

## CAREER RESOURCES FOR CONTEMPORARY WORLD OF WORK

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### Abstract

The dynamic, rapidly changing, and unstable contemporary world of work places high demands on career construction. As individuals now hold primary responsibility for their own growth, career planning, and engagement in the career-construction process, personal strengths—understood as broad resources that underpin modern careers—are becoming increasingly important. In addition to general career preparedness, being well informed about career opportunities is essential. Equally crucial are strong social ties, an optimistic outlook on one's future career, and the ability to manage career demands without allowing them to spill over into private life. To capture these aspects, we applied the Career Futures Inventory (CFI; Rottinghaus et al., 2012) to a nationally representative sample of 1,500 young Croatian employees aged 19 to 35. Our data indicate adequate reliability and validity of the CFI. The five dimensions—career agency, negative career outlook, occupational awareness, support, and work–life balance—were clearly confirmed, with only a minor deviation from the model observed for one item. All scales demonstrated good reliability (alphas ranging from .84 to .92). Job satisfaction and subjective job performance showed weak to moderate positive associations with all career-resource dimensions, except for negative career outlook, which was negatively correlated with both outcomes. Overall, the findings confirm the validity of the Career Futures Inventory and underscore the importance of career resources for effective career construction in the contemporary world of work.

**Keywords:** *Contemporary world of work, career construction, career resources, Career Futures Inventory.*

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### 1. Introduction

Today's world of work places high demands on individuals' personal strengths in career management, and the importance of career agency has been strongly emphasized in contemporary career literature. Various conceptual approaches address different aspects of personal strengths in career development. Among the most prominent are career adaptability, defined as personal resources for coping with imminent change (Savickas, 1997); career self-management and active participation in the career construction process (Hirschi & Koen, 2021); and career orientations reflecting self-directed and autonomous career attitudes, such as protean and boundaryless careers (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). All of these approaches have demonstrated clear associations with positive career outcomes.

An additional and integrative perspective on personal strengths in career construction is provided by Rottinghaus's conceptualization of career resources (Rottinghaus et al., 2012). This framework combines personal competencies, psychological resources, and career-related behaviors as key contributors to the development of a meaningful career. Rottinghaus and colleagues proposed that a sense of personal agency—reflecting perceived competence and control in actively shaping one's career—together with adequate knowledge of the world of work, positive expectations regarding future career development, strong social support, and the ability to balance professional and personal domains, plays an important role in career development. These five dimensions are assessed by the Career Futures Inventory–Revised (CFI-R), namely career agency, negative career outlook, occupational awareness, support, and work–life balance. The CFI-R has demonstrated solid psychometric validity across several studies (Park et al., 2018; Rottinghaus et al., 2012).

From our perspective, career resources are particularly relevant for young workers who are entering the labor market and actively developing their professional paths. Viewed through the lens of Super's developmental career theory (Super, 1980), these individuals are typically in the Establishment stage. During this stage, young adults enter the world of work or consolidate their occupational position, evaluate and confirm their career choices, and actively construct their professional identity. To develop a meaningful career and achieve a sense of satisfaction and competence, young adults require adequate career resources. A strong sense of personal capability and control supports proactive career construction, while a positive outlook on future career prospects serves as both a protective and facilitating factor. Knowledge of career opportunities and labor market conditions enhances occupational attainment, supported by social resources that provide encouragement and a secure basis for exploration. Additionally, the ability to maintain balance between work and private life is increasingly important for sustaining well-being in contemporary careers.

Accordingly, Rottinghaus's career resources can be conceptualized as crucial psychological capacities for successful occupational attainment in early adulthood. We propose that young workers in the Establishment stage are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction and greater confidence in their job performance when their career construction is supported by stronger career resources. To address these assumptions, the present study first examines the structural validity of the CFI-R in a nationally representative sample of 1,500 Croatian young employees aged 19 to 35. We then investigate whether career resources, as measured by the CFI-R, show the expected associations with work-related outcomes, specifically job satisfaction and perceived job performance.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and procedure

The study sample consisted of 1,500 young workers from Croatia, aged between 19 and 35 years, with a mainly equal gender distribution. The sample was nationally representative with respect to age, gender, level of education, geographical and administrative region, and level of urbanization of place of residence. Participants completed self-administered questionnaires as part of a panel study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Ivo Pilar Institute.

### 2.2. Measures

*The Career Futures Inventory–Revised* (CFI-R; Rottinghaus et al., 2012) consists of 28 items rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and measures five dimensions: career agency, negative career outlook, occupational awareness, support, and work–life balance. Psychometric evaluations have supported its five-factor structure and demonstrated meaningful associations with career readiness and psychosocial resources (Park et al., 2018; Rottinghaus et al., 2012).

*Job satisfaction* was assessed using a four-item Likert-type unidimensional scale measuring overall satisfaction with one's job, whereas *perceived job performance* was measured using a seven-item composite scale capturing subjective aspects of job performance. Both instruments have demonstrated adequate psychometric properties in both work and academic settings (e.g., Šverko & Babarović, 2019).

## 3. Results

The empirical data partially confirmed the expected factor structure of the CFI-R, with small departures observed for negatively worded items. We tested a model comprising five intercorrelated factors, as previously proposed by Park et al. (2018). The confirmatory factor analysis largely supported the five-factor solution. Specifically, the model demonstrated a fairly good fit to the data ( $CFI = .903$ ,  $NFI = .891$ ,  $RMSEA = .068$ ). However, inspection of the factor loadings revealed one notable deviation from the proposed structure. Item CFI20 (“*I do not understand job market trends*”), which was expected to show a strong negative correlation with other items reflecting a good understanding of labor market and employment trends, instead exhibited a lack of association with these items and consequently a weak negative loading on the *Occupational Awareness* latent factor (see Table 1).

Table 1. Standardized Regression Weights obtained through CFA.

<i>Career Agency</i>	
1. I can perform a successful job search.	.66
2. I can adapt to change in the world of work.	.70
3. I understand my work-related interests.	.77
4. I am aware of priorities in my life.	.73
5. I can establish a plan for my future career.	.74
6. I am aware of my strengths.	.77
7. I am in control of my career.	.67
8. I will successfully manage my present career transition process.	.75
9. I understand my work-related values.	.76
10. I can overcome potential barriers that may exist in my career.	.75
<i>Negative Career Outlook</i>	
11. I doubt my career will turn out well in the future.	.79
12. It is unlikely that good things will happen in my career.	.80
13. I lack the energy to pursue my career goals.	.88
14. Thinking about my career frustrates me.	.77
<i>Occupational Awareness</i>	
15. I am good at understanding job market trends.	.74
16. I keep up with trends in at least one occupation or industry of interest to me.	.80
17. I keep current with job market trends.	.86
18. I keep current with changes in technology.	.75
19. I understand how economic trends affect career opportunities available to me.	.73
20. I do not understand job market trends.	-.10
<i>Social Support</i>	
21. My family is there to help me through career challenges.	.58
22. I receive all the encouragement I need from others to meet my career goals.	.82
23. Others in my life are very supportive of my career.	.87
24. Friends are available to offer support in my career transition.	.76
<i>Work-Life Balance</i>	
25. I am good at balancing multiple life roles such as worker, family member, or friend.	.78
26. I am very strategic when it comes to balancing my work and personal lives.	.81
27. Balancing work and family responsibilities is manageable.	.78
28. I can easily manage my needs and those of other important people in my life.	.76

Correlations among the five latent variables were predominantly positive and moderate, with the exception of the *Negative Career Outlook* latent variable, which exhibited weak negative correlations (see Table 2). This pattern differs from previous findings, as *Negative Career Outlook* has been shown to display moderate negative associations with the other CFI-R latent variables (Park et al., 2018).

Table 2. Correlations among CFI Latent Variables obtained through CFA.

	CA	NCO	OA	SS
Career Agency (CA)				
Negative Career Outlook (NCO)	-.27			
Occupational Awareness (OA)	.64	-.04		
Social Support (SS)	.56	-.10	.47	
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	.64	-.22	.44	.60

Based on the factor loadings obtained from the CFA, item CFI20 was excluded from the total score of the *Occupational Awareness* scale. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and the number of items for the five CFI scales. Overall, the observed findings largely replicate those reported by Rottinghaus et al. (2012), who found Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .78 to .90 and from .75 to .88 across two samples. Similarly, the descriptive statistics in our sample are largely comparable to theirs, although a somewhat more negative career outlook was observed in our participants. Rottinghaus et

al. (2012) reported means of  $M = 2.34$  ( $Sd = 1.12$ ) and  $M = 2.06$  ( $Sd = 0.85$ ), which may reflect differences in sample composition (workers vs. students), as well as Croatia-specific contextual factors or broader, potentially global, increases in job insecurity in recent years.

Table 3. Reliability, Descriptive Statistic, and Correlations to Job Satisfaction and Subjective Job Performance for CFI Scales.

	<i>M</i>	<i>Sd</i>	$\alpha$	<i>k</i>	Job Satisfaction	Subjective Job Performance
Career Agency (CA)	4.00	.63	.90	10	.30**	.35**
Negative Career Outlook (NCO)	2.79	1.09	.89	4	-.17**	-.30**
Occupational Awareness (OA)	3.68	.76	.88	5	.21**	.20**
Social Support (SS)	3.70	.78	.84	4	.32**	.26**
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	3.85	.71	.86	4	.36**	.35**

Finally, the correlations with job satisfaction and subjective job performance are small to moderate but conceptually meaningful, as presented in Table 3. Overall, the associations are low, with the strongest relationships observed for *Career Agency* and *Work-Life Balance* in relation to both job satisfaction and subjective job performance. These findings underscore the importance of career resources in the development of a meaningful career, one in which individuals experience satisfaction and perceive themselves as competent.

#### 4. Discussion

The present research provides additional evidence for the psychometric validity of the Career Futures Inventory-Revised and highlights the importance of career resources in the process of career construction. Although our findings regarding the scale structure show a small departure from the original results (Rottinghaus et al., 2012; Park et al., 2018), these differences appear to be primarily related to the misinterpretation of negatively worded items. This issue emerged both at the item level and at the scale level, as reported in the Results section. The observed discrepancies are likely attributable to the use of a panel sample, in which participants were recruited from a large pool of panelists who may be less intrinsically interested in career psychology topics than psychology students (enrolled in introductory or career development courses) or clients of a university career center. Nevertheless, our findings indicate satisfactory reliability coefficients, which may have been partially enhanced by method variance. Therefore, for future research in the Croatian context, it would be important to replicate the study using different samples.

Overall, our results underscore the importance of career resources for individual career planning and career achievement. Young workers with higher levels of career resources also report greater job satisfaction and better subjective job performance. Although the correlations observed in our sample are generally lower than those reported in previous studies (Rottinghaus et al., 2012), their conceptual significance supports the broader notion that career resources play an important role in career development. Importantly, job satisfaction and subjective job performance represent career outcomes rather than indicators of career readiness, general coping, or optimism, as employed in Rottinghaus's earlier work. As such, these constructs are more distal from the core concept of career resources, which likely explains the somewhat lower correlations observed.

Future research should further examine the role of career resources within a more comprehensive framework of career development constructs. As proposed within our WORKMOBIL project, which focuses on career decision-making related to employment abroad, career resources can be conceptualized as both protective and facilitating factors. Feeling confident and in control of one's career, as well as being well informed about occupational opportunities and labor market conditions, enables more intentional and realistic career decision-making, including decisions related to cross-border career mobility. Social resources further support international career development by providing encouragement, information, and access to opportunities. Moreover, maintaining a balance between career demands and private life is essential for sustaining engagement and well-being, while a positive career outlook allows individuals to approach their future careers with greater confidence and fewer fear of failure. These resources are particularly critical for constructing careers abroad, as young workers in international contexts face more complex and less predictable career conditions, along with increased ambiguity and heightened adjustment demands.

Finally, in addition to career-related attitudes such as protean and boundaryless career orientations (Briscoe & Hall, 2006), career resources may represent additional motivational foundation for career self-management. As suggested by Hirschi and Koen (2021), self-directed careers are shaped by a range of personal and environmental factors, among which career resources can be viewed as a particularly important and integrative component.

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