



Career Adaptability as A Mediator Between Thriving at Work and Career Engagement in Teacher's Late Career

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Abstract

Research on career engagement among late-career teachers offers valuable insights into educator career development, the optimization of teaching methodologies, and the improvement of student learning outcomes. Teachers with career engagement will be dedicated and responsible for the success of their assignments. A study examining the role of career adaptability as a mediator between thriving in the workplace and career engagement was conducted among 170 teachers affiliated with the "X" Foundation who were in the late-career phase. This investigation explores how teachers in this late-career phase can effectively maintain and develop their professional trajectories. Data collected from teacher participants aged over 50 years (in the late career phase) were processed using the partial least squares. The result is a direct effect between the variables, showing a strong and significant relationship between career adaptability and career engagement ($\beta = 0.924$, $p = 0.000$). A substantial relationship existed between thriving at work and career adaptability ($\beta = 0.608$, $p = 0.000$). In addition, there is a strong and significant relationship between thriving at work and career engagement through career adaptability mediation ($\beta = 0.562$, $p = 0.000$).

Keywords *Career Engagement, Career Adaptability, Thriving at Work, Teacher's Late Career*

INTRODUCTION

Within real-world organizations, there is increasing interest in the concept of engagement, which refers to the state of being stimulated and attracted to one's job. This construct emerged in literature in the 1990s. Hirschi et al. (2014) defined career engagement as the extent to which individuals proactively refined their careers through assorted career behaviours. Numerous studies have consistently highlighted the significance of engagement in organizational achievements, affirming that engagement fosters commitment, dedication to work, and productivity. Discussion about career engagement with teachers becomes essential because when teachers are not involved in their careers, teachers will be less than optimal in carrying out their duties, less enthusiastic about developing teaching skills, and will stop at work activities that are monotonous-less creative and carrying out tasks becomes a burden for a teacher.

On the other hand, career engagement will support employee work improvement, including for a teacher (Daswati et al., 2022). Career engagement will support how a person has proactive behaviour to set life goals and future visions (Doğanülkü, 2022). Career engagement encompasses behaviours such as career planning, career self-exploration, environmental career exploration, networking, voluntary human capital, and skill development. Career engagement directly gauges an individual's level of engagement with their career (Hirschi & Freund, 2014).

In contemporary times, teachers in their late career phase are increasingly responsible for the success of their career management. These developments have increased the need for proactive career behaviours to achieve objective and subjective career success. The maintenance and development of careers have become crucial topics for investigation among teachers during the late career phase. Late career refers to the final stage of a teacher's career, where they are

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approaching retirement but are still actively engaged in their professional duties. Despite being in the late career phase and over 50 years, teachers are expected to fulfil their responsibilities and sustain their career trajectories.

Consequently, teachers above 50 maintain their involvement and performance as educators. The subjective success of their careers remains preserved, even in the late career phase. Discussions related to “career engagement”, “career adaptation”, “thriving in the workplace”, and “late career” related to a teacher's commitment, adaptability, well-being, and career stage. When a teacher (as an employee) enters the end of his/her career, he/she can face challenges in terms of physical conditions, social support and demands of the times regarding the implementation of tasks. Referring to that condition, career adaptability will support their career planning and engagement (Fasbender et al., 2019). Career engagement can be influenced by the concept of “thriving at work,” a psychological state characterized by vitality and learning (Goh et al., 2022). Thriving individuals experience a sense of growth and momentum, marked by excitement and enthusiasm, while continuously improving and enhancing their skills and learning abilities (Porath et al., 2012). A socially embedded model of thriving at work was formulated, encompassing the definition of thriving, its distinction from related constructs, and the exploration of how the surrounding context influences the thriving experience. This conceptualization highlights the adaptive nature of thriving, as it offers individuals an internal signal to assess their progress and personal growth (Goh et al., 2022).

Various challenges arise in the late career phase concerning how teachers can sustain and proactively manage their work involvement in each task. Subjective career development demands that teachers at this stage remain devoted to and perform optimally in their duties. The success of teachers’ career development efforts in the late career phase relies on their ability to accommodate and regulate self-development within the context of their work (Hirschi & Freund, 2014). Career adaptation, first explored by Super and Knasel (1981) and later conceptualized as a psychosocial resource by Savickas and Porfeli (2012a), plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to function effectively in this context. Confronted with the increasingly complex demands of the teaching profession, evolving challenges of different times, and advancements in science and technology, career adaptation can be described as the amalgamation of “attitudes, competencies, and behaviours that individuals utilize to adapt to jobs that are continuously changing and developing (Cai et al., 2022). Essentially, adaptability showcases late-career teachers' capacity to adjust or change, and it is instrumental in facilitating an active adaptation process that leads to successful outcomes (Tolentino et al., 2014). Career adaptability will be awakened when there are teacher activities toward their careers to continue to develop and hone their competencies and remain involved in self-development activities. Through the above phenomenon, the researcher aims to analyze the relationship between thriving at work and career engagement through career adaptability mediation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career Engagement

Hirschi et al. (2014) defined career engagement as the extent to which individuals proactively develop their careers through various career behaviours. These behaviours encompass career planning, self-exploration, environmental career exploration, networking, voluntary human capital/skill development, and positioning. Furthermore, career engagement is an individual effort to increase career success and proactively seek information and opportunities to improve skills and get involved in career advancement. Employees with career engagement will actively seek opportunities for career success in the organization (Daswati et al., 2022).

Thriving at Work

The dynamics of human development can be understood as a two-dimensional construct comprising vitality and learning (van der Walt, 2018). Vitality represents the affective dimension, encompassing a sense of being alive, enthusiastic, and passionate about their work. In contrast, learning pertains to the cognitive dimension, involving growth derived from acquiring new knowledge and skills and applying them effectively (Goh et al., 2022). Thriving at work is a positive psychological state characterized by a shared sense of vitality and learning. Spreitzer (2005), who first mentioned the concept of thriving at work, stated that thriving at work is a positive psychological state desired by employees so that employees experience positive feelings, experiences, and behaviours at work that raise intrinsic motivation in supporting self-development and personal growth (Kleine et al., 2019). As individuals develop within their work environments, they experience a sense of progress, confidence, and enhanced abilities. Such developmental progress in the workplace guides employees in goal-directed tasks and adaptability amid dynamic circumstances, contributing to their mental and physical well-being. Consequently, the combined influence of learning and vitality enables employees to exercise self-regulation at work by using cues to effectively assess their progress (Spreitzer et al., 2016)

Career Adaptability

In the context of career construction, adaptation is characterized by the execution of adaptive behaviours aimed at coping with dynamic circumstances. Ultimately, adaptation denotes the resultant alignment between an individual and their environment, as indicated by the levels of satisfaction and success. Individuals who demonstrate willingness and capability to respond to changing environmental conditions are anticipated to attain more favourable outcomes (Sou et al., 2022).

The outcome of career construction is described by adaptation, which conveys the alignment between an individual and their environment. The levels of satisfaction and success indicate this alignment. Individuals who are willing and capable of responding to a changing environment are anticipated to attain more favourable outcomes. At the core of this concept lies the construct of adaptability that moulds an individual's approach and tactics for adjusting to the social environment and, in turn, achieving adaptation goals (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012a).

Career adaptability comprises four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Concerns embody the orientation and preparation of future careers. Control entails conscientiousness and a sense of ownership when making career decisions. Curiosity describes the exploration of the environment and career opportunities. Lastly, confidence pertains to self-efficacy in problem-solving and overcoming obstacles (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012b).

Career adaptation, a pivotal concept ingrained in career construction theory, entails "a readiness to cope with predictable tasks preparing and participating in work roles and with unexpected adjustments driven by changes in work and working conditions." This reflects an individual's self-regulatory resources to cope with various challenges in vocational development tasks. The theory of career construction posits that career adaptability is less stable than personality traits but more akin to psychological capital, as it aids in shaping strategies to direct career behaviour and empowers the individual as their agent (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012a).

Career Engagement, Thriving at Work, and Career Adaptability as Mediation

Career engagement primarily involves behavioural manifestations. It emphasizes definite actions stimulating an individual's career development and is not considered a stable disposition (Nilforooshan & Salimi, 2016). Career adaptability is considered a crucial psychosocial resource that aids individuals in effectively managing various career-related tasks, transitions, and

challenges, ultimately contributing to career adaptation and success (Kleine et al., 2019). Career adaptability mediates the relationship between personality and career engagement; curiosity as a dimension of career adaptability strongly affects career engagement (Nilforooshan & Salimi, 2016). Career adaptability also mediates the role in the relationship between social capital and career engagement (Sou et al., 2022). Previous research shows that there is a mediating role from career adaptability to career engagement. The effect of thriving at work is that career engagement can occur through the mediation of career adaptability. The career construction theory posits that adaptivity, or the willingness to adapt, is a trait that becomes increasingly stable and enduring, ultimately occupying a central position within an individual's characteristics. This adaptiveness is reflected by the concept of celerity in the Theory of Work Adjustment, which pertains to how rapidly a person responds to imbalanced situations (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012a). Thriving at work can affect career behaviour, including career satisfaction, career commitment, and career involvement mediated by career resilience. The positive effects of thriving at work and engagement are stronger when the achievement orientation is higher (Jiang et al., 2021).

The influence of thriving at work on career adaptability refers to the relationship between the experience of thriving at work, which includes positive psychological states such as feelings of energy and enthusiasm as well as skill development and improvement, and an individual's ability to manage career-related tasks, transitions, and challenges ("career adaptability"). In other words, when someone experiences high levels of "thriving at work," they are likely to possess a higher level of "career adaptability," enabling them to adapt and succeed in facing career changes and challenges. In this context, "thriving at work" serves as a supportive factor influencing an individual's readiness and flexibility in navigating career dynamics (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012b).

Research purposes

The current study examined the relationship between thriving at work, career adaptability, and career engagement. The study of the direct and indirect effects that occur between variables forms the basis of the formulated hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between thriving at work and career adaptability in teachers who are in their late-career stage.

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between career adaptability and career engagement in teachers who are in their late-career stage.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between thriving at work and career engagement through career adaptability mediation.

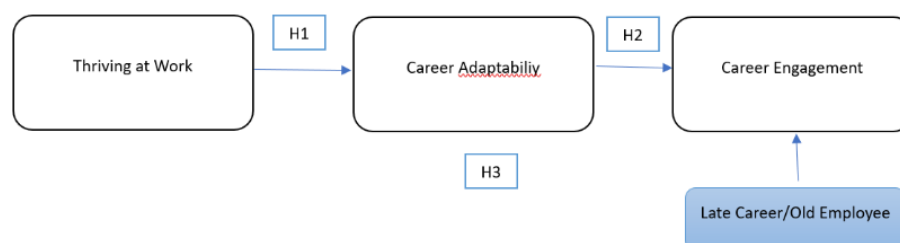


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Career Engagement

RESEARCH METHOD

Quantitative methodology was used to examine the relationship between thriving at work and career engagement, with career adaptability as a mediator. The research subjects were teachers in their late career phases. Data retrieval was performed using a questionnaire in Google Forms. The scales used for data collection included the Career Engagement Scale (CES), the Career Adapt-abilities Scale (CAAS), and the Work Scale. Demographic data included name, age, date of birth, length of work, and contact person (s). The questionnaires were administered to a sample of teachers over the age of 50 (N=170) who were in the final phase of retirement preparation. Data collection was carried out via Googleform on 18-21 July 2023. Partial least squares were used to determine the direct and indirect effects of the model analysis, and PLS was supposed to show the importance of the mediating effect.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents

Respondents were teachers over 50 (late career phase category) who are members of the "X" Foundation. The number of respondents who filled out the N=170 scale with demographic characteristics:

Table 1. Respondents Sociodemographic

Demographics	Number	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	38	22%
Female	132	78%
Age		
50-55	124	73%
56-60	42	25%
> 60	4	2%

Validity and Reliability

As shown in Table 2, the loading factor values of each statement item ranged from 0.763 to 0.937. This indicates that the operational items used in this study were valid. Subsequently, a reliability test was conducted to assess the internal and external consistency of the variables. The table reveals that Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.784 to 0.946, thereby conveying the validity and reliability of the items used in this study.

Table 2. Validity, Reliability, and Common Method Bias

Variables	Items Operational	Validity			Reliability		F-Square	r-square
		Factor Loading	AVE	Fornell-Larcker	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability		
	CA16	0.835	0.668	0.818	0.946	0.953	0.586	0.366

	CA17	0.810						
	CA18	0.764						
	CA19	0.828						
	CA2	0.798						
Career Adaptability	CA20	0.818						
	CA21	0.832						
	CA23	0.849						
	CA24	0.862						
	CA3	0.775						
Career Engagement	CE1	0.813	0.770	0.878	0.851	0.870	5.866	0.853
	CE3	0.937						
	TAW2	0.777						
Thrive at Work	TAW3	0.763	0.607	0.779	0.784	0.861		
	TAW6	0.795						
	TAW7	0.781						

Path Analysis

To address the research questions and hypotheses formulated in this study, they were examined using partial least squares. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Path Analysis

Direct Effect			
Path	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P-Values
Career Adaptability → Career Engagement	0.924	163.835	0.000
Thrive at Work → Career Adaptability	0.608	10.226	0.000
Indirect Effect			
Thrive at Work → Career Engagement	0.562	10.142	0.000

Table 3 shows a strong and significant relationship between career adaptability and career engagement ($\beta = 0.924$, $p = 0.000$). Furthermore, a strong and significant relationship exists between thriving at work and career adaptability ($\beta = 0.608$, $p = 0.000$). Career adaptability mediates the relationship between thriving at work and career engagement ($\beta = 0.562$ and $p =$

0.000).

This research shows that thriving at behaviour can affect career adaptability because thriving at work can shape individual development, in this case, teachers' later careers. In turn, thriving at work and career adaptability may foster teachers' career engagement.

In the context of the late-career phase of teachers, the concepts of "thriving at work" and "career adaptability" are deemed pertinent and exhibit interconnectedness. Unique challenges and changes in the work environment may be encountered when teachers approach late career stages. Therefore, understanding the relationship between "thriving at work" and "career adaptability" is crucial in examining how late-career teachers uphold their job enthusiasm while carefully handling the demands of their careers.

The relevance of "thriving at work" lies in its representation of a positive psychological state that empowers teachers to experience a sense of energy, enthusiasm, and growth in their professional responsibilities (Rocha, 2012). This state of thriving can significantly contribute to the overall well-being, job satisfaction, and motivation of teachers, all of which are of paramount importance in successfully managing the late career phase (Kleine et al., 2019).

The relationship between career adaptability and engagement in teachers' late career phases is important in career development and individual career involvement (Fasbender et al., 2019). Career adaptability refers to the ability of individuals to cope with various situations and challenges in career development with readiness to adapt to changes in the work environment (Sou et al., 2022). On the other hand, career engagement pertains to individuals' level of involvement, commitment, and dedication to their work. During the late career phase, teachers may face diverse changes, such as educational policies, complex teaching demands, and shifts in the work environment. Career adaptability is a key aspect for teachers to effectively confront these changes. A high level of career adaptability enables teachers to seek and implement strategies that align with their work's new demands and challenges. Consequently, career adaptability can help teachers maintain optimal performance and achieve success in carrying out tasks during the late career phase (Johnston, 2018).

Furthermore, career adaptability can positively influence teachers' career engagement in the late career phase. Good career adaptability enables teachers to become more confident in facing changes and challenges. This sense of confidence can strengthen their level of engagement and dedication to their work, as they feel capable of handling emerging situations and remain committed to fulfilling their duties as teachers. In this context, career adaptability and engagement are interrelated and mutually influential. Career adaptability provides a crucial foundation for career engagement in teachers' late career phases, as high adaptability helps maintain their engagement and commitment to their work. Conversely, high levels of engagement and commitment can reinforce career adaptability, as actively engaged teachers seek ways to continuously develop and adapt to career changes (Johnston, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

This study's results show a strong and significant relationship between career adaptability and career engagement. There is also a significant relationship between thriving at work and career adaptability. In addition, career adaptability mediates the relationship between thriving at work and career engagement. Thriving at work is essential for teachers in the late career phase because it will affect their career engagement. Furthermore, career adaptability also plays an important role in shaping a teacher's career engagement.

Implication and Further Research

This study involved a sample of teachers in their late careers to probe the relationship

between thriving at work, career adaptability, and career engagement. Consistent with the proposed moderate mediation model, the results show positive relationships between the three variables, proving the three hypotheses. Consistent with previous studies (Tolentino et al., 2014), this study found a positive relationship between proactive personality and career adaptability. In particular, the findings suggest that highly proactive individuals are more likely to excel in the workplace and are likely able to develop adaptive resources in their careers. Furthermore, by examining development-based mediation, this research supports the initial empirical explanation of TAWs and career adaptability in the career engagement process. The practical implication for teachers in the late career phase is that self-development and competence in the workplace will affect career adaptation skills in the workplace, and it will support career engagement. Good career engagement will support teachers to be able to perform optimally in the workplace even though they are in the final phase of their careers. Theoretical implications and recommendations for further research include expanding the study of thriving at work and career engagement for late, early, and middle careers. This study also highlights the need to explore career engagement during various phases.

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