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The Goal Paves the Way: Inspirational Motivation as a Predictor of Career Adaptability

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Abstract

To cope with a changing work world, organizations look for job applicants who rate high on career adaptability. The present study investigates whether leadership influences employees' career adaptability. Specifically, we investigated whether inspirational motivation fosters career adaptability and whether employees' future temporal focus mediates this impact. With a time lag of 3 months, 766 employees working in various branches answered two questionnaires. Inspirational motivation by their leaders predicted employee career adaptability, mediated by employee future temporal focus. Findings yield implications for personnel recruitment and development.

Keywords

inspirational motivation, career adaptability, future temporal focus

In the face of increasing change in today's working world (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1976; Savickas, 2005) with its rising career uncertainty, the ability of the individual to cope with these changes in a way that promotes effective career decisions is a challenge and core developmental task for employees. Career adaptability as a psychosocial construct provides self-regulating strengths or capacities that help people to cope with their social integration at work (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). More changeable than dispositional factors, career adaptability resources develop through interactions between individuals and their environments and should be fostered via career educators and counselors (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Given the evidence that career adaptability is an important resource to handle challenges across various situations by fostering person–environment fit (Guan et al., 2013), and being positively associated with subjective well-being (Konstam, Celen-Demirtas, Tomek, & Sweeney, 2015) and career satisfaction (McKenna, Zacher, Sattari Ardabili, & Mohebbi, 2016), Guan et al. (2013) suggested that organizations should design training sessions to promote employees' career adaptability. It would be even more beneficial and efficient for organizations if it was possible to enhance career adaptability by leading in a certain manner instead of implementing training sessions.

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However, contextual factors that predict career adaptability such as leadership styles have hardly been investigated. Yukl (2013) defined leadership as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 23). Leadership thus affects followers, work groups, and organizations (Bono & Judge, 2003). According to Moss, Dowling, and Callanan (2009), leaders cannot directly change subordinates' behavior, but they can inspire and encourage, which corresponds to the inspirational motivation dimension of Bass's (1985) conception of transformational leadership. Therefore, we suggest that supervisors could possibly enhance their employees' career adaptability by leading in an inspirational manner. Inspirational motivation as an instrument to foster career adaptability would be of benefit for both employees and employers to help employees to achieve adaptation goals to handle the challenges of today's working world.

The study at hand contributes to the investigation of inspirational motivation, a dimension of transformational leadership, as a facilitator of employees' career adaptability. Up to now, individual differences such as cognitive abilities or personality traits have been investigated as determinants of career adaptability, whereas the investigation of leadership style as a determinant of career adaptability has been understudied. Until now, most studies have focused on adaptable individuals' behavior or coping resources (e.g., Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004) and on explanatory mechanisms between career adaptability and its outcomes (Hirschi, Herrmann, & Keller, 2015; Zacher, 2015). As an exception to these prevailing research foci, O'Connell, McNeely, and Hall (2007) looked at the relationship between managerial support and career adaptability and found it to be positive in a cross-sectional study. Moreover, most previous studies on career adaptability have examined students and adults who had recently entered the working world rather than working individuals of different ages and at various career levels (e.g., Cai et al., 2015; Douglass & Duffy, 2015; Ebberwein et al., 2004).

The present study extends existing findings in three ways: First, the present study investigates a contextual factor, that is, inspirational leadership, as a potential determinant of career adaptability. Thereby, we contribute to a better understanding of the role of contextual factors (i.e., leadership) in fostering career adaptability. Second, we examined the mediating role of future temporal focus to bridge the gap between inspirational motivation and career adaptability and unveil this potential explanatory mechanism. As inspirational leaders motivate and inspire individuals by attractive and uplifting visions (Bass, 1985), this might make their followers direct their attention toward the future. Zacher (2014b) found that "future temporal focus emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor of changes in career adaptability and its dimensions" (p. 197). By investigating future temporal focus as a potential mediator, this study throws a light into a "black box" between inspirational motivation and career adaptability. Third, most studies on transformational leadership/inspirational motivation and its effects on employees' performance have been conducted in the United States (Nerdinger, 2014). Furthermore, Zacher (2014b) used an Australian sample in his study on the relationship between future temporal focus and career adaptability. Consequently, these previous results can be transferred to the European context only with caution. In their investigation of the psychometric characteristics of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) in 13 different countries, Savickas and Porfeli (2012) found differences in mean scores and the factorial structure of the CAAS and concluded that "the subscales measure context-sensitive, psychosocial capital" (p. 670). As a contribution toward generalizability of contextual influences on this psychosocial capital, the present study examines employees who work at various organizations in Europe, especially in Germany.

Concepts and Hypotheses

As first introduced by Super and Knasel (1981), Savickas (1997) used *career adaptability* as the integrating concept of the four perspectives of Super's life-span/life-space approach. Savickas defined career adaptability as "the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and

participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions" (p. 254). Specifically, he described four dimensions of coping resources that promote career adaptability, namely (a) *concern*, which means that an individual is aware and tactical about his or her own vocational future; (b) *control*, meaning that an individual is in control over his or her own vocational future, for example, makes decisions; (c) *curiosity*, which includes exploring possible selves and future options; and (d) *confidence*, encompassing the conviction that suitable decisions can be made and that new abilities can be learned (Savickas, 2005). Career adaptability is one among several mechanisms that help individuals reaching their career goals (Johnston, Luciano, Maggiori, Ruch, & Rossier, 2013; Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012; Super & Knasel, 1981) and gaining objective as well as subjective career success, such as job satisfaction (Fiori, Bollmann, & Rossier, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2014; Zacher, 2014a), or higher employment quality (Koen et al., 2012). There is also evidence for a positive relationship between career adaptability and subjective well-being in unemployed emerging adults (Konstam et al., 2015). As it seems to be crucial for vocational careers (Savickas, 2005), career adaptability has become a central construct in vocational psychology (Goodman, 1994; Zacher, 2014b).

Transformational leadership has been one of the most popular leadership models for the last 30 years (Bass, 1985; Dinh et al., 2014) and combines aspects of relationship-orientated and charismatic leadership (Bass, 1985). The transformation of employees' values and attitudes increases their motivation and performance (Bass, 1985), and individual interests are postponed in favor of common or shared goals. According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership can be described using four dimensions. *Individualized influence* means that leaders hold a particular professional and moral exemplary function through which employees respect and trust their superiors. Through *inspirational motivation*, leaders inspire their subordinates by attractive and convincing visions, and at the same time, leaders prompt hope and confidence that these expectations can be fulfilled. Moreover, through *intellectual stimulation*, leaders inspire innovative thinking by questioning previous methods and encourage their employees to try new solutions. *Individualized consideration* means that leaders see themselves as their staff's coaches. They recognize their employees' individual needs for performance and development and cater to them systematically.

In their qualitative study on career adaptability, Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven, and Prosser (2004) asked adults what they believed they would need to successfully manage change in their careers. The authors described their results, among others, as follows: "Adaptive individuals [. . .] think about and plan for their future" and "anticipate change" (p. 304). Moreover, Ebberwein et al. identified a future orientation as one of the components on which career adaptability hinges. This corresponds to Savickas (1997) and Super and Knasel (1981) who stated that being forward-looking and forward-oriented was a requirement for successful career adaptability, as it was necessary, among other things, to be tactical. Inspirational motivation fosters creativity (Shin & Zhou, 2003) and innovation (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003)—outcomes that are related to adaptability and orientation toward the future. Thus, motivating subordinates by drawing their attention toward a mental image of attractive future states—the core of inspirational motivation (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Densten, 2002)—likely promotes career adaptability because employees' coping resources are fostered. Furthermore, as inspirational motivation was expected to have the largest effects on future temporal focus compared to the other three dimensions of transformational leadership, we focused on this dimension of transformational leadership.

In sum, we expected inspirational motivation to be positively associated with career adaptability as well as its four dimensions. To be prepared for future tasks requires anticipating what comes next (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Through this future focus, leader visioning enables individuals to be *concerned* about their future. Moreover, we assumed that inspirational motivation would increase the dimension of *control*. Having a goal in mind allows employees to pursue it and to assume responsibility for it. Furthermore, communicating an attractive vision likely prompts individuals to think about their

future selves in various situations and roles (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and thus promotes *curiosity*. Finally, we expected that by an inspirational leader who conveys hope that the goals can be reached, the dimension of *confidence* is enhanced. Building on the above considerations and existing empirical evidence we state:

Hypothesis 1: Inspirational motivation determines (a) overall career adaptability, (b) concern, (c) control, (d) curiosity, and (e) confidence.

Inspirational motivation draws employees' temporal focus onto the future, which in turn makes possible that an individual is forward-looking and thus can behave proactively, which is at the heart of career adaptability (Chan et al., 2015; Hamtiaux, Houssemand, & Vrignaud, 2013; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Super & Knasel, 1981). This resonates with Ebberwein et al. (2004) who suggested that by "frequent exploration, daydreaming, and the expectation of change" (p. 305)—in other words, an orientation toward the future—career adaptability can be enhanced. A focus on their future may make individuals anticipate the results of a change and "keep their attention on this desired end goal" (Shipp, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009, p. 18). For preparing future career tasks, it seems to be important to think about the future. Therefore, an appropriate construct to be tested as a mediator is *future temporal focus*, which is described as the level of attention that employees habitually devote to thinking about future expectations (Bluedorn, 2002). Future temporal focus affects employees' attitudes, motivation, and behavior (Bluedorn & Standifer, 2006; Lewin, 1939; Schmitt, Gielnik, Zacher, & Klemann, 2013; Weikamp & Göritz, 2016) and allows proactive behavior and successful adaptation to work tasks (Super & Knasel, 1981). Marko and Savickas (1998) explained that "a future orientation constitutes a fundamental dimension in career choice attitudes and competencies" (p. 106). By testing the mediating role of future temporal focus, the present study contributes to unveiling an explanatory mechanism between inspirational motivation and career adaptability.

Hypothesis 2: Future temporal focus mediates the association between inspirational motivation and career adaptability.

Method

Participants

Data were collected via a German online panel (Göritz, 2014) across two measurement points with a time lag of approximately 3 months. This online panel holds people from all walks of life who had signed up to take part in noncommercial studies. All full-aged panelists who at their sign-up had indicated to be employed were invited to the first wave of this study. The time lag of 3 months between the first and the second wave was chosen to keep seasonal effects of business activities constant and attrition as low as possible. In the first wave, 1,149 (56.7% women) employees participated with a mean age of 46.3 years ($SD = 10.4$). In the second wave, 812 participants returned. Due to missing values or the statement not to have a direct supervisor in the second wave ($n = 40$), 766 (55.9% women) respondents remained, with a mean age of 46.9 years ($SD = 10.4$), resulting in a response rate of 66.7%. Regarding their level of education, 52.8% of participants possessed an O-/A-level certificate, 36.6% held a university degree, and 10.6% had 9 years of school or less. Participants worked on average 35.3 hr per week ($SD = 8.8$) and had 12.5 years of tenure ($SD = 10.8$). Regarding leadership, 26.4% indicated to hold a managerial position. All participants completed the study voluntarily. They had the option to receive credits for their participation, which could be redeemed against money after the completion of various studies.

Procedure

Respondents received the invitation to participate and the link leading to the web-based study via e-mail. They were informed that the topic of the study was career management and that the study consisted of two parts. In Wave 1, respondents completed measures of inspirational motivation, future temporal focus, and sociodemographics. Having a direct supervisor was a prerequisite to rate inspirational motivation by their superior. Three months later in Wave 2, data on career adaptability were collected.

Measures

Inspirational motivation. To assess inspirational motivation, the Inspirational Motivation subscale of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ Form 5 × Short; Bass, 1985; German version by Felfe, 2006) was used. The MLQ is the most commonly used instrument to assess transformational leadership (Felfe, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Respondents were asked how often statements such as "... talks optimistically about the future" apply to their supervisor by rating 4 items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). Felfe (2006) established good construct validity of the German translation, whereby psychometric properties and intercorrelations between the scales correspond largely to North American studies. In our sample, Cronbach's α was .92. This score is higher than the one in Felfe's (2006) validation study ($\alpha = .84$).

Career adaptability. To assess the degree of employees' career adaptability, we used the German translation of the CAAS (Johnston et al., 2013). The psychosocial constructs measured by the subscales of the CAAS can be seen as "the self-regulation strengths or capacities that a person may draw upon to solve the unfamiliar, complex, and ill-defined problems presented by developmental vocational tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas" (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 662). It consists of 24 items, 6 items per subscale, which measure the four dimensions concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Participants rated how strong their respective ability was. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*I don't have the ability . . . /This is no important resource for me . . .*) to 5 (*I have a very strong ability . . . /This is a very important resource for me . . .*). Example items are "... planning how to achieve my goals" (concern), "... doing what's right for me" (control), "... investigating options before making a choice" (curiosity), and "... learning new skills" (confidence). The CAAS shows very good psychometric properties and is construct validated in more than a dozen countries (e.g., Akın et al., 2014; McKenna et al., 2016; Merino-Tejedor, Hontangas, & Boada-Grau, 2016; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Van Vianen, Klehe, Koen, & Dries, 2012). Research on the validation of the CAAS German form showed a high level of fit for a four-factor model (i.e., concern, control, curiosity, and confidence), $\chi^2 = 779.55$, $df = 225$, $\chi^2/df = 3.465$, $p < .001$, goodness-of-fit index = .949, comparative fit index = .965, Tucker–Lewis index = .957, root mean square error of approximation = .045 (Johnston et al., 2013), supporting the use of the German CAAS Scale. Reliability scores in our study were high with Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$ for concern, .86 for control, .87 for curiosity, .90 for confidence, and .94 for the total scale. These scores correspond well to Johnston, Luciano, Maggiori, Ruch, and Rossier's (2013) values in their validity study ($\alpha = .88$ for concern, $\alpha = .87$ for control, $\alpha = .87$ for curiosity, $\alpha = .87$ for confidence, and $\alpha = .94$ for the total scale).

Future temporal focus. The German version (Keller, Spurk, Baumeler, & Hirschi, 2016) of the future orientation scale by Shipp, Edwards, and Lambert (2009) assessed future temporal focus. Participants answered the 4 items (e.g., "I think about what my future has in store") from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's α was .89 (.93 in Keller et al., 2016).

Sociodemographics. To rule out potential confounds, age, sex (1 = *female*, 2 = *male*), level of education (1 = *no degree [yet]*, 2 = *9 years of school*, 3 = *O-levels*, 4 = *A-levels*, 5 = *university*, 6 = *doctorate*), and tenure (how many years they had been working for their employer) were incorporated as control variables, as these variables have been shown to have differential effects on career adaptability (Klehe, Zikic, Van Vianen, & Pater, 2011; Negru-Subtirica, Pop, & Crocetti, 2015; Zacher, 2014b). The number of weekly working hours and whether participants held a managerial position (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*) were also controlled for as these variables could influence career adaptability (cf. O'Connell, McNeely, & Hall, 2007) as well as employees' assessment of their superiors' leadership style.

Analyses

Analyses were calculated using IBM SPSS Statistics 23 and the PROCESS tool by Hayes (2013). Hypothesis 1 was examined with linear regression analyses predicting career adaptability and its dimensions concern, control, curiosity, and confidence by inspirational motivation. To test Hypothesis 2, indirect effects were estimated with Hayes's (2013) PROCESS tool. Bootstrapping was the procedure of choice for both analyses, as it is distribution independent and as it estimates the indirect effect and its confidence interval instead of solely testing for significance. Thus, the degree of mediation observed in the data can be reported (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). Age, sex, level of education, working hours, tenure, and managerial position were included as control variables.

Results

Preliminary Results

Drop-out analyses. Independent sample *t*-tests with bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap method (bootstrap sample size = 1,000) were used to compare the respondents who participated at both waves with the respondents who did not participate at Time 2 or had to be excluded due to having no direct supervisor at Time 2. There were no significant differences between the two groups concerning sex, managerial position, level of education, working hours, inspirational motivation, future temporal focus, and overall career adaptability and its four dimensions. There were significant differences between the groups with regard to age, included participants: $M = 46.9$, $SD = 0.4$; excluded participants: $M = 45.3$, $SD = 0.6$; $t(1,112) = -2.42$, $p < .05$, and tenure, included participants: $M = 12.5$, $SD = 0.4$; excluded participants: $M = 10.7$, $SD = 0.5$; $t(797.79) = -2.89$, $p < .01$.

Descriptive Results

Table 1 displays means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables. Inspirational motivation, overall career adaptability and its dimensions, and future temporal focus were significantly and positively related ($r = .15$–$.87$, $ps < .001$).

With regard to the control variables, age correlated positively with career adaptability and its dimensions ($r = .09$–$.22$, $ps < .05$), weekly working hours with concern ($r = .09$, $p < .05$), and tenure with overall career adaptability ($r = .09$, $p < .05$) and with control ($r = .12$, $p < .01$). Holding a managerial position was significantly and positively correlated with perceived inspirational motivation ($r = .15$, $p < .001$), future temporal focus ($r = .11$, $p < .01$), and career adaptability and its dimensions ($r = .17$–$.20$, $ps < .001$).

Test of hypotheses. To test whether inspirational motivation predicted career adaptability and its dimensions, we performed linear regression analyses. In Step 1, we entered the control variables (i.e., age, gender, education, working hours, tenure, and managerial position) followed by inspirational

Table 1. Means (*M*), Standard Deviations (*SD*), and Correlations of Variables.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age													
2. Sex	.08*												
3. Education	−.11**	.03											
4. Working hours	−.07*	.28***	.11**										
5. Tenure	.45***	.15***	−.10**	.11**									
6. Managerial position	.08*	.13***	.10**	.22***	.07								
7. Inspirational motivation	.02	−.05	.09*	.02	−.03	.15***							
8. Future temporal focus	−.05	−.02	.01	.04	−.02	.11**	.20***						
9. Career adaptability	.17***	−.02	.04	.07	.09*	.20***	.31	.32***					
10. Concern	.09*	−.01	.01	.09*	.06	.18***	.28***	.44***	.78***				
11. Control	.22***	.02	.02	.06	.12**	.18***	.26***	.15***	.85***	.51***			
12. Curiosity	.16***	−.04	.08*	.06	.04	.16***	.28***	.27***	.86***	.58***	.64***		
13. Confidence	.11**	−.03	.04	.03	.06	.17***	.24***	.21***	.87***	.54***	.72***	.68***	
M	46.85	1.44	3.86	35.33	12.50	0.27	3.53	3.70	3.84	3.53	4.03	3.75	4.03
SD	10.40	0.50	1.10	8.80	10.75	0.44	0.89	0.82	0.55	0.67	0.66	0.68	0.63

Note. $n = 737–766$. Variables 1–8 were measured at Time 1, Variables 9–13 at Time 2 (i.e., 3 months after Time 1).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 2. Regression Analysis Predicting Career Adaptability and Its Dimensions by Inspirational Motivation.

Predictor	β	*T*	ΔR^2	R^2
Overall career adaptability as dependent variable				
Inspirational motivation	.30	8.60***	.09	.16
Age	.18	4.32***		
Sex	−.08	−2.22*		
Education	-.00	0.59		
Working hours	.06	1.66		
Tenure	.00	0.04		
Managerial position	.14	4.81***		
Concern as dependent variable				
Inspirational motivation	.27	7.45***	.07	.11
Age	.07	1.68		
Sex	−.07	−1.76		
Education	−.02	−0.40		
Working hours	.07	1.87		
Tenure	0.02	0.48		
Managerial position	.16	4.28***		
Control as dependent variable				
Inspirational motivation	.25	6.96***	.06	.14
Age	.22	5.34***		
Sex	−.03	−0.90		
Education	.01	0.32		
Working hours	.04	1.11		
Tenure	.02	0.38		
Managerial position	.15	3.96***		
Curiosity as dependent variable				
Inspirational motivation	.26	7.43***	.07	.10
Age	.18	4.41***		
Sex	−.09	−2.30*		
Education	.07	1.77		
Working hours	.07	1.78		
Tenure	−.04	−1.04		
Managerial position	.13	3.49***		
Confidence as dependent variable				
Inspirational motivation	.23	6.33***	.05	.09
Age	.12	2.89**		
Sex	−.09	−2.36*		
Education	.01	0.28		
Working hours	.03	0.73		
Tenure	.01	0.33		
Managerial position	.16	4.36***		

Note. $n = 733$. Bootstrap sample size = 1,000. Sex (1 = *female*, 2 = *male*).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.***$p < .001$.

motivation in Step 2. The results are shown in Table 2. In line with our predictions, we found that inspirational motivation predicted overall career adaptability ($\beta = .30, p < .001$). Inspection of the four dimensions of career adaptability showed positive associations between inspirational motivation and concern ($\beta = .27, p < .001$), control ($\beta = .25, p < .001$), curiosity ($\beta = .26, p < .001$), and confidence ($\beta = .23, p < .001$), respectively. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

With regard to Hypothesis 2, there were significant indirect effects of inspirational motivation via future temporal focus on career adaptability (indirect effect, $b = .03$, 95% CI [.019,

Table 3. Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effects) Predicting Career Adaptability and Its Dimensions by Inspirational Motivation, Mediated by Future Temporal Focus.

	Model Coefficients[a]			Effect Size[b]	
Predictor	*b*	*SE*	CI	ab_{cs}	CI
Overall career adaptability as dependent variable					
Inspirational motivation	.03	.01	[.019, .048]	.05	[.031, .081]
Concern as dependent variable					
Inspirational motivation	.06	.01	[.034, .084]	.08	[.046, .113]
Control T2 as dependent variable					
Inspirational motivation	.01	.01	[.004, .028]	.02	[.006, .039]
Curiosity T2 as dependent variable					
Inspirational motivation	.03	.01	[.015, .051]	.04	[.020, .068]
Confidence T2 as dependent variable					
Inspirational motivation	.02	.01	[.010, .037]	.03	[.015, .053]

Note. $n = 733$. Bootstrap sample size = 1,000. Results are controlled for age, sex, education, working hours, tenure, and managerial position.
[a]Unstandardized coefficients. [b]Completely standardized indirect effects.

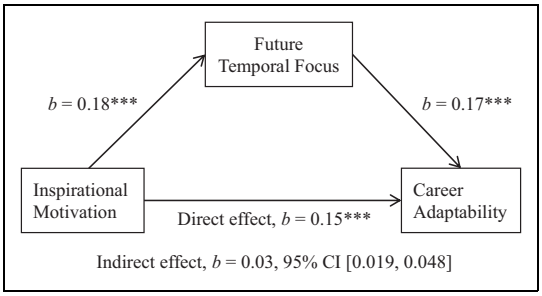

Figure 1. Inspirational motivation as a predictor of career adaptability mediated by future temporal focus. Results are controlled for age, sex, education, working hours, tenure, and managerial position. The confidence interval for the indirect effect is a bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrapped confidence interval based on 1,000 samples.

.048]) and all of career adaptability's dimensions, namely, concern (indirect effect, $b = .06$, 95% CI [.034, .084]), control (indirect effect, $b = .01$, 95% CI [.004, .028]), curiosity (indirect effect, $b = .03$, 95% CI [.015, .051]), and confidence (indirect effect, $b = .02$, 95% CI [.010, .037]; cf. Table 3). As a measure of effect size, we calculated completely standardized indirect effects, $ab_{cs} = 0.02–0.08$ (with bootstrap confidence intervals not including zero). Figure 1 exemplarily shows the findings of inspirational motivation as a predictor of career adaptability mediated by future temporal focus displaying direct as well as indirect effects. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was confirmed.

Regarding the control variables, we found that managerial position was positively associated with overall career adaptability and all of its dimensions as well as age (except for the dimension concern). Moreover, men reported lower overall scores of career adaptability and lower values in the curiosity and confidence dimensions of career adaptability. The overall model explained 16% of the variance in overall career adaptability.

Discussion

In times of changes in today's work environments (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), career adaptability has become important for employees to stay competitive. Career adaptability promotes effective career decisions and is considered to be an important resource for coping with change (Savickas, 2005). The present study is one of the first to investigate a contextual factor as a predictor of career adaptability. Specifically, in this two-wave study, we examined leadership (i.e., inspirational motivation) as a contextual factor to foster career adaptability. At the same time, we aimed at discovering an explanatory mechanism of how inspirational motivation promotes career adaptability. We examined future temporal focus—a central construct in vocational psychology—as a mediator between inspirational motivation and career adaptability. In line with our hypotheses, inspirational motivation positively predicted career adaptability and its dimensions concern, control, curiosity, and confidence 3 months later. Our findings suggest that supervisors who convey an attractive vision, who are optimistic about the future, and who signal trust in the attainability of the communicated goals contribute to the development of their followers' career adaptability. These findings confirm and extend previous theorizing (Ebberwein et al., 2004; Ohme & Zacher, 2015; Zacher, 2014b) by unveiling the contextual factor of inspirational motivation as a predictor of career adaptability. Furthermore, our results confirm Zacher's (2014b) findings on future temporal focus as an antecedent to career adaptability and its dimensions. Additionally, our study uncovers future temporal focus as a mediator in the relation between inspirational motivation and career adaptability.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are limitations that should be discussed prior to drawing theoretical and practical implications. First, our self-report data may entail common method bias. However, according to Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2012), introducing a time delay between the measures—as we did—minimizes this potential bias and allows for investigation of causal relationships. Future research should use a variety of measurements and data sources. For example, it would be interesting to complement and compare superiors' inspirational motivation as perceived by their followers (as done in the present study) with more objective assessments of superiors' inspirational motivation such as impartial ratings of leader behavior captured on video (Behrendt, Matz, & Göritz, 2017).

Second, as future temporal focus mediated the impact of inspirational motivation on career adaptability only partially and the effect sizes of the indirect effects were small, additional mediators should be investigated. Furthermore, moderators such as situational variables or employee characteristics should be considered. Griffin, Parker, and Mason (2010), for instance, found differential effects for the effect of a vision on adaptive performance depending on the strength of the vision and individuals' openness to work role change. With future temporal focus being a predominantly motivational construct (Shipp et al., 2009; Weikamp & Göritz, 2015), it could be useful to examine variables such as self-efficacy, so that both elements in terms of being "willing" and "able" (Guan et al., 2014) are integrated. Future research should examine the effect sizes concerned by collecting data on the two variables using more than one measurement point.

Finally, it needs to be kept in mind that even with a two-wave design, reverse causal effects and the existence of further variables that influence the examined variables cannot be excluded (Zapf, Dormann, & Frese, 1996).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our findings confirm that positive effects of transformational leadership, in particular inspirational motivation, emerge not only in the U.S. context but also in the German-speaking part of Europe.

Furthermore, they validate Zacher's (2014b) research on future temporal focus as predictor of career adaptability among Australian employees for subordinates working at various organizations in Europe, especially Germany. Thereby, our findings underline the generalizability of the findings.

The results of the present study are important, as they suggest that leaders' behavior in terms of formulating compelling and convincing visions positively impacts career adaptability as mediated by future temporal focus. As our findings show, inspirational motivation directs followers' focus on the future, which in turn enhances followers' career adaptability. Several studies have shown that training of inspirational motivation is successful (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Frese, Beimel, & Schoenborn, 2003). This is why supervisors should be trained in communicating an attractive vision and conveying confidence that the vision can be reached in order to enhance their employees' focus on the future and so to increase their career adaptability. In doing so, it should be kept in mind that the visions should be reachable (Ebberwein et al., 2004; Moss, Dowling, & Callanan, 2009).

If the psychological resource of career adaptability can be enhanced by supervisors who lead in an inspiring and motivating manner, as our study indicates, it is not necessary to limit oneself to recruiting applicants who already possess these qualities or implement expensive interventions for employees; rather it is alternatively or additionally possible to train leaders, so that they facilitate their followers' career adaptability. These "training" implications imply a simplification and unburdening of personnel selection and, therefore, an economic advantage for organizations.

Moreover, by transcending mere correlations in favor of understanding the mechanisms, as the two-wave design makes it possible, counselors are able to support their clients more appropriately. This is especially necessary in today's fast-changing world with frequent transitions and changing job demands. Our results suggest that counselors should help their clients to envision the future to make it easier for them to imagine their personal future (Savickas, 1990). According to Ebberwein et al. (2004), besides an orientation toward the future, it is necessary to have a strong sense of reality; this means that career counselors should help their counselees to clarify their envisioned goal and thus have a clear path to follow (Behrendt, Heuer, & Göritz, 2017).

Conclusion

In times of today's career environments with higher needs for employees to adapt to changing work environments, leaders play an important role in strengthening employees' career adaptability. The present study showed that leaders who act in a visionary way can foster employees' career adaptability via enhancing their future temporal focus. Organizations and career counselors can use this knowledge to help employees deal with today's work challenges and to develop their careers successfully.

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