

Relationships between socioemotional skills, adaptability and self-efficacy in the school-work transition

Relações entre competências socioemocionais, adaptabilidade e autoeficácia na transição escola-trabalho

Relaciones entre competencias socioemocionales, adaptabilidad y autoeficacia en la transición escuela-trabajo

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to investigate possible correlations between socioemotional competencies, career adaptability and self-efficacy in the school-work transition. The sample consisted of 505 young apprentices aged between 14 and 24, 39.4 % male ($n = 199$), 60.6 % female ($n = 306$), participating in an apprenticeship program. Four online instruments were used: the Socio-Emotional Skills Assessment Tool (SENNA 2.0), the Career Adaptability Scale (CAT), the Self-Efficacy Scale for the School-Work Transition (AETT-BR), the Identification Questionnaire and the Brazil Economic Classification Criterion. Confirmatory factor analysis, reliability analysis, descriptive analysis and Pearson's r correlations were carried out. The results indicate significant correlations between all the variables, except for socioemotional competencies, kindness and engagement with others. The results of the AETT-BR and CAT show a relationship between trust and adaptation. The findings show implications for practice and avenues for further research.

Keywords: socioemotional competencies; career adaptability; self-efficacy; school-to-work transition; apprentices

Resumo: O objetivo deste estudo foi investigar possíveis correlações entre competências socioemocionais, adaptabilidade de carreira e autoeficácia na transição escola-trabalho. A amostra foi composta por 505 jovens aprendizes com idades entre 14 e 24 anos, sendo 39,4 % do sexo masculino ($n = 199$), 60,6 % do sexo feminino ($n = 306$), participantes de um programa de aprendizagem. Foram utilizados quatro instrumentos aplicados online: Instrumento para Avaliação de Competências Socioemocionais (SENNA 2.0), Escala de Adaptabilidade de Carreira (EAC), Escala de Autoeficácia na Transição Escola-Trabalho (AETBR), Questionário de Identificação e Critério de Classificação Econômica Brasil. Foram realizadas análises fatoriais confirmatórias, de confiabilidade, descritivas e correlações r de Pearson. Os resultados indicam correlações importantes entre todas as variáveis, exceto entre as competências socioemocionais, amabilidade e engajamento com os outros. Os resultados da AETT-BR e da EAC mostram relação entre confiança e adaptação. Os achados mostram implicações para as práticas e pistas para novas investigações.

Palavras-chave: competências socioemocionais; adaptabilidade de carreira; autoeficácia; transição escola-trabalho; aprendizes



Resumen: El objetivo de este estudio fue investigar posibles correlaciones entre competencias socioemocionales, adaptabilidad de carrera y autoeficacia, en la transición escuela-trabajo. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 505 jóvenes participantes de un programa de aprendizaje con edades entre 14 y 24 años, siendo 39.4 % de sexo masculino ($n = 199$) y 60.6 % de sexo femenino ($n = 306$). Se utilizaron cuatro instrumentos aplicados online: Instrumento para Evaluación de Competencias Socioemocionales (SENNA 2.0), Escala de Adaptabilidad de Carrera (EAC), Escala de Autoeficacia en la Transición Escuela-Trabajo (AETBR) y Cuestionario de Identificación y Criterio de Clasificación Económica Brasil. Se realizaron análisis factoriales confirmatorios de confiabilidad y descriptivos y correlaciones r de Pearson. Los resultados indicaron correlaciones importantes entre todas las variables, excepto entre las competencias socioemocionales, amabilidad y compromiso con los otros. Los resultados de la AETT-BR y de la EAC mostraron relación entre confianza y adaptación. Los hallazgos muestran implicaciones para las prácticas e indicios para realizar nuevas investigaciones.

Palabras clave: competencias socioemocionales; adaptabilidad profesional; autoeficacia; transición escuela-trabajo; aprendices

Constant changes in lifestyle and work environment mark contemporary society in the digital age, significantly transforming life, entry into the job market, and career development. Work structures are evolving at an unprecedented pace, with multifaceted careers, forced entrepreneurship, outsourcing, and project-based hiring becoming more common, underscoring individual responsibility in career management. The World Bank Report (2018) highlights new professional challenges in this century that demand cognitive, technical, and socioemotional skills, regardless of age.

The rapid changes in the labor market within the capitalist production model indicate that holding a diploma or certification no longer guarantees success; therefore, young people must develop diverse skills through educational and professional training programs. Focusing on the human and professional development of early-career youth is crucial in the Brazilian context, as many individuals face challenges due to educational disparities, especially in schools on the outskirts. Data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2022) reveal that approximately 18% of young people aged 14 to 29 have not completed high school, reflecting significant educational and socioeconomic inequalities. In a context characterized by swift changes, young people face specific challenges in transitioning from school to the workforce, influenced by personal (internal conditions), social, and economic (external conditions) factors. For youth apprentices, the emphasis is on preparing them for the future within the current socioeconomic reality.

In this context, it is worth highlighting the study by Klitzke et al. (2023), which aimed to assess how the Aprendiz Legal [Apprenticeship] program influences an individual's entry and retention in the formal job market in Brazil. The results indicate that participants have an estimated 68% probability of entering the formal market, representing a remarkable increase of 20 percentage points compared to other programs. Additionally, individuals with disabilities are more likely to enter the formal labor market than those without disabilities. In terms of job retention, former program participants hold an advantage of approximately 10 percentage points over other groups in 2015 and 2016. Thus, analyzing career trajectories of young people holds social, economic, and academic relevance, as well as potential positive impacts on career guidance, educational policy development, and training programs geared toward young apprentices. As highlighted by Axmann (2018), the active policy for creating dignified employment for young people, even under special circumstances, reflects a commitment to international mobilization to achieve this goal.

The first variable in this study pertains to socioemotional skills, which involve the capacity to make conscious decisions, handle challenges, and regulate emotions appropriately (Abed, 2016; Melo-Silva et al., 2023). These skills are considered essential for both personal and professional life and are categorized within the Five-Factor Model taxonomy (Soto & John, 2017) as macro-competencies, including Emotional Resilience, Extraversion, Openness, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness (Primi et al., 2021). Macro-competencies are acquired and developed through life experiences and are crucial for managing transitions and challenges in the workplace, contributing to young people's employability and the quality of their work (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2015; Primi et al., 2021). Socioemotional skills are being incorporated into public educational policies. While recent educational legislation reflects both consensus and dissent, as noted by Ciervo and Silva (2019), some authors criticize the central role of socioemotional skills in contemporary curricular policies in Brazil, arguing that the inclusion of these competencies aligns with neoliberal and capitalist demands. Additionally, some authors criticize the emphasis on developing socioemotional skills in Brazil. Smolka

et al. (2015) question the large-scale "socioemotional measure" instrument (SENNA 1.0), particularly regarding its proposition for public education policy. Concerning the inclusion of socioemotional skills in curricular policy and secondary education, Magalhães (2021) highlights the shift from critical thinking to an emphasis on individualism. By examining OECD and Brazilian documents, Cardozo et al. (2023) conclude that Brazil aligns with the international movement promoting governance in educational policies. Specifically addressing educational materials and analyzing life project books from the National Book and Educational Material Program, Silva (2023) indicates a direct relationship between socioemotional skills and neoliberal rationality. Furthermore, Silva's (2022) study examines documents produced by the Ayrton Senna Institute, Inter-American Development Bank, and OECD, which are present in secondary education reform and the Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular* in Portuguese). Drawing from historical-cultural psychology and critical pedagogy, the aforementioned author highlights the artificial divide between cognitive and affective functions in human psychology. These critiques are essential within the scope of public policy and knowledge production. Neoliberal and emancipatory biases are possibilities acknowledged in the capitalist production model. While the underlying logics of public policies require further investigation, this falls outside the scope of this study; hence, this study aligns with the latter perspective, focusing on the emancipatory nature and youth empowerment.

In this study, socioemotional skills (SES) are considered a form of human potential, associated with abilities that reflect the outcomes of utilizing these resources, resulting in specific performance derived from training in particular activities (Melo-Silva et al., 2023). While maintaining a critical and political perspective, the focus is on the full development of the human being within the context of holistic education, life preparation, and career readiness, as defined by Brazilian legislation.

The second variable pertains to career adapt-ability (CA), a psychosocial concept that explores how individuals manage their career choices, navigate transitions, and overcome challenges in the work environment (Carvalho et al., 2017; Ladeira et al., 2019; Rudolph et al., 2017; Savickas, 2005). This construct encompasses four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, which assess individuals' ability to reflect on career, act proactively, explore new opportunities, and believe in their abilities (Gamboa et al., 2014; Savickas et al., 2009). CA is a flexible individual trait that can evolve over time due to personal and contextual factors, making it especially relevant in a constantly evolving labor market (Kim et al., 2020; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Thus, career adaptability is essential for overcoming obstacles in job-seeking and professional integration, influencing young people's confidence in these processes (Gamboa et al., 2014).

The third variable is self-efficacy in the school-to-work transition (STWT), which is based on Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (2008) and refers to an individual's belief in their ability to plan and perform actions related to job searching and adapting to the workplace. According to Betz (2004), young individuals who are confident in their job-search skills are more likely to take action, as self-confidence is linked to a willingness to engage in proactive behaviors. Conversely, a lack of confidence can lead to avoidance behaviors and a tendency to give up in the face of challenges, which hinders one's job search. Low self-efficacy may result in negative self-talk and anxiety, affecting focus and performance. In summary, self-confidence is crucial in the job search, while its absence may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Self-efficacy is influenced by factors such as past experiences, social support, and positive feedback (Betz, 2004; Lent et al., 1994; Vieira, 2008). Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in how young individuals approach the school-to-work transition, impacting their confidence and optimism throughout the process.

Studies addressing college students emphasize the importance of self-efficacy in the school-to-work transition (Barros, 2018; Kim et al., 2015; Martins, 2019). Similarly, Tolentino et al. (2019) demonstrated that self-efficacy is crucial for career adaptability and job-seeking, showing a positive correlation with performance. Some studies on college students in the Brazilian context indicate that professional self-efficacy and personality traits influence career planning (Ourique & Teixeira, 2012) and are correlated with career adaptability (Bardagi & Albanaes, 2015; Monteiro et al., 2019). Vieira and Theotônio (2018) demonstrate a relationship between transition self-efficacy and career success. In examining the connection between self-efficacy in higher education and academic procrastination, Fior (2022) found that women and older students exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy for academic training, while men and younger students display higher levels of procrastination. In a study of senior college

students in the Portuguese context, Gomes et al. (2019) found that self-efficacy in the transition to work and perceived employability predict job search intentions and behaviors. Gamboa et al. (2018) compared non-working and working college students and found that working students obtained higher scores in adaptability, perceived employability, and self-efficacy. Most studies focus on college students; however, Ambiel et al. (2018) addressed high-school students and found significant correlations between self-efficacy for career choice and career adaptability. Salvador and Ambiel (2019) addressed workers and found that participants with higher occupational self-efficacy displayed higher levels across all dimensions of career adaptability.

Thus, the gap in the literature concerning young apprentices is evident, highlighting the relevance of this investigation. Some studies focusing on apprentices within the context of professional training explore relationships among this study's central variables. Oliveira and Godoy (2015) sought to identify risk and protective factors and coping strategies to analyze resilience among apprentices. The results indicate moderate resilience levels, lack of time to balance study and work, and negative sibling influences as the main risk factors. In a study conducted by Souza (2019) involving young participants in a training program, positive correlations were found between SES and CA. The study by Oliveira (2023) shows that the apprentice group scored higher in openness-related SES than the group of technical-level students following the implementation of an intervention program aimed at SES development.

On studies addressing SES, the literature review shows that most investigations were carried out with samples of children (Santos et al., 2018). Regarding studies on CA, the literature review by Coradini et al. (2022) highlights a predominance of studies conducted in the United States, focusing on topics such as career development and employability, primarily in the field of psychology. Additionally, the literature review by Barbosa and Melo-Silva (2023), aimed at characterizing intervention programs focused on learning and socioemotional development, reveals a remarkable diversity of programs. The fact that 24 of these programs showed positive effects on the development of socioemotional skills and other critical variables for participant development is particularly encouraging.

Thus, this study is expected to contribute to knowledge by investigating the relationships among the three variables: SES among young people; CA in the Brazilian context; and self-efficacy in school-to-work transition in a sample of participants in the Jovem Aprendiz [Apprenticeship] Program. The hypothesis is that there is a relationship between these three variables, which may provide insights for interventions aimed at adolescents and young adults, given the importance of these three constructs as a foundation for supporting life project development and career building.

Method

This study is part of a larger project and the primary author's master's thesis, supervised by the second author. It involved data collection through a cross-sectional, quantitative approach. A survey method with direct questioning was used (Cozby, 2003), and the results were statistically analyzed to enable quantification and generalization of the findings.

Participants

This study's participants were recruited through a non-probabilistic, convenience sample, based on criteria such as participant availability and ease of access, as highlighted by Hair et al. (2005). The sample comprised young participants in a Learning Program at a school in a city in the interior of Brazil. Participants were between 14 and 24 years old, with 39.4 % identifying as male ($n = 199$) and 60.6 % as female ($n = 306$). The program's duration averaged 8.3 months.

Instruments

Identification Questionnaire to Characterize the Apprentices. This instrument was specifically developed for this study to gather information on participants' gender, age, educational level, household composition, parental education levels, type of high school attended or currently attending (public or private), work hours, field of apprenticeship, duration as an apprentice, prior work experience and its duration, interest in further education, desired type of undergraduate program, and motivations for seeking employment.

SENNA inventory for the Assessment of Social and Emotional Socioemotional Skills – SENNA 2.0 (Primi et al., 2021; Primi et al., 2023). This Brazilian instrument, developed by researchers affiliated with the Ayrtton Senna Institute (IAS in Portuguese), is designed to measure SES in large-scale

educational contexts, supporting the development of education-focused public policies. The SENNA 2.0 full version contains 162 items, organized into five macro-skills and 17 facets or competencies. For this study, the 54-item version was adopted to optimize administration time, given the additional instruments applied to participants. Specifically designed for the Brazilian educational context, this version is well-suited for assessing socioemotional skills in this field. Despite the reduced number of items, this version demonstrates excellent internal consistency, with the following α coefficients for macro-skills in samples over 18 years old: openness to new experiences .91, conscientiousness .94, extraversion .86, agreeableness .86, and emotional resilience .90. Another reliability estimate, the test-retest, yielded very strong results ($r \geq .85$) (Primi et al., 2023). SENNA 2.0 was administered online with detailed instructions provided to participants. The 54 items required approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Individual assessments were conducted, but the results were aggregated for analysis without identifying participants individually. The IAS categorization system classifies scores into four levels: “to be developed,” “emerging,” “capable,” and “very capable.”

The Brazilian version of Career Adapt-Ability Scale (EAC in Portuguese; Teixeira et al., 2012). The Career Adapt-Ability Scale, developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012), is organized into four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, based on Savickas' Career Construction Theory (2005), which underpins the Life Design paradigm. The scale's original version, consisting of 44 items, was tested internationally among adolescents and working adults. Confirmatory analyses were conducted on the international results, resulting in a final version with 24 items—six items per dimension. According to Audibert and Teixeira (2015), Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients for the Brazilian version were as follows: .94 for the total scale, .88 for the concern subscale, .83 for the control subscale, .88 for the curiosity subscale, and .89 for the confidence subscale. Savickas and Porfeli (2012) note that these alpha values are close to the best results observed in samples from other countries. The 24-item international version was adapted to the Brazilian context by Teixeira et al. (2012).

Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work (AETT-BR; Soares et al., 2006). The Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work assesses the students' beliefs in their ability to organize and perform job-search actions and adapt to the working world. The version used in this study consists of 28 items, grouped into three dimensions: a) self-efficacy in work adaptation: 14 items, $\alpha = .91$; b) self-efficacy in emotional regulation: 8 items, $\alpha = .93$; and c) self-efficacy in job search: 6 items, $\alpha = .85$ (Fleming, 2015). This scale employs a 6-point Likert scale, where 1 represents “not confident at all” and 6 represents “fully confident”. A higher the agreement with the items indicates a greater level of self-efficacy.

Data collection

The Institutional Review Board approved the larger project. The instruments, including the characterization questionnaire, were prepared and incorporated into the Google Forms platform. Parental consent was obtained through a free and informed consent form for participants under 18, who also provided their assent via an informed assent form. Participants aged 18 or older provided their consent in the questionnaire's introductory section. It is important to note that all data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic when social isolation measures were in place.

Data Analysis

After data were collected, the form containing the SENNA 2.0 responses was sent to the Ayrton Senna Institute team. The team applied Item Response Theory (IRT) to correlate the scores from the polytomous instrument (Likert-type scale: to be developed, emerging, capable, and very capable) using the partial credit model and individual classifications for each of the scale's dimensions. Once the SENNA 2.0 analysis was completed, data from this instrument, along with data from other instruments and sociodemographic information, were transferred into an Excel spreadsheet and coded for analysis using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Next, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted using IBM-SPSS-Amos© software (version 22) along with reliability assessments. Additionally, correlation analyses were performed using Pearson's r test between the dimensions of the study variables. The r coefficient ranges from -1 to 1, where the sign indicates direction and the value represents the degree of the relationship. The interpretation adopted in this study follows the recommendations of Hair et al. (2005), where $r = .10$ to $.30$ is considered weak; $r = .40$ to $.60$ is moderate; $r = 0.60$ to 0.80 is strong; and $r = .80$ to 1.00 indicates very strong or perfect correlation.

Results

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to validate the factorial structure of the Brazilian version of the Career Adapt-Ability Scale (EAC in Portuguese) and the Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work (AETT-BR). Reliability indices were measured using Cronbach's alpha, yielding the following values for the EAC dimensions: .884 for Concern, .836 for Control, .892 for Curiosity, and .884 for Confidence. For the AETT-BR subscales, Cronbach's alphas were .954 for Self-Efficacy in Work Adaptation, .927 for Self-Efficacy in Emotional Regulation, and .857 for Self-Efficacy in Job Seeking. Table 1 presents the goodness-of-fit indices for both scales.

Table 1

Goodness of Fit Indices for the Career Adaptability Scale and Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work

Instrument	GFI	CFI	RMSEA	χ^2/df
EAC	.903	.964	.057	2.619
AETT-BR	.870	.939	.062	2.967

Note. EAC: Brazilian version of the Career Adapt-Ability Scale; AETT-BR: Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work.

The analysis of the relationship between the SES macro-skills, dimensions of the Career Adaptability Scale (EAC in Portuguese), and the subscales of the Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work (AETT-BR) was conducted using Pearson's correlation (r), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlations between SENNA 2.0 Macro-Skills and the variables of the Career Adapt-Ability (EAC) and the Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work (AETT-BR)

	Agreeableness	Consciousness	Extroversion	Emotional Resilience	Openness
EAC_Concern	.102*	.389***	.247***	.250***	.137**
EAC_Control	.123**	.421***	.288***	.299***	.179***
EAC_Curiosity	.150***	.434***	.289***	.328***	.223***
EAC_Confidence	.128**	.449***	.235***	.280***	.184***
AETT_Work Adapt	.205***	.474***	.289***	.275***	.250***
AETT_Emotion Regulat	.122**	.399***	.287***	.291***	.196***
AETT_Job Search	.159***	.287***	.216***	.177***	.151***

Notes. EAC_Concern: Career Adapt-Ability, Concern dimension; EAC_Control: Career Adapt-Ability, Control dimension; EAC_Curiosity: Career Adapt-Ability, Curiosity dimension; EAC_Confidence: Career Adapt-Ability, Confidence dimension; AETT_Work Adapt: Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work, Work adaptation; AETT_Emotion Regulat: Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work, Emotional Regulation; AETT_Job Search: Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work, Job Search.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 2 shows positive correlations between the macro-skills of SENNA 2.0, career adaptability competencies, and dimensions of self-efficacy in transition to work. More specifically, the Conscientiousness macro-skill showed moderate correlation with all EAC's four dimensions and with the AETT-BR's Emotional Regulation and Work Adaptation dimensions, with r between 0.30 and 0.60. In turn, the Emotional Resilience macro-skill exhibited moderate correlation with the EAC's Control and Curiosity dimensions.

This study also assessed the correlations between the EAC's dimensions and those of AETT-BR (Table 3).

Table 3

Correlations between the variables of the Career Adapt-Ability (EAC) and the Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work (AETT-BR)

	EAC_Concern	EAC_Control	EAC_Curiosity	EAC_Confidence
AETT_Work Adapt	.574***	.654***	.671***	.684***
AETT_Emotion Regulat	.514***	.600***	.602***	.604***
AETT_Job Search	.438***	.499***	.500***	.483***

Notes. EAC_Concern: Career Adapt-Ability, Concern dimension; EAC_Control: Career Adapt-Ability, Control dimension; EAC_Curiosity: Career Adapt-Ability, Curiosity dimension; EAC_Confidence: Career Adapt-Ability, Confidence dimension; AETT_Work Adapt: Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work, Work adaptation; AETT_Emotion Regulat: Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work, Emotional Regulation; AETT_Job Search: Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work, Job Search.

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Table 3 shows statistical significance for all correlations between the dimensions of the EAC and AETT-BR. All correlations are positive, with moderate (0.4 – 0.6) or strong intensity (0.6 – 0.8).

Discussion

This study aimed to assess the relationships between socioemotional skills (SES), referred to as macro-skills, and the dimensions of the Brazilian version of the Career Adaptability Scale, as well as the subscales of the Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work (AETT-BR). The study hypotheses proposed that significant, positive correlations would be found among the variables of the SES, Career Adaptability Scale, and Self-Efficacy Scale for the Transition to Work. The results supported this hypothesis, demonstrating these relationships and aligning with existing literature, despite the use of different instruments, populations, and perspectives, thereby validating these associations within a sample of apprentices.

In this regard, the results of this study align with those of Ourique and Teixeira (2012), who found a statistically significant correlation between the dimensions of neuroticism, extraversion, and achievement with self-efficacy for career planning and decision-making. The results presented in Table 1 also revealed a significant correlation with the AETT-BR subscales (Soares et al., 2006), indicating that the emotional resilience macro-skill is on the positive pole of the trait, while the neuroticism dimension is on the negative pole. This distinction explains the difference in correlation direction between the two studies. Remor et al. (2022), in their study on college students, also indicate that optimism and self-efficacy are precursors to employability in the school-to-work transition.

Furthermore, Bardagi and Albanaes (2015) examined college students and found that the neuroticism dimension was negatively correlated with the total score of the Brazilian version of the Career Adaptability Scale (EAC; Teixeira et al., 2012), as well as with the confidence and control dimensions. A similar result was observed in this study, where the emotional resilience macro-skill showed a significant positive correlation with all EAC's dimensions. These findings reinforce the evidence that SES, particularly emotional resilience, may serve as a strong indicator of self-efficacy in transition and career adaptability.

Regarding the relationships between self-efficacy in transition and career adaptability, numerous studies corroborate this study's findings (Table 3). Ambiel et al. (2018) reported associations between self-efficacy for career choice and career adaptability, with all correlations being statistically significant. Specifically, positive associations were found between self-assessment and adaptability. Monteiro et al. (2019) investigated correlations between career adaptability and employability during the school-to-work transition, finding a significant positive correlation. Similarly, Vieira and Theotonio (2018) reported that the confidence dimension had a statistically significant positive correlation with all AETT-BR subscales. Kim et al. (2015) conducted a study examining the relationship between dysfunctional career thoughts and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy during the school-to-work transition. Their results highlighted that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in this transition, suggesting that dysfunctional thoughts decrease through learning experiences and career planning.

Finally, Gamboa et al. (2018) examined adaptability, perceived employability, and self-efficacy as fundamental constructs in career development, particularly for college students preparing to enter the job market. The study compared non-working and working college students in terms of career adaptability, perceived employability, and self-efficacy in the transition to work. Results indicated that working students scored higher across all variables analyzed.

In line with existing literature but in a broader context (considering the analysis involved SES, CA, and self-efficacy in the school-to-work transition), this study's results demonstrate that SES traits, such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional resilience, extraversion, and openness to new experiences, are essential for social interaction and self-regulation across various life contexts, including the workplace. The positive correlation between emotional resilience and confidence in career adaptability suggests that individuals with a greater capacity to recover from emotional challenges also feel more confident when facing career-related obstacles, such as changes or uncertainties in the professional environment, which are characteristic of this century. Agreeableness may correlate with control in career adaptability, indicating that more pleasant and cooperative individuals feel more in control of their career paths, as they are able to cultivate strong relationships, facilitating access to support networks and professional opportunities. Curiosity (within adaptability) and openness to new experiences (within socioemotional skills) are strongly correlated, indicating that individuals more open to experiences tend to be more curious and interested in exploring new career possibilities and acquiring new knowledge, which helps them navigate adversity in a chaotic world.

The positive correlations between EAC dimensions (such as confidence and curiosity) and self-efficacy in work adaptation and job seeking suggest that individuals with greater adaptability—those who feel capable of controlling their choices and exploring new opportunities—also have stronger beliefs in their ability to transition successfully into the job market. This relationship implies that young people with higher adaptability to professional changes feel more confident in finding employment and adapting to job demands. The positive correlation between emotional regulation, a self-efficacy dimension, and the control dimension in career adaptability suggests that young people who manage their emotions well in stressful situations are better able to control their career decisions, thus facilitating their adaptation during the school-to-work transition. Finally, self-efficacy in the school-to-work transition, which encompasses work adaptation, emotional regulation, and job seeking, is strongly associated with socioemotional skills. The positive correlation between emotional regulation and emotional resilience within SES indicates that emotionally resilient youth also have greater confidence in their ability to regulate their emotions when facing the challenges of the school-to-work transition. Furthermore, the correlation between job seeking and extraversion and consciousness suggests that individuals with better self-regulation skills and an active approach to problem-solving are more effective in pursuing job opportunities.

Conclusions

Implications for the scientific literature in the career guidance field and for career counseling practice

The implications of this study are three-fold: First, from the perspective of career adaptability (CA), the findings reinforce the central importance of this construct for career development, particularly during the school-to-work transition. The relationship between adaptability and transition self-efficacy confirms that individuals with a more adaptive repertoire are better equipped to handle professional challenges. Second, socioemotional skills (SES) can be seen as precursors to success in career transitions. The correlations between SES, CA, and transition self-efficacy emphasize that SES are fundamental to success at the start of one's professional life. These findings suggest that career preparation should focus not only on technical skills but also on interpersonal and emotional management competencies. Third, as a corollary to the previous points, the results indicate the need to expand the Career Self-Efficacy Model. The relationship between self-efficacy in the school-to-work transition and SES offers a more comprehensive view of the factors that boost young people's confidence in the job market. This intersection between self-efficacy and emotional factors broadens the understanding of how young apprentices can be more effective in job seeking and adapting to work.

Regarding implications for career guidance and counseling practice, this study's findings provide valuable insights for interventions with young apprentices transitioning to the job market. First, the results emphasize the importance of integrating SES as a core component in career guidance. Career

counseling may be more effective when it includes the development of SES, such as emotional resilience, openness, and conscientiousness, alongside support in building technical skills or career planning competencies. These socioemotional skills can enhance both adaptability and self-efficacy in the transition to work. Second, the development of self-efficacy is shown to be highly relevant. Counseling programs can strengthen self-efficacy in the school-to-work transition, boosting young apprentices' confidence in their work adaptation abilities and emotional regulation. Activities such as interview simulations, job search exercises, and emotional regulation training can be especially beneficial. Third, the findings point to the importance of building support networks. Encouraging young apprentices to develop agreeableness and engagement skills can help them establish support networks, thereby increasing their employment opportunities and access to resources during their career transition. Finally, personalized interventions for diverse groups are desirable. Recognizing that different aspects of adaptability and self-efficacy may align with specific socioemotional skills allows for more tailored counseling approaches. For example, a group with low confidence or curiosity may benefit from activities that foster engagement or openness to new experiences.

In summary, the correlations between career adaptability, self-efficacy in the school-to-work transition, and social emotional skills emphasize the importance of adopting a holistic approach to career guidance rather than focusing on each variable individually. Reinforcing these interactions allows both theory and practice to evolve, supporting young people in career-building by equipping them with not only technical skills but also the emotional and behavioral qualities essential for professional success.

A critical appraisal of the findings and opportunities for future research considering socioeconomic and cultural aspects

Although the correlation between career adaptability, self-efficacy in the school-to-work transition, and social emotional skills provides a promising perspective on the importance of a holistic approach to career guidance, a critical analysis is necessary to acknowledge potential limitations and offer more nuanced interpretations of the findings. Some aspects that need consideration are presented next.

1. One primary consideration in interpreting correlations is remembering that correlation does not imply causation. Although an association was found between these variables, this does not mean that CA causes higher levels of self-efficacy or socioemotional skills, or vice versa. Other factors not considered in this study may simultaneously influence all these variables. For example, external factors such as family support, socioeconomic level, or educational experiences could account for a significant portion of these correlations. These structural factors can impact both CA and SES, making it challenging to isolate a direct effect between the studied variables.

2. Generalizing the results to broader populations is a common concern. Career guidance studies often use specific samples, such as college students or young apprentices (as was the case here), which may not adequately represent other groups. For instance, young people from different socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds, or those with special educational needs, may develop these skills differently. Findings from a group of apprentices or college students may not apply equally to young people facing greater social vulnerability or with fewer opportunities to develop their socioemotional skills in structured environments like high schools or universities.

3. It is also crucial to consider that emphasizing individual skills and psychological characteristics, such as CA and self-efficacy, can divert attention from broader structural issues. Young people with lower levels of self-efficacy or SES—such as resilience or self-management—may be mistakenly viewed as less prepared for the job market when, in reality, they face challenges like structural unemployment, poverty, lack of institutional support, or discrimination. In this sense, a more critical analysis could highlight the risk of placing responsibility on the individual for career success or failure, while overlooking structural inequalities that limit their opportunities and access to resources for developing these skills.

4. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge that the development and expression of SES, as well as CA, are strongly influenced by cultural context. The dimensions comprising these variables, such as curiosity, confidence, or resilience, may be interpreted and valued differently across cultural settings. For example, in more collectivist cultures, where collective success and social conformity are highly

valued, concepts like “self-efficacy” and “self-management” may carry distinct meanings, and their correlation with success in the school-to-work transition may be weaker. Cross-cultural studies often reveal that competencies valued in Western contexts do not hold the same significance in other cultural settings.

5. Following from the previous point, a potential issue with emphasizing SES and CA is that it may place undue value on individual development while neglecting a broader analysis of educational and employment systems. By focusing merely on personal skill development, there is a risk of overlooking the need for systemic changes to improve working conditions and reduce structural barriers. For instance, rather than concentrating solely on fostering “resilience” in young people, it is essential to question why so many individuals need to be resilient in the first place. If the job market is unstable or conditions are precarious, SES alone may not suffice to counterbalance these realities.

6. Another critical point is that the CA, self-efficacy, and SES variables may conceptually overlap, raising questions about the clarity of distinctions between them. For example, the confidence dimension in CA may closely resemble the concept of self-efficacy. This lack of clear differentiation between these constructs could distort the interpretation of results, potentially leading to an overestimation of their relationships. Researchers such as Bandura (1997) have emphasized the importance of clearly defining the boundaries of concepts like self-efficacy, noting this as a limitation in studies involving multiple overlapping psychological constructs.

7. Another aspect to consider is that correlations may imply that interventions aimed at improving SES, CA, and self-efficacy are beneficial for all young people; however, standardized interventions do not always work equitably. Holistic interventions may be effective for some, but others may require more tailored approaches that take into account factors such as prior trauma, special needs, or cultural and social barriers. Implementing programs that target the development of these skills indiscriminately, without individualized assessment, may result in interventions that fail to meet the actual needs of vulnerable subgroups.

This study advances the Psychology of Working Theory by developing a complementary paradigm centered on change to guide interventions at both the individual level (e.g., counseling psychology in the workplace) and the systems level (e.g., systemic intervention psychology in the workplace), as noted by Blustein et al. (2019). The change paradigm presented here includes: (a) a needs assessment encompassing survival, social connection/contribution, and self-determination, and (b) guidance on mobilizing agentic action, which involves critical reflection and action, proactive engagement, social support, and community involvement. The needs assessment and agentic action components of this approach can support changes in individual counseling, advocacy, and systemic intervention. Case examples illustrating systemic intervention and an individual counseling vignette are provided, along with research implications, such as exploring the impact of these change models on client outcomes and systemic change efforts.

8. Finally, as with any study, methodological limitations must be acknowledged. The results presented here represent only a snapshot in time, meaning the interactions between the variables addressed in this analysis may change over time, especially at different stages of the school-to-work transition. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial to verify whether these correlations remain consistent over time or reflect only a specific developmental period.

While the correlations between career adaptability, self-efficacy in the school-to-work transition, and social emotional skills offer promising insights into the value of a holistic approach to career guidance, a critical analysis reveals that the results may not be as straightforward as initially suggested. Factors such as structural inequalities, cultural contexts, construct overlap, and methodological limitations must be considered when interpreting these findings. Furthermore, caution is necessary when applying interventions based on these correlations, ensuring they are contextualized, individualized, and informed by a broader understanding of social and structural barriers.

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