which is affected by the person-environment interactions, their study suggests that adaptability is not stable like other personality traits rather it is a type of human capital that people accumulate from their learning and experience which enable employees to express positive behavior to get their career goals. Similarly, Zacher (2014) studied that career adaptability predicts career success above and beyond stable personality traits. He explained that career adaptability is more flexible than other personality traits and it fluctuates due to different factors within the person and the environment. He later found significant differences between the within- and between-subject variations in career adaptability and their impact on individuals' behavior in organizations (Zacher, 2015). These theoretical insights aroused us to theorize the impact of within-person variations of career adaptability on employee behaviors such as daily job performance.

Conclusion

This paper has theorized challenged that career adaptability is not a fixed inherent trait but rather a flexible competency skill. Based on the theory of career construction CCT, we have theorized that career adaptability is a flexibility competency skill and it is very much possible that this can be empirically tested. Based on our paper we assume that future researches can be conducted in the area of within-person career adaptability theoretically and empirically.

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