

# Career Adaptability

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With the rapid development of society and technology, personal adaptability is becoming more and more important. Learning how to adapt to a changing world is becoming one of the necessary conditions for success. Career adaptability can help individuals to smoothly adapt to changes when coping with their career roles, and maintain their ability to balance their career roles, which will affect their important psychological resources for career development and achieve more meaning in life. In recent years, career adaptability has gradually attracted the attention of researchers. Therefore, in order to explore the main factors, such as research focus, the main researchers, its evolution, and the important results of career adaptability in the last ten years, this study used the scientific knowledge mapping software CiteSpace as a research tool, and select related articles from the Web of Science between 2010 to 2020 under the theme of "career adaptability" for data analysis, which can help future researchers to understand current and future career adaptability research and control the research direction of career adaptability. The results of this research indicate that there are direct or indirect connections between different themes, such as the career adaptability scale, career construction, positive personalities, and so on, but few articles integrate multiple research topics. At the same time, the main researchers, research frontiers and network relationships were also obtained. Based on the above findings, the correlative main concept, theoretical structure, evolution, and research progress of career adaptability in the past ten years are discussed.

Super and Knasel argued that career adaptability is a state of readiness which is required to cope with tasks that can be predicted by current or future job roles and to adapt to unpredictable work or changes in the work environment (Super & Knasel, 1981). Savickas modified it to be the individual's state of readiness for predictable career tasks, the career roles involved, and career problems that are unpredictable in career changes or career situations, which is also a quality that allows for change without much difficulty to conform to the new environment (Savickas, 1997). Later, Savickas made a more concise definition and supplement to the concept that was the state of preparation and resources needed to respond to current and anticipated career development tasks, including the attitudes, abilities, and behaviors individuals need to match them with work that suits them, which are psychological resources for managing career change, new tasks, and job trauma (Savickas, 2005; Savickas, 2002).

Keywords: career adaptability ; literature review ; scientific knowledge mapping ; CiteSpace

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## 1. History

Career adaptability originated from the core concept of Super's career development theory, namely career maturity, which has been constantly updated and revised by researchers (Super & Knasel, 1981)<sup>[1]</sup> [1]. Some experts proposed "career adaptability" instead of "career maturity" after 1981 (Super & Knasel, 1981; Savickas, 1997)<sup>[1][2]</sup>. The concept of career adaptability was first proposed by Super, which evolved from another core concept of career development, career maturity. Career adaptability refers to the ability of individuals to adapt to changes smoothly and maintain the balance of their career roles when coping with the transition of their own career roles (Super & Knasel, 1981)<sup>[1]</sup>. As the work world shifts from stable to fluid, how individuals can improve their career resilience to cope with unpredictable situations and make appropriate adjustments has been explored (Savickas, 1997; Savickas, 2005)<sup>[2][3]</sup>. Simply put, career adaptability are the resources that can successfully manage individuals' current and anticipated career transitions (Savickas, 1997; Savickas, 2005)<sup>[2][3]</sup>. These resources are not the core characteristics of the individual, but exist as a meeting point between humans and the environment, so they are psychosocial (Samuel, 2015)<sup>[4]</sup>. As an adaptive resource, career adaptability is a self-regulatory ability that one can use to solve unfamiliar, complex, and ill-defined problems arising from developmental career tasks, career transitions, and job trauma (Tolentino et al., 2014)<sup>[5]</sup>. Career adaptability enables individuals to broaden, improve, and ultimately realize self-concept in professional roles, thus creating a working life, bettering life satisfaction, and building a career framework (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012; Ginevra et al., 2018; Ginevra et al., 2017)<sup>[6][7][8]</sup>.

## 2. Theory Construction

Super was one of the earliest researchers to discuss the construction of career adaptability theory. In the early days, Super proposed that the measurement of career adaptability should include the following areas: work values and work salience, autonomy or sense of agency, planning or future perspective, exploration and establishment, decision-making, and reflection on experience (Super & Knasel, 1979)<sup>[9]</sup>. Later, Super revised the construction of adult career adaptability, and proposed a more complete “model of adult career adaptability”, which had five dimensions, including planning, exploration, information, decision-making, and reality orientation. However, the object scope of the career adaptability model constructed by Super was aimed at adults (Super & Knasel, 1981)<sup>[1]</sup>.

In order to make up for this deficiency, Savickas further enriched and improved the theoretical construction of career adaptability based on Super. Initially, Savickas proposed that career adaptability consists of three important dimensions: planful attitudes, self and environmental exploration, and adaptive decisions (Savickas, 1997)<sup>[2]</sup>. In 2005, Savickas further revised and improved the theoretical construction of career adaptability and proposed a more complete construction model. Savickas believed that the development of individual career adaptability develops along four dimensions or stages, which are career concern, career control, career curiosity, and career confidence (Savickas, 2005)<sup>[3]</sup> [3]. In the theory of career adaptability, career concern is regarded as the first and most important dimension, which addresses the question “do I have a future?” It means that an individual can pay attention to his/her own future career (Savickas, 2005)<sup>[3]</sup>. Career control is the second important dimension of career adaptability. It addresses the question of “who owns my future?” that is, the belief that individuals are self-determined and responsible for building their own careers (Savickas, 2005)<sup>[3]</sup>. Career curiosity reflects the individual's curiosity attitude, which motivates individuals to explore more careers, and enables teenagers to more realistically explore education and career choices, and then achieve future goals. The basic function of career curiosity in career construction is the same as the function of self-exploration and career exploration in career development theory, which means that individuals are willing to actively try to explore themselves and the work world (Savickas, 2005)<sup>[3]</sup>. Career self-confidence refers to individuals' confidence in their problem-solving abilities and self-efficacy beliefs, which can help the individual to build a perfect future and overcome difficulties (Savickas, 2005)<sup>[3]</sup>.

## 3. Scale Compilation

In the field of research on career adaptability, the career adaptability scale is undoubtedly an important research topic. Scholars in various countries have also localized the scales of Super and Savickas in light of their own cultural background and actual situation, and with further research in this field, more and more kinds of scales have been developed.

In the process of compiling various career adaptability scales, this study found that most of the subjects of the scales are adults. For example, the career adaptability scales of Savickas, Hirschi, and Rottinghaus. However, there are not many scales specifically designed for high school students and below, such as the Savickas and Porfeli Career Maturity Scale (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011)<sup>[10]</sup>. In China, secondary vocational students enter jobs after their secondary vocational studies are completed. As a special group, is the adult career adaptation strength chart applicable and is it also applicable to the measurement of the career adaptability of secondary vocational student groups? This needs to be verified by further research.

## 4. Influence Factors

When reviewing the literature of this period again, this study found that the factors affecting career adaptability were mainly concentrated in two aspects: one was the variables related to the individual, such as gender, grade (age), personality traits, etc. In terms of gender, Rottinghaus found that there was no significant gender difference in career adaptability among college students (Rottinghaus et al, 2005)<sup>[11]</sup>, and Hirschi also believed that gender did not affect the development of career adaptability among middle school students (Hirschi, 2009)<sup>[12]</sup>. In terms of age level, most studies believed that grade (age) level was a good predictor of career development, but Hirschi found that grade does not affect the development of career adaptability (Hirschi, 2009)<sup>[12]</sup>. Therefore, the influence of grade (age) on career adaptability remains to be further studied. As for personality traits, Hirschi focused on the Big Five personality traits and the proactive personality. The second was the variables related to the environment, such as family, social support, and so on. In terms of family factors, the impact of family socioeconomic status and parents on career adaptability was mainly explored. Many scholars believe that family socio-economic status is positively related to the development of career adaptability, and that

parenting styles also have an impact on youth career development (Chen et al., 2020; Dietrich & Kracek, 2009)<sup>[13][14]</sup>. In terms of social support, the social support of students was mainly reflected in family, school, and peers. While the social support of the adult group mainly came from the unit, supervisor, or related policies and measures.

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