

Career Adaptability, Hope, Optimism and Life Satisfaction in Italian and Swiss youngers

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Abstract

The consequences of economic crisis are different from one European context to the other. Based on Life Design approach, the present study focused on two variables, career adaptability and a positive orientation toward future (hope and optimism), relevant to coping with the current work context and their role in affecting life satisfaction. A partial mediational model between career adaptability and life satisfaction, through a positive orientation toward future (hope and optimism) was tested across Italian and Swiss countries. 726 Italian and 533 Swiss youngers participants were involved. Results provided support for the model in the Italian group and a full mediation model for the Swiss one. The data suggest that the context may have an effect on how career adaptability has an impact on general life satisfaction. These results have important implications for practice and underscore the need to support youngers in their life design process.

Keywords: Career Adaptability, Hope, Optimism, Youngers

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Introduction

This new century is characterized by a fast moving global economy (Coutinho, Dam, & Blustein, 2008). Therefore phenomena such as globalization, internationalization, and rapid technological advances, influence people life and the ways in which they seek and do their jobs (Nota, Ginevra, & Soresi, 2012). In Western countries, in particular, the economic recession has resulted in the loss of employment, insurance and pension securities (Judt, 2011). The world of work is in general much less clearly defined or predictable, and employees face greater challenges in coping with work transitions (Savickas et al., 2009). People now find themselves having to develop professional skills that differ substantially from the knowledge and the skills required in 20th-century occupations, such as continuous updating of knowledge which is crucial to the use of increasingly sophisticated technologies (Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013; Nota, Soresi, Ferrari, & Ginevra, 2014).

The consequences of economic crisis are different from one context to the other. The lack of work is influencing negatively an increasing part of the population. Therefore the World Health Organization has expressed its concern about depression, which seems to extent in Western countries (World Health Organization, 2011). According to the Eurostat (2015) in February 2015, the youth unemployment rate was 21.1 % in the EU-28 and 22.9 % in the euro area. In this regard, however, there are differences between European countries. In Switzerland, for example, the unemployment rate among young people remains low by international standards (ILO, 2014). The same situation also seems to emerge with regard to the rate of school dropout and the percentage of early school-leavers—people aged between 18 and 24 years who completed only lower secondary education and are not involved in further education or training—, which was 5.4% in 2013, compared with 23.6% in Spain,

18.9% in Portugal and 17% in Italy (OECD, 2013). The reasons for these discrepancies can be partially explained or related with different, social, political and economic contexts, characterized by different migration rates, financial situations, etc.

To better account for the complexities of work and careers and the constraints induced by today's economic conditions, globalization, and the digital revolution, the Life Design (LD) paradigm for career counseling has been recently developed (Savickas et al., 2009). The LD paradigm expands the 20th-century person-environment fit and developmental models by focusing on adaptation, regulation, and self-identity processes that allows people to self-manage and self-construct their life and career and making sense of their personal pathways (Nota & Rossier, 2015). People today experience a new social arrangement of work that moves from permanent to more temporary jobs, from linear to dynamic career trajectories, and from specific career knowledge to lifelong learning. LD emphasizes the need to support people to become experts in constructing their life-careers, to anticipate and deal with transitions, and to create hope and optimism for a meaningful future and life satisfaction. Among other, the life design paradigm suggests that preventive career interventions with child and youngers are very useful, in order to prepare these young people for their future transitions—among which the school-to-work transition (Masdonati & Fournier, 2015) —, increase their choice opportunities, detect at-risk situations, and decrease social inequalities (Savickas et al., 2009). Adolescence is in fact a period of growth and life changes and transitions from parental dependency to independency and is also the school-leaving age (Vilhjálmisdóttir, 2015). In this regards an important role is played by career adaptability and a positive orientation toward future.

Career adaptability

People behaviors are function of the physical, social, and cultural environment, of personal disposition, and of the ability to take into account these sources of strengths and

constrains. To regulate the impact of these two sources they can use several regulation processes. These regulation processes constitute one dynamic aspect of the person that allows her/him expressing adapted behaviors that are adjusted to the environment's expectations (Rossier, 2015). Considering career related outcomes, one important regulation process according to Savickas' (2005) career construction theory is career adaptability that allows integrating the four distinct aspects of the life-span, life-space approach (the personal, developmental, contextual and identity aspects). Career adaptability is a psychosocial construct that includes four more specific abilities contributing to these regulation processes, called the four career adapt-abilities: Career concern, with the associated attitude of and competence in planning, fosters coping behaviors of awareness and preparation, assisting individuals to respond to the demands of the work environment. Control fosters personal responsibility for one's career and work experiences. A decisive attitude, engaging in decision-making and behaving in an assertive manner may assist individuals to create the desired work experience. Career curiosity facilitates a good fit between the self and the world of work, and through exploration and risk-taking suggests that individuals gain new knowledge and competences. Confidence has been likened to self-esteem and self-efficacy (Savickas, 2005) with this belief in the self to master challenges and solve problem suggesting a "capacity to respond to stressful situation[s]." (Johnston, Luciano, Maggiori, Ruch, & Rossier, 2013, p. 296) Career adverse situations or career interventions can activate the expression of these regulation processes that should help people to optimize their use of their personal and environmental resources.

Career adaptability is related to several personal characteristic including personality traits (Öncel, 2014; Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori, & Dauwalder, 2012; Teixeira, Bardagi, Lassance, Magalhaes, & Duarte, 2012; van Vianen, Klehe, Koen, & Dries, 2012), positive expectations and dispositions regarding the future (Öncel, 2014; Wilkins et al., 2014;

Zacher, 2014), confident view of the self and strong agency beliefs (Hirschi, 2009; Hou, Wu, & Liu, 2014; Öncel, 2014; Tolentino et al., 2014; Tolentino, Garcia, Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2013; van Vianen et al., 2012; Zacher, 2014), as well as optimistic evaluation of the context (Hirschi, 2009; Soresi, Nota, & Ferrari, 2012), encouraging emotional dispositions (Hirschi, 2009; Johnston et al., 2013; Pouyaud, Vignoli, Dosnon, & Lallemand, 2012) and emotional intelligence (Coetzee & Harry, 2014). In the career context, this concept has also been positively connected to employment status (Guan et al., 2013; Guan et al., 2014), career satisfaction and career success (Maggiori et al., 2013; Tolentino et al., 2013; Wilkins et al., 2014;), person-environment fit perceptions (Guan et al., 2013), job search self-efficacy (Guan et al., 2013; Guan et al., 2014), self-rated career related performance and competences (Guan et al., 2013; Guo et al., 2014), as well as work engagement (Rossier et al., 2012). It is also linked to low work stress (Johnston et al., 2013) and low career anxiety (Pouyaud et al., 2012). More broadly, career adaptability is positively related to outcomes such as general well-being (Maggiori et al., 2013), life satisfaction (Hirschi, 2009; Santilli, Nota, Ginevra, & Soresi, 2014), and quality of life (Soresi et al., 2012).

Hope

Within counseling literature hope has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. Snyder and colleagues (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991) conceptualized hope as a cognitive set that is directed at goal attainment and is defined as “the perceived capacity to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways” (p. 249). Furthermore Scioli et al. (1997) considered hope as an affective variable that sustains action and affects thoughts and behaviors. It is an emotion rooted in biological, psychological and social resources (Scioli, Ricci, Nyugen, & Scioli, 2011). For this reason it can be considered a positive feeling that supports individuals to face difficulties and to succeed in what it is important for them thus stimulating even greater feelings of life

satisfaction. In line with these considerations Santilli et al. (2014) have underlined that individuals with higher level of career adaptability, that considered oneself able to construct own future career intentions and to cope with career transitions and difficult work situations, showed higher levels of hope and life satisfaction.

Hope is linked with other important variables in the life of young adolescents. For example Valle, Huebner, and Suldo (2004) found that hope was positively correlated with youngers' global life satisfaction, and Amundson, Niles, Yoon, Smith, In, and Mills (2013) observed that hope is also associated with positive career related variables such as vocational identity, career decision self-efficacy and career-related beliefs. Hirschi, Abessolo and Froidevaux (2015) were able to see a significant relationship between hope and career exploration. Therefore, Kenny, Blustein, Haase, Jackson, and Perry (2006) have emphasized that hopeful youngers are characterized by higher motivation toward reaching goals, higher school achievement and higher satisfaction for their educational plan. Hope is thus an important aspect to consider in relation with career adaptability and life satisfaction in young adolescents (Ginevra, Sgaramella, Santilli, Ferrari, Nota, & Soresi, in press.; Nota et al., 2012).

Optimism

Optimism can be defined as the tendency or attitude to view the work and interpret situations and events positively and can be considered as a human strength and virtue (Sheldon & King, 2001). Bryant and Cvengros' study (2004) considered optimism as a general expectancy of positive future results and Karademas (2005) found that optimism reflects an overall positive appraisal of the future and of the things to happen. Involving a group of adult workers, the author showed that optimism mediated the relationship between self-efficacy to achieve future expectations and life satisfaction.

Optimism also reports positive relationships with a number of significant variables

in the life of the youngers. For example, higher scores on optimism correlate with a lower psychological maladjustment, aggressiveness, with higher assertiveness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, positive humor, and even a stronger immune system (Chang, 2001; Extremera, Durán, & Rey, 2007; Malinauskas & Vaicekauskas, 2013). Patton, Bartrum, and Creed (2004) found that optimism predict career goals, career planning and career exploration in a group of high school students. Rottinghaus, Day, and Borgen (2005) reported positive correlations between optimism and career adaptability, and found that higher optimistic and adaptable university students showed higher comfort with and were more engaged in their educational and career planning.

Although hope and optimism are two related but distinct constructs, with hope focusing on pathways and motivation to achieve desired goals and optimism concerning the general outcome expectancy of positive future results and attitude to view and interpret situations and events positively, Bryant and Cvengros (2004) suggested that they can be considered as dual indicators of a single global dimension reflecting future orientation. Also Snyder, Sympson, Michael, Cheavens, and Chang (2001) suggested the possibility that these constructs share a future orientation theme that keeps the individual engaged in pursuing goals. Lastly, Sun and Shek (2012) observed that hope and optimism can be considered as internalized constructs referring to possible outcomes of beliefs toward future. Moreover, these positive beliefs toward future are associated with positive expectations about the future and to positive health outcomes.

Life Satisfaction

As regards the quality of life concept, Schallock et al. (2002) considered the term “quality” as related to human values, e.g. happiness, satisfaction and health, and the term “life” as referred to the important aspects of human existence, e.g. health, family and work. In this study, in particular, we consider the subjective component of quality of life, i.e., life

satisfaction. This latter refers to a judgmental process, in which individuals assess the quality of their lives on the basis of their own unique set of criteria (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Having a job and thinking one can perform the desired tasks generally are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (Haar, Russo, Suñe, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014), as well as having focused professional goals and feeling a sense of career decision help young people feel more satisfied (Nota et al., 2014). The future, the work, the perception that there are possibilities for own selves are factors that help people to feel better and to consider positively their lives.

Recent findings indicate that variables such as hope, optimism, and career adaptability serve as important predictors of life satisfaction in youngers (Hirschi, 2009; McIlveen, Beccaria, & Burton, 2013). Students who endorsed the belief that things would ‘go their way’ and that they can achieve their future goal, tended to experience greater overall satisfaction (Wilkins et al., 2014).

Research Aim

Considering the forgoing studies and the Life Design approach, which emphasizes on the role of career adaptability, hope and optimism to deal with the challenges of today society, the present study aimed at analyzing the relationship between career adaptability, hope, and optimism, on Swiss and Italian youngers’ life satisfaction. According to Hirschi (2009), who observed direct relationships between career adaptability and life satisfaction, and taking in consideration the studies carried out by Karademas (2005) and Scioli (2010) who observed relationships between personal social resource and hope and optimism, we hypothesized that career adaptability, directly and indirectly, through a positive orientation toward future (hope and optimism), predicted life satisfaction in Swiss and Italian youngers. Specifically, we predicted that the conceptual model would be comparable across countries.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 1,259 youngers, 618 boys and 651 girls ($M_{\text{age}} = 14.35$, $SD = 2.34$). This total sample included 726 Italian participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 14.09$, $SD = 1.49$), 371 boys and 355 girls, and 533 Swiss participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 14.19$, $SD = 1.72$), 247 boys and 286 girls. Concerning the Swiss sub-sample, 409 were Italian-speaking and 124 French-speaking, coming from two out of the four Swiss linguistic regions. No age [$F(1, 1258) = .622$, $p = .430$] and gender [$\chi^2(1) = 2.893$, $p = .053$] differences were observed between Swiss and Italian youngers.

Measures

Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The CAAS consists of 24 items. Participants responded to each item on a scale from 1 (*not strong*) to 5 (*strongest*). The 24 items combine into a total career adaptability score, and are also divided into four subscales that measure the adapt-ability resources of concern (e.g., “Realizing that today's choices shape my future”), control (e.g. “Counting on myself”), curiosity (e.g., “Investigating options before making a choice”) and confidence (e.g. “Working up to my ability. For the present study, the Italian and French validated versions were used (Rossier et al., 2012; Soresi et al., 2012). For this study Cronbach's alpha for four subscales were .78, .66, .72, and .80.

Visions About Future (VAF; Ginevra, Sgaramella, Santilli, Ferrari, Nota, & Soresi, in press). The instrument consists of 20 items assessing a total score of positive orientation toward future and two subscales: youngers' hope (e.g. Certainly in the future I'll be able to realize something interesting for me) and optimism toward the future (e.g., “I think I'm an optimist”). Participants responded to each item on a scale from 1 (*not strong*) to 5 (*strongest*). For this research the Italian validated version was used. The VAF was also translated in French by a team of three career counselor specialists and back translated in English. This back-translation was compared with the original Italian-version by the authors

of this scale who made several suggestions. The French-version revised accordingly. A multi-group analysis confirmed that the Italian and French versions reached, configural ($\chi^2 (129) = 451.80$, CFI = .976, NNFI = .970, RMSEA = .078), weak ($\chi^2 (147) = 490.45$, CFI = .975, NNFI = .972, RMSEA = .075), and strong invariance ($\chi^2 (129) = 593.25$, CFI = .969, NNFI = .969, RMSEA = .079). In this study, Cronbach's alpha was .88 for hope subscale and .78 for optimism subscale.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). For this study we used the frequently used Italian- and French-version of the SWLS that is a five-item scale used to assess global life satisfaction (Blais, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Brière, 1989; Santilli & Soresi, 2013). An example of items is "I am satisfied with my life". Participants are asked to rate how much each statement describes them on a 7-point from 1 (*not strong*) to 7 (*strongest*). For this study, Cronbach's alpha was .80.

Procedure

Italian youngers, participating in middle school-based counseling activities, filled out the questionnaire during group testing sessions conducted in a small group format by specialized psychologists, in classrooms and in training contexts. Informed consent was received, along with assent from the youngers, before school personnel administered the assessment. Youngers were asked to read the instructions for each instrument before beginning self-evaluation.

The Italian-speaking part of Swiss youngers filled out the questionnaire in the presence of a researcher in the IT classroom of the middle-school they attended. Extra explanations on difficult questions were given to students who asked for them. The French-speaking part of Swiss youngers completed the questionnaire in their classroom. The youngers were instructed by the researcher during a psychology course, in presence of their teacher. They were given additional information on the aim of the research after they

completed the questionnaire.

The research followed the ethical rules of the Swiss Society of Psychology and of the American Psychological Association.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations for each country are reported in Table 2. Positive correlations were observed among career adaptability, orientation toward future and life satisfaction across two groups. Correlations were lower for the Italian sub-sample. Three preliminary analysis of variance (ANOVA) were also run to verify whether any gender and nationality differences would emerge in career adaptability, orientation toward future, and life satisfaction. ANOVAs revealed a significant but negligible main effect of gender on orientation toward future, $F(1, 1259) = 5.164, p = .023, \eta^2 = .004$, and a significant but small effect of nationality on both career adaptability, $F(1, 1259) = 34.319, p = < .001, \eta^2 = .027$, and orientation toward future $F(1, 1259) = 49.572, p = < .001, \eta^2 = .038$. Italian youngers reporting slightly higher levels of career adaptability and orientation toward future. These results confirm the importance of distinguishing countries when testing an overall model linking career adaptability, orientation toward future, and satisfaction with life.

The measurement and structural model

A two-step approach to SEM was employed (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). First, a measurement model was evaluated using a multi-group approach for the Italian and Swiss sub-samples. Specifically, we tested the invariance of the measurement model, using a covariance matrix with 8 variables as input data. Specifically, we created item parcels to form multiple observed indicators representing each latent construct (4 for career adaptability, 2 for orientation toward future, and 2 for life satisfaction). As suggested by Kistton and Widaman (1994), we used the internal-consistency approach, which creates parcels that use

the factors as the grouping criteria. So, we created four parcels for career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity and confidence) and two parcel (hope and optimism) for orientation toward future. Instead, for life satisfaction, we assigned items for each of the latent constructs, using the item-to-construct balancing technique (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002), creating two parcels.

Overall, the baseline measurement model had good fit indices $\chi^2(34) = 80.15$, CFI = .992, NNFI = .986, RMSEA = .046. Next, we constrained all factor loadings to be equal between the two groups. The results show that the model imposing equality constraints across groups provided a good fit $\chi^2(39) = 91.10$, CFI = .990, NNFI = .986, RMSEA = .046. Moreover, no significant fit changes were observed according to the Satorra-Bentler chi-square difference test and CFI test ($\Delta\chi^2 = 10.95$, $\Delta df = 5$, $p = .052$, $\Delta CFI = .002$).

In the second step, we conducted EQS structural modeling tests to evaluate the conceptual model. Firstly, we tested the hypothesized model across Italian and Swiss groups simultaneously without imposing any equality constraints. The baseline model produced a good fit to the data $\chi^2(34) = 80.15$, CFI = .992, NNFI = .986, RMSEA = .046. As is often the case in the psychological literature (e.g., Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2005), the baseline model in the present study was not fully identical across groups. Specifically, one regression coefficient differed across the two groups. The path from career adaptability to life satisfaction was significant for Italian ($b = 1.05$, $p < .001$), but not for Swiss ($b = .008$, $p > .05$) youngers. This path in Swiss sample was released and the model was re-estimated $\chi^2(35) = 80.64$, CFI = .992, NNFI = .987, RMSEA = .046. This path was not constrained in subsequent steps of invariance testing.

Lastly, we tested the nested structural model using the scaled difference chi-square test ($\Delta SB\chi^2$; Satorra and Bentler, 2001) and using the CFI Δ test (Byrne & van de Vijver, 2010; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). The model which constrained the paths from career

adaptability to orientation toward future and from orientation toward future to life satisfaction was significantly worse than the baseline model according to the Satorra-Bentler chi-square difference test and CFIA test ($\Delta\chi^2 = 90.88$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < .001$, $\Delta CFI = .018$). Thus, significant group differences exist in the conceptual model across Italian and Swiss youngers. The standardized regression path coefficients for Italian and Swiss groups are presented in figure 1.

Discussion

Based on Life Design approach (Nota & Rossier, 2015), the present study examined the relationship between career adaptability, positive orientation toward future (hope and optimism), and life satisfaction in Swiss and Italian youngers in order to characterize more precisely how adaptive resources influence people life course and more particularly in this case life satisfaction. Specifically, we hypothesized that a positive orientation toward future (hope and optimism) partially mediated the relationship between career adaptability and life satisfaction and that the conceptual model would be comparable across countries.

Our results supported a partial mediation in the Italian youngers, showing that career adaptability is, directly and indirectly, related to life satisfaction. In the Swiss youngers, results supported a full mediation, showing that career adaptability is indirectly related to life satisfaction through positive orientation toward future (hope and optimism). As regards the relationship between career adaptability and positive orientation toward future, our results are similar to those of other studies that have shown that career adaptability influences the hopeful expectations and positive dispositions regarding the future (Öncel, 2014). This means that, both for Swiss and Italian young adolescents, being career adaptable, or considering oneself able to construct their own future career intentions and to cope with career transitions, may

favor a general subjective well-being to face difficulties and to succeed in what it is important for them (Konstam, Celen-Demirtas, Tomek, & Sweeney, 2015).

As regards the direct relationship between career adaptability and life satisfaction, for Italian youngers, our results are in line with those of other studies with adolescents (Hirschi, 2009) but also with adults (Maggiori et al., 2013). This indicates that, disregarding age, career adaptability positively contributes to general life satisfaction. This may be due to the fact that the ability to cope with educational, vocational, or career challenges, by exploring different possibilities, options, and opportunities, for example, is an important resource throughout childhood and adulthood and contributes to well-being by increasing life satisfaction (Santilli et al., 2014). On the contrary, people with less resources might have much more difficulties to cope with the challenges of the contemporary labor market; people with less resources being also less capable of taking advantage of the contextual opportunities (Rossier & Nota, 2015). This hypothesis of cumulative advantage or disadvantage would certainly deserve more research in the field of career counseling considering that some data suggest that people with higher level of distress benefit less from career interventions (Whiston, Rossier, Hernandez-Barón, submitted). This topic would be especially relevant concerning work rehabilitation and interventions for marginalized populations (Nota, Soresi, Ferrari, & Ginevra, 2014).

Interestingly the mediation was partial in Italy and full in Switzerland, suggesting that the context may have an effect on how career adaptability has an impact on general life satisfaction. In Switzerland, middle school students are included in different paths, which are vocational or high education oriented, depending mainly of their school performances. This means that at age 15, two third of the compulsory Swiss students have to choose a concrete profession and to start an apprenticeship, in

a limited range of possibilities. Consequently, even students who are confident in their career adapt-abilities can still be dissatisfied with life if they feel stuck in their early career prospects. On the contrary vocational choices are usually made later in Italy. Contextual specificities of the educational and vocational system might explain why orientation toward the future is especially important for Swiss youngers that have to prepare the school-to-work transition (Masdonati & Fournier, 2015). Thus this study illustrates the importance of considering the social and cultural context when studying that type of models that might not always be generalizable across countries.

Finally, these results emphasize the idea that in the actual fast moving global economy and the consequents phenomena such as globalization, internationalization, and rapid technological advances, youngers, who are approaching to the world of work, should develop not only work knowledge and competences but also variables that increase today's workers' life satisfaction, such as adaptability, hope, and optimism, regardless of their contextual and socio-economical background (Nota et al., 2012). Considering the high number of young adults having difficulties to integrate the world of work in our contemporary societies, the investment in preparing young people for transitions emphasizes the need to support people to become experts in constructing their life-careers, to anticipate and deal with future challenges, and to create a positive orientation toward future and a life satisfaction.

Implications for practice

The results underline the importance of preventive career education activities focusing on strengthening career adaptability, which in turn can sustain the development of hope and positive expectations towards future and life satisfaction in youngers. Useful suggestions of interventions and activities aiming at helping developing career adaptability can be found in the literature (Savickas, 2005; Hartung, Portfeli, & Vondracek, 2008;

Feldman & Dreher, 2012, Rossier, 2015). Hartung (2015) claimed that it is especially important to create preventive career interventions, able to engage children toward key life design goals of activity, adaptability, and intentionality with the aim to help them to experience satisfaction and success in their careers. Nota, Ginevra, and Santilli (2015) also suggested promoting positive attitudes toward school and the future, with the aim of increasing career knowledge and prerequisites of career adaptability with their ten unit program interventions, "Journey in the world of professions and work".

Another important implication of this study is that it illustrates that career counseling models should take the context into account, as does the social cognitive theory of career (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) or the life design paradigm (Savickas et al., 2009). In this study the context moderate the mediation effect of orientation toward future. This implies, as suggested by Hirschi (2010) that counselors should pay particular attention to the specific contextual demands regarding career development for youngers instead of focusing mainly on age or grade level to determine appropriate career interventions. Furthermore, Masdonati and Fournier (2015) consider that the school-to-work transition process as it occurs in modern Western societies, need to develop intervention that focus on the relationship between individual and his/her specific life context. Considering the high number of young adults having difficulties to integer the world of work in our contemporary societies, for example the proportion of young person between 15 and 24 not in education, employment or training (NEET) represent about 12.9% in the European community (Eurofound, 2012) and in Switzerland 3.9% of people aged between 18 and 25 do benefit from the social welfare system (OFS, 2011), such intervention or preventive intervention for adolescents are certainly necessary and should be systematically proposed.

Limitations and future directions

The first limitation of this study consists in the findings and reflections reported herein that refer that models could be theoretically influenced by the context. It is hoped that future research will recruit participants from other regions and countries, with the aim of study and test the model in different contexts, in order to check its generalizability.

Future studies could also consider other positive psychology variables, such as resilience or orientation to happiness, and study their role in career construction and life design of youngers. Future research could therefore adopt a longitudinal design, to examine if these characteristics, in relation with career adaptability, help over time to develop vocational identity.

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics, and Correlations across groups

				Italian sub-sample		Swiss sub-sample	
	1	2	3	<i>M</i>	<i>DS</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DS</i>
1. Career Adaptability	-	.189***	.397***	90.82	10.58	86.96	12.80
2. Orientation toward future	.526***	-	.201***	45.84	8.53	42.27	9.07
3. Life satisfaction	.350***	.544***	-	24.93	5.28	24.74	5.96

Note. Correlations for the Italian sub-sample are above the diagonal and correlations for the Swiss sub-sample are below the diagonal. Correlation above .30 in absolute magnitude are in bold.

*** $p < .001$.

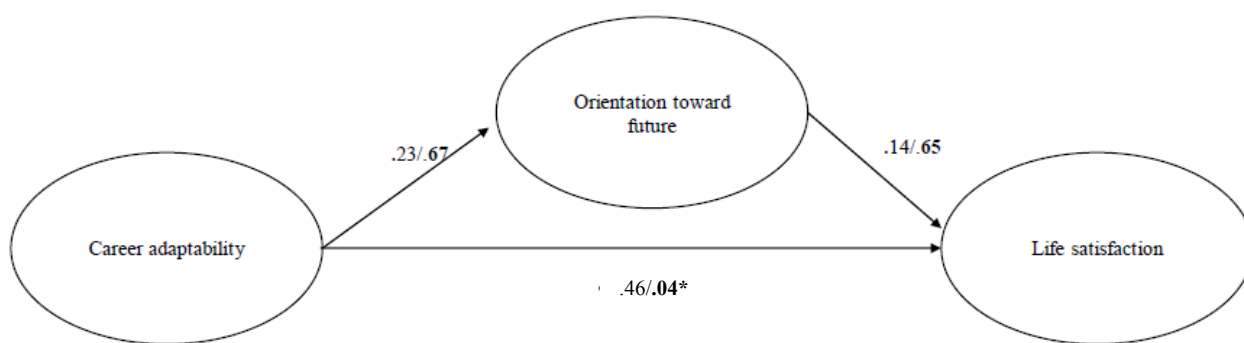


Figure 1.

Standardized regression path coefficients for the Italian and Swiss sub-samples. Regression path coefficients for the Swiss group are in bold. All coefficient were significant except the path indicated with an “*” that was non-significant for the Swiss sub-sample.