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Unlocking Knowledge, Unlocking Potential: Exploring the Relationship Between Career Adaptability Dimensions, Employee Optimism and Life Satisfaction in Indian Manufacturing Sector

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KEYWORDS

career, career adaptability, employees, knowledge, optimism, life satisfaction.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Amidst the new realities of the modern world, promoting optimism and career adaptability has become crucial for organizations to maintain a happy and satisfied workforce, which in turn is necessary to gain knowledge and remain competitive. This study tries to explore the role of optimism and career adaptability in promoting well-being and provide practical insights for organizations seeking to create a positive work environment that fosters employee happiness and satisfaction.

Design/methodology/approach – This study used a sample of 418 employees working in various Indian manufacturing organizations. PROCESS macro was used to test the hypotheses and explore the complex relationships between these variables while accounting for the potential influence of other factors.

Findings – The results revealed that career adaptability dimensions significantly influence life satisfaction wherein concern has a negative association and curiosity, control along with confidence are positively associated with life satisfaction. Also, employee optimism partially mediates this relationship in Indian manufacturing organizations.

Practical implications – Organizational development practitioners and human resource professionals are encouraged to prioritize interventions and practices that foster positive outlook and adaptability skills among employees. Ultimately, this can contribute to a more engaged and productive workforce, and help organizations maintain their competitive edge as well as aid in development of comprehensive employee well-being strategy.

Originality/value – This study adds to the Life Design paradigm and underscores the need for organizations to promote career adaptability and optimism as key factors in employee well-being. By investing in training and development programs that help employees build adaptability skills and a positive outlook, organizations can foster a more engaged and satisfied workforce, and ultimately gain a competitive edge in the marketplace.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has been marked by a rapidly changing global economy, driven by factors such as globalization, internationalization, knowledge management and technological advancements (Coutinho, Dam, & Blustein, 2008). These factors have impacted people's lives in numerous ways, including how they seek and do their jobs (Nota, Ginevra, & Soresi, 2012). In addition, the economic recession that began in 2008 has resulted in significant job losses and a decrease in

employment, insurance, and pension securities in many Western countries. This has had a profound impact on the workforce and the way people approach their careers and job security (Judt, 2011). The world of work has changed dramatically over the past few decades, and employees today face a much more dynamic and unpredictable work environment than in the past (Savickas et al., 2009). One of the key challenges facing workers today is the need to continuously update their skills and knowledge in order to keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies and shifting market demands (Nota, Soresi, Ferrari, & Ginevra, 2014). However, today's economy is characterized by a much greater degree of uncertainty and volatility, with many jobs and even entire industries facing disruption and displacement due to technological advances, globalization, and other factors. As a result, workers today need to be more adaptable and flexible in their approach to work and be willing and able to learn new skills and take on new roles as needed (Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013).

Further, the Life Design approach recognizes the complex and rapidly changing nature of the modern world of work and seeks to help individuals construct a career path that is both adaptable and fulfilling. Based on the principles of social constructivism, Life Design emphasizes the dynamic interaction between the individual and their environment in shaping career development (Savickas, 2015). Central to the Life Design paradigm is the concept of career adaptability, which refers to an individual's capacity to effectively navigate the changing demands of the job market and adapt to new and unpredictable working conditions. By cultivating career adaptability, individuals can better plan for their future and increase their well-being, even in the face of uncertainty and adversity (Savickas, 2015). Also, in some countries where there is a strong cultural emphasis on traditional lifestyles and occupational practices, careers are becoming less linear and more dynamic, with young people being required to change occupations more frequently than in the past which has created a challenge for the individuals to navigate a complex and often uncertain job market. In some cases, young individuals may be forced to accept jobs that are not well-suited to their skills or interests in order to gain entry into the workforce (Karavdic & Baumann, 2014). This can lead to feelings of disillusionment and dissatisfaction, as well as a lack of motivation and engagement in their work. Whereas, on the other hand, some young people are able to approach the transition to work with confidence, optimism, and hope, even in the face of uncertainty and adversity. This may be due in part to their personal strengths and resilience, as well as their ability to adapt to changing circumstances and remain open to new opportunities (Cabras & Mondo, 2017. Therefore, emphasizing the importance of adaptability, creativity, and self-reflection, counselors can help young individuals to identify their strengths and values, explore different career options, and develop a plan for achieving their career goals (Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010; McIlveen, Beccaria, & Burton, 2013). Research shows significant associations between career adaptability and career- and work-related outcomes, such as success in the workplace, work engagement, job satisfaction, job embeddedness and organizational commitment (Ferreira, 2012; Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori, & Dauwalder, 2012).

However, despite the growing interest in career adaptability, more research is needed to understand the intricate relationship between individual career agency and the structures within which the career unfolds (Dany, 2014). Also, the research in the area of career development has highlighted the importance of career adaptability and future orientation for achieving life satisfaction and coping with life's difficulties (Santilli, Marcionetti, et al., 2016). To add more, research highlights the interdependency between individuals and organizations (Fleisher et al., 2014; Tams & Arthur, 2010) and that organizational business needs for success are achieved through addressing employees' individual needs. Further, he boundaryless career era has brought about significant changes to the way employees are expected to work and develop their careers. In this era, employees are required to adapt to changing job requirements and work with diverse groups of people (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Rasheed & Weng, 2019). The challenges that employees face in the workplace, such as low salaries, irregular working hours, lack of training, and limited career development opportunities, have been particularly pronounced in the manufacturing sector (Savickas, 2011). This industry is known for its demanding and often unpredictable work schedules, which can make it difficult for employees to plan their careers and achieve work-life balance (Guan et al., 2019). Therefore, the present study tries to explore the association between career adaptability, optimism, and life satisfaction in manufacturing sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Career adaptability and life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is a subjective evaluation of a person's quality of life based on their individual set of criteria. It is considered a central indicator of happiness and overall well-being. The construct has been extensively studied in psychological and psychosocial research (Unanue et al., 2017). The definition of life satisfaction has been discussed in various studies, and it is commonly described as an overall cognitive assessment of an individual's quality of life (Diener et al., 2003; Pavot and Diener, 2008; Schimmack, 2008).

Further, the concept of career adaptability is relevant to employees in various stages of their career journeys. This is in line with the definition given by Savickas (2005) which defines career adaptability as “a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual’s readiness and resources for coping with current and imminent vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas.” The four dimensions of career adaptability - concern, control, curiosity, and confidence - provide a framework for individuals to develop and enhance their adaptive resources and strategies to cope with career-related challenges. Concern refers to an individual's awareness and interest in their career prospects, while control refers to

the level of agency and influence, they feel they have over their vocational future. Curiosity pertains to an individual's openness and exploration of themselves and potential opportunities, while confidence relates to their self-assurance in pursuing their goals and navigating career-related obstacles. By cultivating and strengthening these dimensions of career adaptability, individuals can better cope with the demands and transitions of their careers and increase their potential for career success and satisfaction (Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

The earlier research studies (Di Maggio et al., 2022; Cabras & Mundo, 2018; Douglass & Duffy, 2015; Cai et al., 2015; Ohme & Zacher, 2015; Santilli, Nota, Ginevra, & Soresi, 2014; Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013; Hirschi, 2009;) provide evidence for the positive associations between career adaptability and various psychological and career-related outcomes. The studies show that career adaptability is linked to career optimism, self-esteem, hope, life satisfaction, and overall well-being. Additionally, it has been found to be positively associated with job search behavior, self-efficacy, successful labor market transitions, and employment status among individuals. Career adaptability can be considered a precursor to life satisfaction (McIlveen et al., 2013; Stoltz, Wolff, Monroe, Farris, & Mazahreh, 2013). Hirschi (2009) revealed that increased career adaptability over time was a predictor of increased life satisfaction over time. Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, and Rossier (2013) studied employed and unemployed adults in Switzerland and found that career adaptability predicted general well-being (e.g., life satisfaction). Therefore, based on the above literature the following has been hypothesized:

H1: Career adaptability dimensions influence life satisfaction in employees.

H1a: Concern positively influences life satisfaction in employees.

H1b: Control positively influences life satisfaction in employees.

H1C: Curiosity positively influences life satisfaction in employees.

H1d: Confidence positively influences life satisfaction in employees.

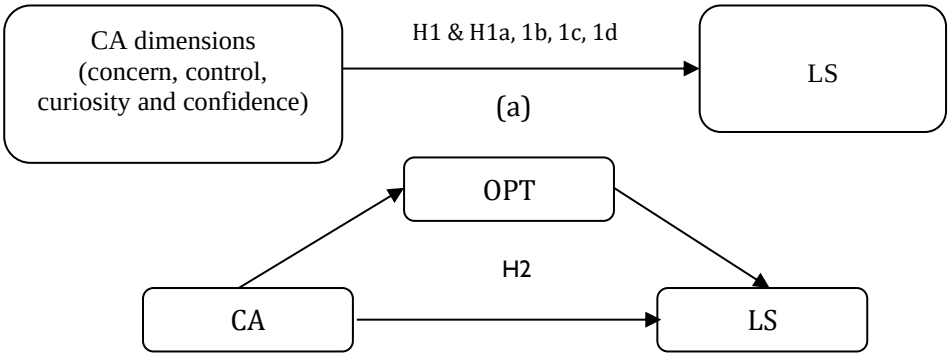
2.2 Career adaptability, optimism and life satisfaction

Optimism refers to a general expectation of positive outcomes, even in the face of adversity, and has been shown to be positively associated with life satisfaction (Carver et al., 2010; Chang et al., 2019). Also, optimism has been defined as "a cognitive and a self-serving tendency to expect the positive outcomes and believe that setbacks are only temporary" (Bharti et al., 2023; Bharti & Rangnekar, 2019; Gavrilov-Jerkovic et al., 2014). Studies have found that optimism mediates the relationship between various factors and life satisfaction, such as resilience, coping strategies, and self-esteem (Santilli et al., 2020; Chang et al., 2019; Karademas, 2006; Lai et al., 2015). But not enough evidence is available that makes it plausible that optimism mediates the relationship between career adaptability dimensions and life satisfaction. In addition to the traditional competencies, it is crucial for individuals to develop other psychological variables that contribute to overall life satisfaction in today's workforce. However, this association is underexplored in the organizational setup. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H2: Optimism mediates the association between career adaptability and life satisfaction in employees.

Also, based on the above literature account the hypothesized model is shown by Figure 1.

Figure 1: Hypothesized model



Source: created by authors;

Note: CA= career adaptability; OPT=optimism; LS= life satisfaction; (a) Total effect; (b) direct and indirect effect

Theoretical Framework: Life Design Paradigm

To address the rapidly changing nature of work and careers in the modern world, a new paradigm for career counseling known as the Life Design (LD) paradigm has been developed by Savickas et al. (2009). This approach recognizes that traditional linear models of career development no longer fully capture the complexities of modern work and career paths, which are characterized by uncertainty, ambiguity, and rapid change. The LD paradigm emphasizes the importance of

individuals taking an active and ongoing role in designing their own careers, rather than relying on external factors such as employers or job markets to dictate their path. It also emphasizes the importance of ongoing learning and development, as well as the need for individuals to cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning in their work. The Life Design (LD) paradigm represents a significant departure from traditional 20th-century person-environment fit and developmental models of career counseling. Rather than focusing primarily on the fit between individuals and their environment, the LD paradigm places greater emphasis on the adaptive and self-regulatory processes that allow individuals to construct and manage their own career paths (Nota & Rossier, 2015). The LD paradigm emphasizes the importance of individuals taking an active role in shaping their own careers, by developing a strong sense of self-identity, purpose, and meaning in their work. The LD paradigm recognizes the importance of supporting individuals in becoming experts in constructing their own life careers. This includes helping individuals to anticipate and navigate career transitions, as well as fostering hope and optimism for a meaningful future and life satisfaction. One key aspect of this paradigm is the recognition of the importance of preventive career interventions in individuals (Masdonati & Fournier, 2015). Additionally, as employees undergo transitions in their careers, such as changing jobs, shifting industries, or pursuing new opportunities for growth and development. Therefore, the notion of preparing individuals for transitions and supporting them in constructing their own career pathways, as emphasized by the LD paradigm, is aptly applicable to employees at any stage in their careers. In this regard, an important role is played by career adaptability and a positive orientation toward future.

Indian Manufacturing sector: The context

The Indian manufacturing sector is currently facing intense global competition, constant technological advancements, and restructuring, according to studies by Bharti and Rangnekar (2019). While this presents career opportunities and growth for employees, it also brings about unrelenting competitive pressure that leads to stress in the workplace, as noted by Chhabra (2018). In fact, the Global Workforce Study by Willis Towers Watson (2015) revealed that 50% of Indian employees report experiencing high levels of stress at work. Furthermore, the attrition rate in Indian organizations is higher at 14% as compared to the global average of 11.20% (Willis Towers Watson, 2014). This trend is particularly relevant to the Indian manufacturing sector, where employees are expected to be highly efficient and effective, unlike other sectors such as agriculture.

In the Indian manufacturing sector, while new career opportunities are emerging, employees also face constant mental and physical pressure, leading to work-related stress and poor life satisfaction (Kapoor, 2020; ; Singhal and Rastogi, 2018). A 2019 CIGNA well-being survey revealed that 82% of the Indian working population suffers from high stress and low satisfaction levels, further emphasizing the need for improvement (CIGNA, 2019). This is particularly true in the Indian manufacturing sector, where employees are expected to maintain high levels of productivity and efficiency, unlike other countries such as the USA, the UK, Australia, Germany, and France (Bhalerao and Kumar, 2016). Consequently, there is a growing trend of lack in positive outlook in the Indian manufacturing industry, which, if left unresolved, could lead to serious disputes (Karak and Basu, 2019). Though, Nakra and Kashyap (2023) highlights the association of career adaptability and wellbeing in IT sector, but it does not shed light on the importance of positive outlook in individual life. Hence, it becomes particularly important to explore the association between career adaptability and life satisfaction while exploring the mediating role of optimism.

3. METHOD

3.1 Measures

Career adaptability

Career adaptability was measured using an abridged scale of career adaptability (CAAS-SF) as validated by Maggiori et al. (2017) and Bharti and Ojha (in press). A brief scale having four components namely concern (i.e., “preparing for future career tasks”), curiosity (i.e., “taking responsibility for development”), control (i.e., “exploring possible future selves and opportunities”) and confidence (i.e., “believing in one’s ability to solve problems and to succeed”). The responses were recorded by utilising 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The test item includes “I am thinking about what my future will be like”.

Employee optimism

To evaluate the concept of employee optimism, a 9-item scale was utilized, which was adapted from POSO-E, as noted in studies conducted by Gavrilov-Jerković et al. (2014) and Bharti and Rangnekar (2019a, 2019b). The responses to the scale items were gathered using a seven-point Likert Scale, ranging from strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1). The reliability coefficient was determined to be $\alpha > .7$, indicating a high degree of internal consistency among the items. Some of the sample items included in the scale were "I am facing my future in an optimistic way at the workplace.”

Satisfaction with Life

The measurement tool used to assess life satisfaction in the present study was developed by Diener et al. (1985) and is a widely used self-reported questionnaire designed to assess individuals' global life satisfaction. It consists of five items that are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater life satisfaction. The items are intended to tap into

individuals' cognitive evaluations of their overall satisfaction with their lives, rather than their affective or emotional experiences. The two illustrative items used were, “In most ways, my life is close to my ideal” and “I am completely satisfied with my life,”. Also, the internal consistency of the scale was 0.951.

3.2 Participants

The study targeted a specific subset of employees working in the manufacturing sector in India. Specifically, the study targeted organizations with annual revenues of more than Rs. 500 crores and with at least 1,000 employees (IBEF, 2019). The annual revenue criterion suggests that the study aimed to include organizations that are relatively large and have a significant impact on the economy. The participants were selected based on their job titles and the organizations they worked for, which had to meet certain criteria such as annual revenue and number of employees. It included both private (5 private) and public (5 public) sector organizations engaged in different industries such as infrastructure development, automobile, IT, and hydropower generation. These organizations were located in industrial hubs in the National Capital Region and Uttarakhand. The participants in the study included employees at various levels of seniority, ranging from junior to middle and senior managerial positions. Their job titles included “Assistant Managers”, “Senior Executives”, “Deputy General Managers”, “Production Managers”, “System Analysts”, “Business Analysts”, “General Managers”, “Project Managers”, “HR Managers”, “Assistant Manager-HR”, “Senior Engineers”, “Assistant Engineers”, “Test Engineers”, “Key Account Managers”, “Manufacturing Customer Service Representatives”, “Marketing Managers”, “Manager Pre-Sales”, and “Area Sales Managers”. The study has a diverse group of participants representing different industries and job titles in the manufacturing sector in India.

3.3 Procedure

Random sampling was used to gather responses, and each questionnaire had a cover letter asking people to voluntarily participate in the study. The human resource manager of the manufacturing companies involved in this study provided the ethical approval and permission. The confidentiality and anonymity of each respondent's responses were assured in a cover letter to the respondents. Furthermore, it stated that returning the questionnaires would constitute consent for the data to be used only for research purposes. 418 valid questionnaires were produced during the research process, with an 82% response rate. Look at the statistics in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics detail

Demographics (N=418)	**Numbers**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender		
Male	258	61.72
Female	160	38.28
Age (in years)		
Less than 30 (young)	136	32.53
31-40 (middle –age)	140	33.49
More that 40 (old)	142	33.98
Education Level		
Diploma holders	127	30.38
Graduate	149	35.65
Postgraduate & above	142	33.97
Hierarchical Level		
Junior Level	159	38.04
Middle Level	139	33.25
Senior Level	120	28.70
Work Experience		
Less than 10 yrs	176	42.11

10-20 yrs	152	36.36
Above 20 years	90	21.53
Organization sector		
Public	257	61.48
Private	161	38.52

Source: created by authors

4. ANALYSIS

In order to ensure the quality of their data and analysis, various checks were conducted using SPSS 24.0 and AMOS 24.0 version, that comprised of assessing missing data, normality, and data homogeneity. We also evaluated the potential for common method bias due to the use of self-reported questionnaires, using Harman's single factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2012). The results showed that only 37% of the variance was accounted for, which falls within the acceptable range of less than 50%. Additionally, the researchers assessed multicollinearity and found that it was not an issue, with all predicting variables having VIFs less than 3. The study also employed the PROCESS macro (Model 4) developed by Hayes and Preachers to simultaneously examine direct, indirect, and mediation effects (Hayes, 2013). The descriptive statistics among the variables under study are shown in Table 2.

To confirm the factor structure, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied. Primarily, the model fit indices were checked to see whether the data was suitable to run the CFA analysis. The preliminary or full measurement model included three factors with 26 items (career adaptability:12; optimism: 9; life satisfaction: 5). As shown in Table 3 the hypothesized model ($MH1^a$) had better fit indices than the one-factor model ($M2^b$). Also, it revealed that the goodness of fit indices of $MH1^a$ was better than the common method factor model ($M3^c$) and three-factor measurement model ($M4^d$) fit indices. Moreover, Table 3 substantiates that all the fit indices of the $MH1^a$ (x2 /df = 2.131, GFI = 0.951, CFI = 0.972, NFI = 0.963, NNFI = 0.971, RMSEA = 0.045) were not only better than the other models but also met the criteria given by Hair et al. (2014) and Hu and Bentler (1999). The indicators were significantly loaded on their respective latent variables at the level of $p < 0.01$, showing adequate representation of latent variables by their indicators. As a result, the hypothesized model ($MH1^a$) consisting of three factors was subjected to additional scrutiny for reliability, validity, and hypothesis testing. The composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha and the validity statistics are shown in Table 4 wherein the criteria given by Campbell and Fiske (1959) as well as Hair et al. (2014) for establishing the composite reliability (CR> 0.70 and CR > AVE) and divergent validity i.e., AVE > MSV and AVE > ASV is clearly fulfilled.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Concern	4.43	0.68	-						
2.control	3.39	0.71	0.37	-					
3.curiosity	3.13	0.65	0.23	0.21	-				
4. confidence	3.25	0.69	0.17	0.31	0.19	-			
5.CA	3.18	0.78	0.19	0.28	0.22	0.33	-		
6.Optimism	3.12	0.71	0.25*	0.34 *	0.20	0.42**	0.51*	-	
7.Resilience	3.65	0.82	0.36*	0.23 *	0.31*	0.31 *	0.47**	0.39**	-

Source: created by authors; Note: p ** < 0.05, p * < 0.01; SD=standard deviation, CA=career adaptability.

Table 3: Fit indices results

Details	χ2/df	GFI	CFI	NFI	NNFI	RMSEA
Three-factor model (M4[d])	4.560	0.725	0.721	0.717	0.713	0.711
Two-factor model (M3[c])	3.209	0.785	0.789	0.792	0.793	0.799
One-factor model (M2[b])	2.537	0.857	0.939	0.901	0.923	0.059
Hypothesised model (MH1[a])	2.131	0.951	0.972	0.963	0.939	0.045
Recommended criteria	< 3.00	≥ 0.80	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≤ 0.08

Source: created by authors

Note: χ2 = chi-square; df = degree of freedom; NFI = normed fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; GFI = goodness of fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI=non- normed fit index, [a] hypothesised model; [b] one factor model, [c] two factor model; [d] three factor model.

Table 4. Factor loadings, reliability, and validity of the constructs

Variable/Items	Standardized Loadings	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	MSV	ASV
Career adaptability						
Concern						
CONC_1	0.847	0.815	0.814	0.711	0.157	0.113
CONC_2	0.823					
CONC_3	0.819					
Control						
CON_1	0.835	0.889	0.887	0.621	0.143	0.112
CON_2	0.871					
CON_3	0.891					
Curiosity						
CUR_1	0.887	0.818	0.811	0.715	0.286	0.152
CUR_2	0.739					
CUR_3	0.771					
Confidence						
CONF_1	0.819	0.825	0.824	0.653	0.151	0.111
CONF_2	0.789					
CONF_3	0.735					
Optimism						
OPT_1	0.801	0.881	0.879	0.745	0.307	0.193
OPT _2	0.854					
OPT _3	0.900					
OPT _4	0.944					

OPT _5	0.872					
OPT _6	0.929					
OPT _7	0.819					
OPT _8	0.879					
OPT _9	0.913					
Life satisfaction						
LS_1	0.879	0.852	0.851	0.681	0.173	0.121
LS_2	0.835					
LS_3	0.821					
LS_4	0.819					
LS_5	0.845					

Source: created by authors

4.1 Mediation model and hypotheses testing

The most suitable structural model was discovered after obtaining a valid, reliable model (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). As shown in Table 5, Direct effect, partial mediation, and full mediation were the three models that were created, tested, and compared to one another.

The mediation model included 26 observed variables and three latent variables (career adaptability, employee optimism, and life satisfaction). The use of the full mediation model as a baseline model was advised by James et al. in 2006. Consequently, a comparison of the baseline model and a different partial mediation model was conducted. The fit indices were noticeably better with the partial mediation model (x2/df =2.58, CFI=0.93, GFI=0.94, NNFI=0.91, NFI=0.94, RMSEA=0.05) despite the fact that the fit indices of the full mediation model (x^2/df=3.15, CFI=0.87, GFI=0.78, NNFI=0.89, NFI=0.88, and RMSEA=0.08) did not meet the threshold values. Additionally, the partial mediation model should be used for hypothesis testing, according to the significant results of the x^2 differential test (Δx^2 (5) = 118.75, p<0.01). The results of various fit indices demonstrated that the partial mediation model fit better than even the direct effect model.

The results depict that concern (β=-0.19, p<0.01) is negatively associated with life satisfaction, whereas control (β=0.31, p<0.01), curiosity (β=0.29, p<0.01), and confidence (β=0.35, p<0.01) are positively associated with life satisfaction in Indian manufacturing sector as shown in Table 6. In addition, career adaptability significantly and positively effects life satisfaction in employees (β= 0.45, p<0.01). Therefore, hypotheses H1b, H1c, H1d and H1 are supported whereas H1a is not supported. Further, according to the second hypothesis, employee optimism would act as a mediator in the relationship between career adaptability and life satisfaction. As a result, both direct and indirect effects were calculated. The direct impact of career adaptability was discovered to be significant (β=0.37, p<0.01), and the relationship between employee optimism and life satisfaction was also significant (β=0.51, p<0.01). The next step involved examining the relationship between career adaptability and life satisfaction when employee optimism was present. Nevertheless, the indirect effect (the impact of career adaptability and life satisfaction via employee optimism) was significant (β= 0.25, p<0.01, CI; 0.189 and 0.311). As the effect of career adaptability on life satisfaction (β = 0.45, p<0.01) decreases in the presence of employee optimism but still remains significant (β= 0.27, p<0.01, CI; 0.201 and 0.343), the results only partially support the second hypothesis. This is because the effect of career adaptability on life satisfaction is significant and substantial enough to necessitate our consideration. Thus, H2 is only partially accepted.

The bootstrap procedure was used with 5,000 samples and a 95% confidence interval (CI) in order to further examine the significance of the partial mediation model. The findings demonstrate that CI does not overlap with zero, supporting the partial mediating role of optimism on career adaptability and life satisfaction. The path coefficients of the mediation model are shown in Figure 2. A different approach, known as the Sobel test, was also used to determine the significance of an indirect effect (Sobel, 1982). According to the findings, there is a significant indirect effect of optimism at play on the relationship between career adaptability and life satisfaction (standardized indirect effect = 0.21; Sobel SE = 0.03; Z value = 2.43; p = 0.015; p<0.05). These findings partially corroborate H2, and the data show strong partial mediation effects.

Table 5: Comparison of Mediation models

Models	x^2/df	CFI	GFI	NNFI	NFI	RMSEA
Direct effect[1]	2.78	0.91	0.92	0.90	0.91	0.07
Partial mediation[2]	2.58	0.93	0.94	0.91	0.94	0.05
Full mediation[3]	3.15	0.87	0.78	0.89	0.88	0.08
Recommended criteria	< 3.00	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.80	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≤ 0.08

Source: created by authors

Notes: x2 = Chi-square; df = Degree of freedom; NFI = Normed fit index, GFI = Goodness of fit index, RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation, CFI = Comparative fit index. [1]Career adaptability has a direct effect on life satisfaction. [2]Career adaptability has an effect on life satisfaction both directly and indirectly. [3]Career adaptability has an effect on life satisfaction via employee optimism.

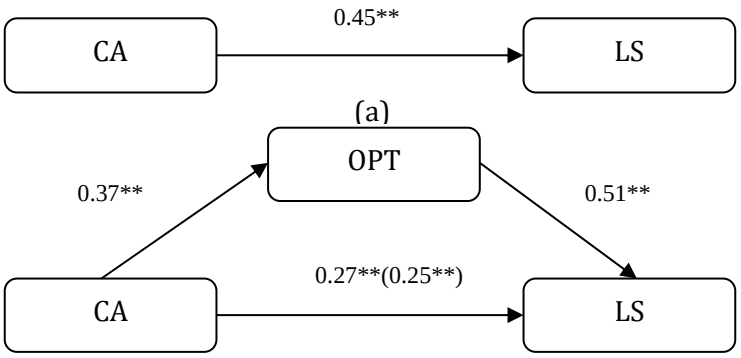
Table 6: Direct, Indirect and Total effect results

Model pathways	Effect estimates (β)	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Direct effects			
Concern → LS	-0.19	0.191	0.243
Control → LS	0.31	0.115	0.201
Curiosity → LS	0.29	0.141	0.319
confidence → LS	0.35	0.349	0.417
CA → LS	0.27	0.201	0.343
CA → OPT	0.37	0.215	0.401
OPT → LS	0.51	0.343	0.411
Indirect effects			
CA → OPT → LS	0.25	0.189	0.311
Total effects			
CA → LS	0.45	0.312	0.378

Source: created by authors

Note: CA= career adaptability, OPT= optimism and LS= life satisfaction, **p<0.01

Figure 2: Results of mediation analysis



Source: created by authors

Note: CA= career adaptability; OPT=optimism; LS= life satisfaction; (a) Total effect; (b) direct and indirect effect wherein the value in parenthesis is the indirect effect.

5. DISCUSSION

In this study, we sought to deepen our understanding of the connections between career adaptability dimensions, optimism, and life satisfaction, focusing in particular on the mediating role of optimism in those relationships. For both researchers and academicians, the concepts and claims made in positive psychology regarding adaptability, positive outlook, and life satisfaction, as well as their application in organizations, are seen as promising and captivating (Lopez et al., 2018). However, there hasn't been much research done on how career adaptability, optimism, and life satisfaction relate to one another in the Indian manufacturing industry. The findings show a significant relationship between career adaptability dimensions and life satisfaction, with optimism serving as a partial mediator.

The significant direct relationship between concern, control, curiosity, confidence along with career adaptability and life satisfaction is in line with the career construction model of adaptation (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and the results of the meta-analysis by Rudolph et al. (2017), which demonstrate that career adaptability is a useful tool for enhancing personal well-being. The profession-related worries, such as stagnant career advancement, job insecurity, or difficulties juggling work and life, can have a detrimental effect on people's mood, feelings, and general well-being, thereby explaining the negative association with career concern (Karavdic and Baumann, 2014). Moreover, anxiety over job prospects may wither the individual's sense of meaning and purpose. The ones, who are either feeling stuck at their jobs or not able to meet their professional goals, go through such feelings of dejection and unfulfillment. Their general level of happiness and wellbeing may suffer as a result. This, in turn, can negatively impact their overall life satisfaction (Zambelli et al., 2024). On the contrary, career control makes it easier for individuals to handle the stress and problems of their work. Individuals with a predominant career control are also more likely to perceive their challenges as manageable ones and employ a proactive approach to cope with them (Dou et al., 2016). In addition, people who are exploratory and inquisitive about their careers are more likely to form professional networks, look for social support, and work on group projects. Increased connection and a sense of belonging are two outcomes that can lead to a more contented life in general. Furthermore, the individuals who are confident about their self-efficacy and belief that they will succeed has the ability to steer workplace challenges and engage more in proactive career management. This adds to a sense of purpose and fulfilment, thus suggesting that confident people not only have an impact on their career success but also improve their general well-being (Ginevra et al., 2018).

According to earlier studies (Hirschi, 2009; Maggiori et al., 2013), there are linear relationships between measures of career adaptability and life satisfaction. Our findings support those of other studies (Santilli et al., 2016; Santilli, Nota, et al., 2014), which found that career adaptability has a concomitant indirect impact on life satisfaction. As a result, individuals with higher career adaptability are more future-focused (Guan et al., 2014; O¨ncel, 2014) and consequently experience higher levels of life satisfaction (Mishra and Bharti, 2023). This finding suggests that a successful career transition and adaptation may enhance life satisfaction and positive life functioning more extensively. According to Konstam et al. (2015) and Santilli et al. (2016), having high career adaptability resources in individuals may induce perceptions of more possibilities and potential opportunities even in this complex social context, embracing subjective well-being to overcome challenges and be successful in achieving future goals. Consistent with the life design paradigm, this emphasizes the significance of people actively and continuously designing their own careers as opposed to depending on outside forces like employers or job markets to determine their course. It also stresses the value of lifelong learning and development, as well as the necessity for people to develop a sense of meaning and purpose in their work. Furthermore, career adaptability is related to life satisfaction (adapting results) both directly and indirectly via the function of adapting responses (Savickas and Porfeli, 2012; Rudolph et al., 2017).

Moreover, when individuals feel threatened, they are more likely to seek out employment opportunities by networking with others (such as managers and coworkers) and learning new skills on the job. They tend to make their jobs less complicated or take other measures to make them less physically, emotionally, or mentally taxing when there is a high level of perceived threat. Only those with high levels of career adaptability experience these outcomes. When they feel that automation technology poses a greater threat to their industry, people frequently acquire new skills and make plans to advance in fields other than their current ones (Zhang et al., 2019). Empirical and theoretical literature supports that career adaptability is directly and indirectly related to life satisfaction of an individual (O¨ncel, 2014) as career adaptability influences the hopeful expectations and positive dispositions regarding the future. Thus, the results are in line with earlier research that showed career adaptability is a crucial psychological resource for handling challenging work environments with a positive outlook (Ginevra et al., 2018; Santilli et al., 2017; Öztemel and Yıldız-Akyol; 2021; Bharti and Ojha, 2024 in press).

6. IMPLICATIONS

This research has several practical implications. The Career counsellor, coaches human resource managers, and organizational behavior practitioners could suggest orientation activities to encourage career concern, career decision-making exercises to hearten career control, information-seeking activities to encourage curiosity about oneself and the outside world and use techniques like modelling and vicarious learning to encourage career confidence in the employees especially in the transitioning phase (Rossier, 2015). Here, the emphasis is on situational and internal beliefs or thoughts that

could improve output by raising the employees' positive outlook expectations in turn leading to increased satisfaction levels. Additionally, the managers might give employees the chance to take part in constructive interventions aimed at enhancing their cognitive resources in order to help them develop a higher perception of positive emotions and states of work as well as a greater awareness of the opportunities to change their characteristics at work. Employers can help staff members develop positive attitudes toward their work, which will boost their motivation and overall satisfaction at the workplace. Thus, fostering optimism enhances the psychological work environment and promotes organizational excellence by spreading competency beliefs, performance improvement, and good mental as well as physical health.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The study has several limitations. Firstly, the generalizability of the findings must be explored with other samples from other ethnic groups and age groups, with a more gender-balanced representation of women, and samples with participants from other sectors like hospitality, telecom etc. Secondly, owing to the cross-sectional nature of the study it is difficult to infer about causality and hence, further research can be done with longitudinal nature of data (Preacher, 2015). Lastly, other constructs like hope, compassion, and resilience should also be taken into account because they are linked to life satisfaction and may be able to account for life satisfaction variation that is not yet explained by the variables considered in this study (Ginevra et al., 2018). Future studies in the context of positive psychology might look at other beneficial effects like happiness and positive affect, which can help prevent the emergence of psychopathological outcomes (like anxiety and depressive symptoms).

8. CONCLUSION

This study offers important insights into the intricate interplay between career adaptability, optimism, and life satisfaction in Indian manufacturing sector by thoroughly examining the relationship between these variables. This research provides new insight into the mechanisms underpinning the beneficial impact of adaptability on life satisfaction by emphasizing the role of optimism as a mediator in the relationship between career adaptability and life satisfaction. Further, it emphasizes how crucial it is for businesses to support employees' career adaptability and optimism as vital elements of their life satisfaction. Thus, by investing in training and development programs that help employees develop adaptability skills and a positive outlook, organizations can foster a more engaged and satisfied workforce and ultimately gain a competitive edge in the marketplace.

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