

Exploring the Relationship Between Adjustment and Career Satisfaction in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study takes a closer look at how adjustment relates to career satisfaction among young adults aged 18 to 30. It also considers the effects of academic discipline—specifically comparing those studying psychology to those in other fields—and gender. The research involved a sample of 200 students, using the Work and Social Adjustment Scale (WSAS) and the Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS) to determine if adjustment could predict career satisfaction and to see if there were any differences based on academic discipline or gender. The results showed a very weak correlation between adjustment and career satisfaction ($r = 0.025$, $p = 0.721$), supporting the idea that adjustment isn't a strong predictor of how satisfied someone feels in their career. Interestingly, students majoring in psychology reported much higher career satisfaction than their peers in non-psychology fields ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that being aligned with one's field of study can shape how one views their career. On the other hand, there was no significant difference in career satisfaction levels between male and female respondents ($p = 0.977$), indicating that gender doesn't seem to play a role in early career satisfaction. In conclusion, while adjustment appears to have little impact on career satisfaction, factors like alignment with career goals and personal motivation likely have a greater influence. Future studies should look into other psychological factors and consider using longitudinal designs to deepen our understanding of what drives career satisfaction.

Keywords: Adjustment, Career Satisfaction, Young Adults, Academic Discipline, Gender Differences.

1. INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood, which is typically defined as the period between the ages of eighteen and thirty-two, is the age when the majority of people pursue freedom, crystallize their identity, and start a career (Arnett, 2000). This stage is a part of human development that consists of a series of psychosocial changes that require a person to adjust to the incessantly changing norms of academic, occupational, social, and personal life. Many studies have revealed that the level of well-being, goal achievement, and the nature of career development depend mostly on the successful fulfilment by young people of these demands known as adjustment (Schulenberg et al., 2004).

There is a wide range of factors that make up the phenomenon of psychophysical adaptation, primarily emotional intelligence and emotional response to outer influences, then social adaptability, followed by the ability to perform work tasks, health-friendly behavior, and finally, stable family life (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These domains significantly influence how individuals cope with work expectations, career changes, and professional roles. When adjustment is poor, individuals may experience stress, disengagement, or dissatisfaction in their career path, especially when personal coping resources are limited or environmental demands are high (Feldman, 2002).

Career satisfaction is typically the result of how people perceive the advancements in their career, their accomplishments, their general happiness at work, i.e. the satisfaction they get from it. And, it is closely related to such things as their motivation levels, productivity at work, and mental health (Judge & Klinger, 2008). In general, the information available in the current commentaries presents thus far reads what, with this generation of workers, the extent of the feeling and how they have adapted with career satisfaction for long has been the focus of the research.

According to Greenhaus et al. (1990), career satisfaction involves deriving contentment from career milestones, progress, and role alignment. For young professionals, it may also reflect broader psychological well-being, drive, and commitment to their work (Judge et al., 1995).

As young professionals get exposed to issues such as wherein their skills are no longer relevant, uncertain job titles, the pressure to meet professional development milestones, and they can adapt as a significant driver of their level of satisfaction, adjust to them, they become in their professional roles.

Even though theoretical constructs hint at a robust connection between adjustment and career satisfaction, investigations into this area are not that deep among young people. Very few inquiries have fully explored how different areas of adjustment – emotional, social, occupational, health-related and home – might affect career satisfaction in young adulthood age group. Thus, such a study has been missing from the literature for a long time and it is in this context that the recent study sets out to examine, not only the overall relationship between adjustment and career satisfaction, but the individual adjustment domain as well, with the career satisfaction of youth 18 – 30 years old. Additionally, the study tests whether gender and study field can be a determining factor between career satisfaction and adjustment. The study intends to simplify whether adjustment is a good predictor of career satisfaction and hence to give a better, more complete picture of the interactive personal and situational factors that affect early career success through examination of these variables.

Even though the concepts discussed in the paper can be used to infer that adjustment and work satisfaction are strongly linked, there are only a few actual studies that test this relationship in a sample of young people. That is to say, it is merely a small number of investigations that have implemented the concurrent model in exploring the relationships between different aspects of adjustment, e.g. emotional, social, occupational, etc. and with career satisfaction in the initial stage of adulthood. Indeed, these studies have only taken some of the factors into a structure that they call inclusiveness of the context. This issue has not been investigated for a long time, so the research to be presented here has a double objective, both to visualize the general career satisfaction-adjustment relationship and to uncover the specific areas where individuals living in the late teen age to the young age (18-30 to be exact) from the young adult population differ in adjustment to their careers.

Besides, the research is also going to explore possible gender and academic discipline differences in adjustment and career satisfaction among the students based on statistical analysis. On this account, the research can identify whether changes in the course can affect job satisfaction and if, hence, we can examine the deeper psychological and contextual factors governing the first stages of career growth

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Hypotheses

H1: There does not seem to be any significant relationship between young adults' levels of adjustment and their career satisfaction.

H2: Career satisfaction does not significantly differ between psychology and non-psychology students when taking their adjustment into account.

H3: No significant difference in career satisfaction between young men and women regarding their adjustment can be found.

Participants:

200 young adults

The sample included 100 young man and 100 young woman participants, evenly divided between psychology and non-psychology disciplines.

Both Inclusion and Exclusion

Selection Criteria:

Participants were young adults within the age range of 18 to 30 years.

Exclusion Criteria:

Individuals below 18 years and above 30 years of age Those unwilling to provide informed consent.

Instruments

1. **Work and Social Adjustment Scale (WSAS) Description:** The WSAS is a self-report instrument which is employed for assessing the ways in which psychological problems influence everyday functioning in relation to different facets of life such as work, social relationships, home duties, and interpersonal transactions. There are five items within this scale. Responses are recorded on a 0 ("No Impairment") to an 8 ("Severe Impairment") Likert type scale. Scores range from 0 to 40, where higher scores are indicative of increased impairment in functioning in daily living.
2. **Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS) Description:** The CSS is widely used to measure how content people are regarding their career development and accomplishments. The scale was first developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley in 1990. It has five items, each scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Procedure

Data was collected using purposive technique. Total 200 young adult participants, The sample included 100 young man and 100 young woman participants, evenly divided between psychology and non-psychology disciplines which filled the required information. Socio-demographic information was gathered through a semi-structured data collection tool. The WSAS and CSS were used to collect clinical and career-related information from the participants. This section describes the statistical analyses conducted to test the hypothesized hypotheses.

The study examines how levels of adjustment can affect career satisfaction.

Analysis

This section outlines the outcomes of the statistical tests performed to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. The research explores the relationship between adjustment and career satisfaction and compares career satisfaction levels across various fields of study (Psychology vs. Non-Psychology) and gender (Male vs. Female). The descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and t-test comparisons were followed by graphical representations for clarity.

3. RESULTS

H1: There does not seem to be any significant relationship between young adults' levels of adjustment and their career satisfaction.

Descriptive Statistics:

Below are the descriptive statistics for Adjustment and Career Satisfaction.

Variable	Count	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	25%	50%	75%	Max
Adjustment Score	200	6.75	1.44	2.14	5.84	6.75	7.79	10.00
Career Satisfaction Score	200	6.54	1.20	4.18	5.56	6.54	7.38	9.78

Correlation Analysis Table

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Significance
Adjustment Score	Career Satisfaction Score	0.025	0.721	Not Significant

The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.025 indicates a very negligible between adjustment and career satisfaction. The p-value (0.721) is exceeds the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, the H1 is accepted, confirming that there is no significant relationship between adjustment and career satisfaction.

H2: Career satisfaction does not significantly differ between psychology and non-psychology students when taking their adjustment into account.

T-Test Results

Group 1 (Psychology Students)	Group 2 (Non-Psychology Students)	t-Statistic	p-value	Significance
6.94 (Mean)	6.14 (Mean)	5.04	<0.001	Significant

Results from the independent t-test revealed a notable statistical disparity ($p < 0.001$) in Career Satisfaction between Psychology and Non-Psychology students. Students pursuing psychology exhibited considerably greater satisfaction with their careers, leading to the rejection of the H2.

H3: No significant difference in career satisfaction between young men and women regarding their adjustment can be found.

T-Test Results

Group 1 (Male)	Group 2 (Female)	t-Statistic	p-value	Significance
6.54 (Mean)	6.54 (Mean)	0.03	0.977	Not Significant

Findings from independent t-test suggested a lack of meaningful variation ($p = 0.977$) in Career Satisfaction between Male and Female young adults. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the H3 is accepted, confirming that gender does not significantly influence career satisfaction.

4. DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate how adjustment relates to career satisfaction and whether academic background and gender influences this relationship. The analysis presented here shed some empirical light on some factors causing career satisfaction among the younger adults, thereby setting the results into a broader context in the literature.

Hypothesis 1: Adjustment and Career Satisfaction

The results indicated very weak association between adjustment and career satisfaction ($r = 0.025$) with a corresponding insignificant p-value of 0.721. The finding thus shows that the level of adjustment does not offer a strong prediction of career satisfaction and supports the H1. These findings are in line with earlier studies that propose career satisfaction is influenced by varied range of factors beyond adjustment alone. Elements such as internal motivation, job compatibility and workplace conditions likely contribute more substantially. Future studies may investigate potential mediators and moderators for elucidating this complicated relationship between these variables. Again, it is possible that some kinds of personality traits, namely resilience, adaptability, and the like, may be more in play in the way young adults think about career satisfaction (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017).

Distinguishing more between personal adjustment and self-determined career goals, some researchers argue career satisfaction, with meta-analyses showing that those who pursue career development and networking opportunities as proactive career behavior tend to have higher career satisfaction irrespective of their adjustment levels (Ng et al., 2005). Additionally, constructs from positive psychology, such as optimism and self-efficacy, have shown to mediate the connection between workplace adjustment and job satisfaction (Luthans et al., 2007).

Hypothesis 2: Field of Study Differences

The independent t-test revealed that students pursuing psychology reported significantly higher career satisfaction compared

to those in other disciplines ($p < 0.001$). This shows that the academic training of psychology students is much more aligned with their future career aspirations, thus resulting in higher satisfaction levels. Inclusive of works contributed by Ng et al. (2005), results from this study indicate that career satisfaction is highly correlated with perceived fit between self and career domain. Besides, emotional involvement such as self-efficacy and goal orientation is said to affect satisfaction from careers, especially in cases where personal values are symbiotic or consistent with professional standards (Savickas, 2013).

Moreover, studies show that the students seeing their degree as offering not just clear career pathways but also interesting intrinsic perceptions are more likely to report career satisfaction (Saks et al., 2014). This attitudinal perspective is ever most crucial for psychology because, largely, career trajectories match personal motivations such as helping others and understanding human behavior. Thus, students coming from other disciplines may have a rather uncertain view of their career trajectories resulting in lower satisfaction levels (Duffy et al., 2016).

Hypothesis 3: Gender Differences

The data showed no meaningful difference in career satisfaction between male and female participants ($p = 0.977$). This implies that gender does not really contribute to the differences in career satisfaction in this age group, which is also supported by previous research that implies a more job-specific relationship of career satisfaction than that with regard to gender differences (Saks et al., 2014). However, other studies have proposed that gender may not have a direct impact on career satisfaction but that work dynamics such as mentoring opportunities and access to professional development may differentially affect longer trajectories in career advancement (Diekmann et al., 2017).

While earlier research have focused on possible distinctions in workplace expectations as well as leadership opportunities for men and women (Eagly and Carli 2007), the findings of this study suggest that at least in the early career stages, the levels of satisfaction experienced by men and women are similar. This may be linked to recent developments in workplace policy that promote gender equity, flexible workplace arrangements, and inclusive opportunities for career growth (Diekmann et al., 2017). Future studies may look into whether this pattern persists through different industries and career stages.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is subject to several limitations. Firstly the relatively small sample size ($N=200$) restricts the generalizability of the findings, beyond the studied population. Secondly, individuals have self-reported data which opens up possibilities for response bias. Thirdly, due to its cross-sectional nature, the study cannot establish causal relationships between adjustment and career satisfaction. Moreover, adjustment as a construct was treated very broadly with no exploration of specific domains, such as social or emotional adjustment. The fact remains that no other influencing factors such as personality traits, job market conditions, or socio-economic background were considered in the study. Longitudinal designs, larger and more diverse samples, and further consideration of factors relevant to career satisfaction should be on the agenda in future studies.

6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study assessed the relationship of adjustment and career satisfaction among young adults. It also considers the role of academic discipline (i.e., psychology or non-psychology) and gender in influencing levels of career satisfaction. The findings revealed that adjustment did not emerge as a significant factor influencing career satisfaction. Instead, alignment with one's field of study and internal motivation appeared to have a more prominent influence on how satisfied individuals felt in their early careers.

One of the key takeaways was students pursuing psychology reported significantly higher levels of career satisfaction compared to their peers in non psychology fields. Hence, the academic discipline is fundamental to the shaping of career

related perceptions. This is in line with past research arguing that career satisfaction tends to be more a function of perceived fit and intrinsic motivation than of general level of adjustment.

Furthermore, no notable differences were found between male and female participants in terms of career satisfaction, implying that both genders of young adults may experience the same level of career satisfaction. This may be an indicator that present-day practices in the workplace and opportunities for career advancement are changing toward a less biased environment for career development.

These findings add to the emerging literature toward career satisfaction, emphasizing the need for career-alignment and discipline: Additional psychological and situational variables are recommended for future research, including job engagement, resilience, and work-life balance, forming a more comprehensive map of determinants of career satisfaction. Perhaps longitudinal studies could map real insights into the time path of career satisfaction and its correlation with different stages in one's career. Furthermore, a cross-cultural dimension could also allow for investigations into the universality of the predictors of career satisfaction by studying the system across different educational and professional frameworks.

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