

The Career Adaptability in the COVID-19 Pandemic Scenario

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Abstract

This work aims at verifying the level of career adaptability among the secondary sector workers, in times of crisis and due to sociodemographic variables. The research's subjects were the workers who were active during the COVID-19 pandemic period between March and June, 2020 in third-party companies belonging to a Brazilian multinational mining company. Through the quantitative research, 76 questionnaires were carried out based on the Career Adaptability Scale consisting of five dimensions (concern, control, curiosity, trust and cooperation). The polychoric correlation analysis indicated that two of the concerns are considered the most important for the interviewees, the F1 factor (current behavior) and the F2 factor (future preparation), that is, the way of acting in the present will influence professional success in the future.

Keywords: Career Adaptability, COVID-19.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The current work addresses the career adaptability theme in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic scenario. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 is a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus and presents a clinical picture that varies from asymptomatic infections to severe breathing conditions, reason why the its impact over the world's population has been plentiful studied.

The COVID-19 pandemic causes great biomedical and epidemiological implications, already proven by the frightening number of infected and the deceased worldwide. However, their effects in the social, economical, political, cultural and historical areas are still unknowns regarding the effects and impact over the population in general (FIOCRUZ, 2020).

In order to contribute with the discussion on the theme, this article proposes to verify the level of career adaptability among the secondary sector workers during times of crisis and sociodemographic variables.

The present market dynamics have been demanding each time more professionals with resilience skills (TIEN; WANG, 2017). From this perspective, it is noticed the society's continuing anxiety in relation to the formation of individuals in their professional journey. The work market is constantly worried about developing professionals who can be more flexible before the uninterrupted changes occurring in the world scenario and the increase of autonomy within the working relationships (OLIVEIRA et al, 2010).

The choice of this theme is justified by the possible contribution it will bring to the studies concerning the New Coronavirus (Sars-Cov 2) and the illness it causes, the COVID-19, involving all the community and the impacts on society, as well as the need to broaden the knowledge on the theme: career adaptability.

The following sections introduce the main concepts related to career adaptability and the discussion on the pandemic aspects regarding the development of career adaptability resources. The article's conclusion mentions the discussions of theoretical and practical implications of the results obtained.

1.1 COVID-19 VERSUS CAREER ADAPTABILITY

Since the individuals' psychosocial formation is part of the relations they keep with society, it is probable they are related to the roles performed by them. From such perspective, it is realized the need to discuss the person during the professional journey.

The working market is constantly worried about the formation of more flexible professionals before the constant changes occurring in the world scenario (TIEN; WANG, 2017), although, it is necessary to reassure that situations when traumatic life events demand a career transition, are becoming more frequent and actual (HAYNIE; SHEPHERD, 2011).

Such transitions refer to the need of general conception of the career adaptability construct, which can be seen as the capacity one has to deal with transitions and professional changes. This conception is carried out under the perspective of the Super development theory (1980) and, afterwards, the Savickas constructivist theory (1997).

Savickas (2013) defines such term as “a psychosocial construct that denotes the individuals’ readiness and the resources they use to deal with current and imminent tasks of career development, occupational transitions and personal traumas.”

In this context it is inferred the necessity to expand the knowledge regarding the career adaptability matter, since such knowledge takes over great relevance in moments of global working adaptation (AUTIN et al, 2017; DUFFY, 2010; GINEVRA et al, 2018; RYBA et al, 2016; SANTILLI et al, 2016; EBENEHI; RASHID; BAKAR, 2016), as per Moscovici (1982) the individuals’ comprehension is made impossible without considering them as part of an economical, cultural, historical and political society.

The construct previously presented is further explained through the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS), which is a scale used to measure the career adaptability, to map and assess competences. The competences involved are: concern, control, curiosity and confidence, which are validated by Savickas and Porfeli (2012), through the transcultural construction of a mediation instrument of those competences in several countries and a validation in national scenario, conducted by Teixeira et al (2012).

Although, many studies about career adaptability use the CAAS defined by Savickas e Porfeli (2012), the fifth dimension - cooperation - initially excluded, may be included in the expansion of the construct transcultural generalization, as Nye et al (2018) reinforces, and the relevance rescue of such dimension in relation to the fact that workers were submitted to an extreme situation, enabling the understanding, in a deeper way, how the career transitions are performed (NICHOLSON, 1984).

This way, people with a high level of concern regarding their careers, demonstrated skill to see their career future, making possible the planning and preparation to face challenges. However, people with high level on the control dimension own the necessary skills in order to be controlled, to get ready for a professional future and take over behaviours, such as, self-discipline and persistence (SAVICKAS; PORFELI, 2012).

The ability associated with curiosity is related with the capacity to self-explore and future environment, using different roles. And the ones with high levels of trust, believe they make the most appropriate choice in order to have their plans implemented (SAVICKAS; PORFELI, 2012).

The dimensions with the inclusion of cooperation are reinforced, a dimension that emphasizes the commitment through interpersonal aspects of career adaptability (PULAKOS et al, 2000; PLOYHART; BLIESE, 2015; MCMAHON; WATSON; BIMROSE, 2012), what corroborates with the need to analyze a dimension that shows empathy in such peculiar moment in history.

The fact that career development happens throughout someone’s life, implies in continuous decision making that depends on the performance of several development tasks, on the situational determinants and yet, on the combination of diversity of roles that each individual performs (SAVICKAS, 2013).

As previously mentioned, career adaptability is seen as adaptive behavior, that is, it varies from person to person and may lead to the transition of light or extreme career and to learning new skills. According to Seibert, Kramer e Heslin (2016) it does not matter how much people plan opportunities in their careers, the unexpected development, in general, occurs due to unpredictable changes.

Haynie and Shepherd (2011), before the so called “career shocks,” affirm that each person may have a positive or negative look towards vocational changes.

Based on that approach, it is understood that this article’s presentation is configured as relevant, since the literature on traumatic events in careers is not much mentioned in a way that the proposal to research the level of career adaptability of workers in times of crisis, in such an atypical period, as the COVID-19 pandemic, demands reflections and studies about their consequences.

In Brazil, the first actions connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, started with the repatriation of Brazilians who lived in Wuhan/China. Right after that, the country confirmed the first contamination, however, Europe had already confirmed hundreds of cases and countless deaths, leaving the rest of the world in an alarming notice/standby.

Thus, there was the concretization of a period of changes and full unawareness about the solution of the chaos installed amongst February, 2020 in Brazil, according to the national media.

At this moment of instability, it is emphasized that the concerns integrate the general concept of adaptability, standing out that being concerned with career is a catalytic element of the adaptation process, what clears that such process happens in someone's integration with the environment in a dynamic and continuous way. (SAVICKAS, 2013).

Such thought is integrated to Spurk 's et al (2016) that shows that professionals who carry more adaptability characteristics tend to feel less unsafe at work. Therefore, trying to understand adaptability in times

of sanitary and economical crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic, may be a fertile territory for new interferences.

1.2 METHOD AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed at verifying the level of career adaptability in workers of the secondary sector, in times of crisis and due to sociodemographic variables.

To do so, in this exploratory study, a socio demographic questionnaire was used with closed questions related to gender, age, marital status, occupation, company time, number of dependents, family income, estate of residence and level of education. The questionnaire also contained five points Likert-type scale, ranging between (1) poor development and (5) extremely well developed, which participants should punctuate their degree in relation to the career adaptability level as per Savickas and Porfeli (2012) Career Adaptability Scale (CAAS) presented in this study with the five factors: concern, control, curiosity, trust and cooperation. Each one of the factors has six items, which punctuations range between six and thirty.

The theoretical proposal in relation to the scale reliability level presented Alfa de Cronbach ranging between 0,75 to 0,90 among the factors and 0,95 in the total scale.

The sampling research was carried out online and 200 questionnaires were forwarded to the industrial company 's workers and 76 answers were collected. The questionnaires and the answers were sent during the COVID-19 pandemic period from March to June, 2020, to managers and operational workers.

The participants profile show some specific characteristics, such as, most of them are male, the percentage of female gendered answers was 14,6% and the masculine one was 81,6%, having the average of the female answers was 3,91 with 0,99 of standard deviation and for the masculine, the average was 4,08 and 0,84 of standard deviation.

The questionnaire was created at the platform Google Forms, having, initially, the instructions on how to fill it up, as well as the Free and Informed Consent Form and after that, the sociodemographic questions and the CAAS.

First of all, a descriptive statistic was carried out (average, standard deviation and frequencies) for the characterization of the sample and next, inferential statistics were implemented for the verification of score differences due to the socio demographic variables through the software FACTOR 10.10.03 WIN64 version, developed and updated throughout the years (Lorenzo-Seva et al., 2006; Vigil-Colet et al., 2008; Lorenzo-Seva et al., 2010; Vigil-Colet et al., 2013; Lorenzo-Seva, 2013; Ferrando et al., 2016; Ferrando et al., 2017; Ferrando et al., 2018; Lorenzo-Seva et al., 2019; Lorenzo-Seva et al., 2020).

The goal was to verify the level of the career adaptability of the respondent workers in relation to the CAAS factors, therefore, ratings varied from 3,82 to 4,09, whereas, the the highest average was observed in the Control dimension (A = 4,09 AVERAGE; SD = 0,94 STANDARD DEVIATION).

The chart shows the descriptive analysis of each one of the 30 variables (x1 ax 30), specifying each one's average, the break of trust, variance and the statistical asymmetry.

The statistical asymmetry indicates that data lead to the confirmation of the expectations along with the questionnaire, however, for the cooperation dimension, such conformity is not represented, that is, even in the expectation of highlighting due to the moment of crisis, such evidence was not confirmed.

Chart 1: variables descriptive analysis

UNIVARIATE DESCRIPTIVES					
Variable	Mean	Confidence Interval (95%)	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
				(Zero centered)	
x1	3.545	(3.26 3.83)	0.923	-0.487	1.012
x2	4.026	(3.74 4.31)	0.960	-1.311	2.470
x3	3.558	(3.28 3.84)	0.922	-0.704	1.094
x4	3.870	(3.61 4.13)	0.788	-0.981	2.944
x5	3.805	(3.53 4.08)	0.858	-0.791	2.013
x6	3.818	(3.54 4.10)	0.902	-0.824	1.773
x7	4.052	(3.73 4.37)	1.192	-1.257	1.522
x8	3.506	(3.18 3.84)	1.263	-0.656	0.247
x9	4.364	(4.10 4.62)	0.777	-1.940	5.896
x10	4.156	(3.88 4.44)	0.911	-1.409	3.087
x11	4.247	(3.97 4.52)	0.861	-1.700	4.316
x12	3.922	(3.61 4.23)	1.111	-1.056	1.154
x13	3.909	(3.64 4.17)	0.810	-1.226	3.242
x14	4.078	(3.81 4.34)	0.825	-1.315	3.514
x15	3.870	(3.62 4.12)	0.736	-1.244	3.921
x16	3.857	(3.58 4.13)	0.876	-0.961	2.190
x17	3.792	(3.50 4.09)	1.022	-0.793	1.055
x18	4.065	(3.78 4.35)	0.918	-1.568	3.754
x19	4.286	(4.05 4.53)	0.672	-2.011	7.743
x20	4.338	(4.08 4.59)	0.743	-1.950	6.389
x21	4.065	(3.78 4.35)	0.918	-1.388	2.955
x22	4.390	(4.15 4.63)	0.653	-2.326	9.325
x23	4.208	(3.94 4.47)	0.814	-1.716	4.809
x24	4.195	(3.94 4.45)	0.780	-1.540	4.610
x25	4.416	(4.17 4.66)	0.710	-2.235	7.901
x26	4.065	(3.76 4.37)	1.048	-1.310	2.306
x27	4.234	(3.97 4.49)	0.777	-1.748	5.318
x28	4.013	(3.74 4.28)	0.844	-1.248	3.147
x29	4.039	(3.75 4.33)	0.998	-1.345	2.651
x30	3.312	(2.94 3.68)	1.591	-0.412	-0.608

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was used in this sample with the purpose to identify whether the model used is properly adjusted to data, testing its general consistency. The value found to KMO was 0,803, that is, the factor analysis is appropriate for the study.

In the results of the analysis taken by the polychoric AFE method enabled to identify the association among the variables, thus, presenting the data general tendency.

Still in the search of better answers about the career adaptability levels during pandemic, it was observed the need to discover tendencies and to make that happen, an exploratory factor analysis was carried out with the F1 factor named “Current Behavior” and F2 as “future preparation.” Whereas the so called “current behavior” factor gathered issues that mention themes of the individual’s current acting.

As the F2 factor named “future preparation” gathered the issues related to someone 's future planning. Thus, out of the 6 original constructs, after the exploratory factor analysis, changed into a model with 2 main factors. At last, the Cronbach Alpha test scored 0.8755.

The purpose was to verify the career adaptability level in the secondary sector workers during times of crisis and due to socio demographic variables. Before those statistical inferences, it is considered that the adaptability level of the participants presented the highest index in the Trust dimension, alias, the skills related to the job choice behavior, to the identification with the area chosen and the behavior related to the career choices made (PORFELI; SAVICKAS, 2012).

Nevertheless, they demonstrated a lower tendency to the skill related to temporal perspective regarding future (Concern). These data go against Coetzee and Stoltz (2015) studies, which inform that the Concern dimension showed the highest relevance in the results found and the Control dimension showed the lowest evidence.

Right after the inferential statistics to compare the average due to the socio demographic variables, it was noticed, concerning the age item, that 31 to 40 year-old workers presented the highest degree in the scale highlight to the Trust dimension, which focuses on the success expectation according to the ideal choice, as per Savickas and Porfeli (2012) the people are aware of the choices in relation to career and are able to face the current and upcoming challenges.

Meanwhile, it is applicable to point out that the participants who were older than 50 years old, had their Concern dimension as the one presenting the lowest degree in the scale of adaptability, possibly, the older someone is, the lower their anxiety and consequently, the efforts regarding future worries are lower. Corroborated by Super (1980), such perception defends the career perspective as a process that interacts with the cycle of life of each person, indicating a parallelism between the age and the stage of career development.

According to gender, results were found with statistical meaning in the average comparison, a higher degree referent to the Trust dimension for men and women, which indicates the perception of good expectations, reliability before the actual and future challenges (SAVICKAS, 2005).

By considering the marital status variable and the workers level of adaptability, it is observed the group of the married ones have a higher degree in the Trust dimension, compared to other definitions. This group signalizes that it is ready to face current and upcoming challenges with success expectation.

Regarding the "estate of residence" variable, the workers who live with their families (partner and children), as well as the ones living on their own. also presented as the Trust dimension as highlight.

As per Super (1980), the personal/biographic dimensions and the ones with socio economic basis (economical resources and family) interact among themselves, that is, the family has an influence on the development of skills, that consequently interferes in the decision making, demanding from the individuals to face certain tasks of their career development according to the social expectations. That leads to the inference of the individual with socioeconomic subsidies owns more skills referent to challenges in the search of a good career performance.

On the other hand, the ones living with friends stand out the Concern and Cooperation dimensions with the same average. It is valid to highlight that the higher average in the Cooperation dimension group in this research was the one with workers being hired for 6 months, which shows that the interpersonal factor assures the individuals the capacity to interact and work with others, making them feel capable of soon overcoming possible Savickas (1997) barriers, evidenced by the desire to engage in a group.

This way, it is applicable to stress that the Cooperation dimension, although, in a lower evidence, it is shown with significant values in each group. Corroborated such importance by McMahon, Watson and Bimrose (2012) through the need to build support networks and to be seen as part of the team.

In relation to the time working in the company, the most relevant average of the participants is the Trust dimension, that is, the workers working for over 5 years in the company confirm the certainty of career choices. However, it is worth to remember that, Van der Horst, Klehe and Van der Heijden (2017) suggested that the longer a worker remains in the company, fewer career adaptive answers they present in comparison with the workers who have spent less time at the same job.

As far as the workers with 3 children, they had a larger representation in relation to the Trust dimension, it is reaffirmed the influence of families in the career adaptability skill, when the worker feels efficient, even among all the difficulties, but being motivated and supported by their families, the workers increase self-confidence in order to achieve their own goals.

With respect to the socio demographic variable, salary is quite relevant in relation to career adaptability, because in this pandemic period directly interferes in the safety matter, fearing the lack of resources. Thus, regarding salaries, the highest averages of this sample indicate the Trust dimension as dominant in relation to all the other dimensions and to every salary range attributed in this sample.

In accordance with the studies of Rudolph, Lavigne and Zacher (2016) that analyzed the socio demographic variables related to career adaptability, the workers who had more experience in the work market and consequently higher salaries used to have more resources of adaptability than the other workers.

In the same way, the "educational level" variable has as predominant, the Trust dimension in every groups of participants, as Zacher (2014) stands out that the highest level of education is related in a positive way

with the resources of career adaptability. That is explained due to the educational level 's assistance to make the workers conquer and know when to use the resources that allow the career tasks and transitions to get solved.

At last, before the exploratory analysis, it was possible to infer that the workers participating in the research are careful to do their best in the present moment and still feel anxious to get ready for the future, even being uncertain.

II. CONCLUSION

The research aimed at verifying the career adaptability level in the secondary sector workers, in times of crisis and due to sociodemographic variables. The results found through an exploratory study indicate that the highest level of adaptability was observed in the Control dimension, although the five dimensions of career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, trust and cooperation) reflect an interaction process between the dimensions of Trust and Control that are made visible through analysis. Somewhat, the results converge to the literature about the theme proposed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012) and Savickas (1997, 2013).

The polychoric factor analysis showed that two concerns are considered more important for the interviewees, those summarized in the F1 factors (current behavior) and F2 factor (future preparation), that is, the way one acts in the present will influence their professional success in the future.

Therefore, it is inferred after the research conclusion that the analysis hereby described must be analyzed inside a context, taking into consideration some limitations of the study, such as, the sample size. Another limitation is the focus on verifying the differences of measures regarding the career adaptability in relation to the sociodemographic variables.

Since the purpose of this current article was to provide new discussions on the career adaptability topic from the perspective of stressing events like the COVID-19 pandemic, for further studies, it is suggested that the analysis are for the verification, with longitudinal studies, other aspects about adaptability, with the willingness to know deeper the effects brought by times of crisis related to career adaptability.

It found that there is a possibility to go deeper in this theme, because articles about career adaptability in a global level of stress have not been found yet. Another proposal for future studies is the accomplishment of a research comparing different sectors of economy in a way to guarantee greater robustness to the discussion.

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