



The influence of satisfaction and promotability on the relation between career adaptability and turnover intentions☆

Sow H.J. Chan ^{a,*}, Xin Mai ^b, Oi M.K. Kuok ^a, Siew H. Kong ^a

^a Faculty of Business Administration, University of Macau, Macau, China

^b Companhia de Segurança de Macau, LDA, Macau, China

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relation between career adaptability (CA), promotability, and career satisfaction (CS), and their impacts on turnover intentions (TI). Eight hypotheses were proposed. Based on data collected from a sample of 431 employees in Macau, career adaptability was significantly and positively related to both promotability and CS after controlling for the influences of demographic variables including age, gender, education and tenure. CA, promotability and CS were also significantly and negatively linked to TI. The results further revealed that promotability and CS mediated the effect of CA on TI. The study contributed new insights that may inform career development and retention of employees. Practical implications on how to retain employees were discussed.

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1. Introduction

One's ability to develop and to navigate career role transitions in the increasingly borderless global arena in the work and occupational context has attracted the attention of numerous scholars (e.g., Koen, Van Vianen, & Klehe, 2012; Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013; Savickas, 1997; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Zacher, Ambiel, & Noronha, 2015). One of the most relevant constructs for individuals to approach employment and reemployment in this postmodern chaotic society is career adaptability (Savickas et al., 2009). This psychosocial resource (Savickas, 1997), signifies one's resources and readiness for managing current and anticipated tasks, transitions, and traumas in one's occupational roles (Savickas, 2005).

Career adaptability (CA) is a useful concept to evaluate an individual's strength, which enables self-preparation for future occupational changes (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), helping employees fit into their work environment and effectively manage their career changes and challenges (Savickas, 1997; Zacher et al., 2015). It also facilitates their mobility (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005), and is related to many work and life outcomes including turnover, career satisfaction, success, job performance evaluations, promotability, work engagement, career commitment, self-esteem and well-being (e.g., Chan & Mai, 2015; Guan et al., 2013; Koen et al., 2012; Maggiori et al., 2013; Porfeli & Savickas, 2012; Tolentino, Garcia, Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2013; Van Vianen, Klehe, Koen, & Dries, 2012). But research linking CA, career satisfaction (CS), and turnover intentions (TI) is not well integrated (Chan & Mai, 2015).

In recent research CA positively predicted CS and negatively predicted TI of low-ranking employees (Chan & Mai, 2015). It also appears that employees with low CA scores might quit their job (Ferreira, Coetzee, & Masenge, 2013; Omar & Noordien, 2013). In

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* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: joannec@umac.mo (S.H.J. Chan).

spite of the recent progress, questions on the roles of mediators in the career adaptability–turnover intentions (CA–TI) model remain. For instance, little is known about the influence of intraorganizational mobility and CS, which effects employees' decision to leave their workplace, when their decision to leave may be due to feelings and perceptions about their CS and chance to get ahead in their organization. First, few studies document the link between CA and career adaptation outcomes (Tolentino et al., 2013), or the mediating effects of promotability and CS on TI. Thus, the influence of CS and promotability on the association between CA and turnover remains unclear. Second, although Chan and Mai (2015) suggest that CS is negatively related to TI, and CS mediated the association between CA and TI, their findings based on low-ranking employees might not apply to the wider pool of employees filling different ranks in the organization. Thus, there is still a need to further corroborate the previous finding.

Moreover, the limited understanding of the predictors and processes of promotability in the context of managerial and organizational research deserves attention from scholars. Studies linking CA as antecedent to promotability are sparse. First, promotability, an important indicator of career success, manifests one's "projected performance at higher managerial levels" (London & Stumpf, 1983, p. 245). Promotability is also an outcome of career adaptation (Tolentino et al., 2013). Second, this antecedent to turnover may have great implications in employee retention and succession planning since promotability refers to resources that help individuals to achieve power and status in groups (Hogan, 1996). To date, however, little empirical research has investigated the antecedents of promotability (e.g., Hoobler, Wayne, & Lemmon, 2009). To our knowledge, only one study reports the linkage between CA and promotability (Tolentino et al., 2013). Thus, research addressing this void should prove valuable. More importantly, traditional attitudes towards careers no longer hold (Van Vianen et al., 2012). Given that theory development linking CA, promotability, CS, and TI has been relatively scarce, we used the career perspective and the career construction theory (Savickas, 2005) to gain further insights on the mediating effects in the CA–TI model.

We proposed and tested eight hypotheses relevant to employees in contemporary workplaces. This paper answers the call for (1) further validation of the Career Adaptability Scale (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), (2) further studies on the influence of CA on other career outcomes (Guan, Zhou, Ye, Jiang, & Zhou, 2015), and (3) further studies to explore other mediators of the associations between CA and TI (Chan & Mai, 2015); it does so by reporting the findings on the hypotheses, namely testing the link between (a) CA and TI, (b) CA and promotability, (c) CA and CS, (d) promotability and TI, and (e) CS and TI. The study also determines (a) whether promotability mediates the link between CA and TI, (b) whether CS mediates the link between CA and TI, and (c) whether male employees have higher promotability score than female employees. The results contribute to the literature in two ways. First, we empirically demonstrate the usefulness of the Career Adaptability Scale (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and provide valuable empirical evidence of CS and promotability of employees in China. Second, the study adds to the broader career literature by identifying the impact of CS on the CA–TI relation, and the impact of promotability on the CA–TI relation. Based on the findings, practitioners could consider ways to establish positive organizational cultures (Ogbonna & Harris, 2002) that prevent employees' turnover.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Career adaptability, promotability, and turnover intentions

According to Savickas (1997), CA refers to "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). The literature suggests that individuals can use their CA to navigate career role transitions, and match themselves to jobs that fit them (Tolentino et al., 2013). An individual's CA may influence their attraction to an organization and their intention to leave the organization. Although CA is an important skill which can facilitate future career development and help employees to adapt to employment requirements (e.g., Hou, Leung, Li, Li, & Xu, 2012), the relation between CA and TI is inconclusive. Some studies have reported that when an employee's CA (comprised of career development activities and career resilience factors) is high, the employee's TI is also high (e.g., Ito & Brotheridge, 2005), indicating that CA could encourage job-hopping (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). On the other hand, recent studies using a broader conceptualization of CA (comprised of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence factors) reported a negative relation, suggesting that employees having high scores in CA have less intention to leave (Chan & Mai, 2015; Ferreira et al., 2013; Omar & Noordin, 2013).

According to Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation can influence a person's behavior. Contextual factors can also encourage proactive behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Unlike salary increments, the prospect of getting a promotion may promote various positive behaviors at the workplace. Promotability, defined as "the favorability of an employee's advancement prospects" (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990, p. 69), relates to the employee's perceptions of being rewarded by the organization for a deserved promotion (Shore, Barksdale, & Shore, 1995). Since adaptable employees are more capable of handling challenges at work, it is more likely for them to achieve a promotion. Consistently, employees with higher scores in CA perceive themselves to have a greater chance to get promoted (Tolentino et al., 2013).

Since judgments of promotability indicate an individual's competence to achieve at higher levels (De Pater, Van Vianen, Bechtoldt, & Klehe, 2009), promoted individuals may gain job satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment knowing that their superiors valued their contribution. Research has shown that employees who are the most likely to receive organizational rewards such as promotions would choose to remain in the organization (Shore et al., 1995). Further, perception of promotional opportunities or promotability is significantly and negatively correlated to turnover (Carson, Carson, Griffeth, & Steel, 1994; Porter & Steers, 1973) since promoted employees would choose to stay as it becomes more and more costly to leave an organization

(Williamson, Wachter, & Harris, 1975). More importantly, the means of successfully gaining a better job higher in the organizational hierarchy within the same organization, at least for the exempt employees, is also often limited.

The literature also shows that the Chinese society is dominated by males or attributes that are associated with males, such as paternalistic leaders (Redding, 1990) and masculine culture (Hofstede, 2001). Given that the way power is arranged in China originates from the principle of *wulun*, which emphasizes the Five Cardinal Relationships depicting one's foremost social roles in society (Zhang, 1997), and since the structure of the society is tilted in favor of the males, who invariably become the heads of human organizations such as families, commercial firms and public institutions, would male employees perceive themselves to have higher opportunities for promotion? In accordance with earlier studies, we proposed that CA and promotability will have negative influence on TI, and CA will have a positive effect on promotability. We also argued that employees are less likely to change jobs voluntarily once they have found a suitable position. Similarly, we expected that employees who can adapt effectively can cope quickly with the demands on them and will have less intention to quit. Given that previous literature has not revealed the mediating effect of promotability between CA and TI, based on the argument that promotability is an influential factor to boost the relation between CA and TI, we proposed that promotability mediates the effect of CA on TI. The proposed hypotheses follow.

Hypothesis 1. CA is negatively related to TI.

Hypothesis 2a. CA is positively related to promotability.

Hypothesis 2b. Male employees have higher score in promotability than female employees.

Hypothesis 3. Promotability is negatively related to TI.

Hypothesis 4. Promotability mediates the effect of CA on TI.

2.2. Career adaptability, career satisfaction and turnover intentions

CA is a significant predictor for positive career outcomes, including CS (e.g., Tolentino et al., 2013). CS pertains to one's perceptions of their current career achievement and expectation for future development (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995). CS refers to the evaluation of an individual's advancement regarding reaching well-defined career-associated objectives and subjective accomplishments (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Judge et al., 1995; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). In essence, it is a subjective evaluation that represents one's views of their satisfaction towards their accomplishments and overall career goals including income, advancement and development of new skills (Greenhaus et al., 1990).

Several recent studies have shown that CA and its dimensions relate positively to important work and career outcomes, including job and CS (Chan & Mai, 2015; Tolentino et al., 2013). Employees with high scores on CA tend to achieve their career goals and are more satisfied with their career (e.g., Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Tolentino et al., 2013). Since employees with higher CA can enhance their positive attitudes regarding their career progress, thereby increasing their satisfaction towards their career (Tolentino et al., 2013), in accordance with earlier studies, we anticipated a positive relation between CA and CS.

Recent studies by various researchers also indicate that CS is negatively correlated with TI (Chan & Mai, 2015; Guan et al., 2013, 2014; Kang, Gatling, & Kim, 2015; Nauta, Vianen, Heijden, Dam, & Willemsen, 2009). Employees with a higher level of CS have a lower level of TI (Chan & Mai, 2015; Guan et al., 2013, 2014). Employees reporting higher scores in CS also have less pressure to change jobs (Nauta et al., 2009). These findings suggest that satisfied, adaptable employees are less likely to leave their organization.

Further to the discussion above on the link between CA and CS to TI, previous studies also imply that individuals with low CA scores have less overall satisfaction towards the achievement of career goals, and have a lower level of career success, which consequently might lead to a higher intention to resign. Since employees with higher CA have lower intention to quit their job due to a high level of CS (Guan et al., 2015), and since CS mediated the effect of CA on TI (Chan & Mai, 2015; Guan et al., 2015), based on the self-determination theory, we proposed that CS mediates the effect of CA on TI. The proposed hypotheses follow.

Hypothesis 5. CA is positively related to CS.

Hypothesis 6. CS is negatively related to TI.

Hypothesis 7. CS mediates the effect of CA on TI.

2.3. Research context

Macau is a small city covering an area of 30.3 km², at the mouth of the Pearl River. It is a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. The Portuguese governed Macau from the mid-sixteenth century to December 20, 1999 when its sovereignty was returned back to China. Macau started to catch the world's attention after the liberalization of the gaming industry in 2002. Since then, the GDP of Macau jumped more than fivefold from Mop 82.29 billion (US\$10.29 billion) in 2004 to Mop 443.30 billion (US\$55.44 billion) by the end of 2014 (Government of Macau DSEC, 2015). At the same time, the population increased from 462,000 in 2004 to 636,000 in 2014 (Government of Macau DSEC, 2015).

The labor force participation rate reached its historical high at 73.80% while unemployment rate reached a historical low at 1.70% in 2014 (Government of Macau DSEC, 2015). The rapid development of the gaming industry and the sudden influx of foreign investment into the economy expanded all other industries, resulting in fierce competition for labor force. Employers turned to more imported labor. The non-resident workers increased from 27,736 in 2004 to 170,346 in 2014 (Government of Macau DSEC, 2015); a majority were from China (64.97%) and the Philippines (12.65%) in 2014 (Government of Macau DSEC, 2015). The imported labor mainly concentrated in construction (26.86%), hotels and restaurants (25.02%), and wholesale and retail trade (10.57%) (Government of Macau DSEC, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1. Respondents and procedure

The respondents for this study were full-time employees working in the service sector in Macau. In order to safeguard participants' confidentiality, the specific industry is not being disclosed. The organization was approached formally for permission to allow their employees to participate in the study. A member of the senior management team was shown a copy of the questionnaire, and informed that the data collected was for research. This senior manager was also informed that a copy of the research output would be delivered for reference if necessary. A member of the research team then coordinated with the operations department to administer the questionnaire on-site. The employees were informed that they were contacted following the permission from their management.

All the employees covering six different ranks (477) received the questionnaire except those who were on leave during the data collection period. The respondents were notified about the intention of the study, that their employer had no access to the questionnaire they would return to the researcher, and that the data collected would be only used for academic purposes and analyzed as group data. The participants were asked for their willingness to participate in the study, and were given the option to stop at any time. They were asked to return their completed questionnaires right away via a locked data collection box, to ensure the data were not exposed to other parties in the organization. The total number of valid completed questionnaires was 431, and the valid response rate was 90.4%. The high response rate (93.5%) was unsurprising and is similar to Huang, Shi, Zhang, and Cheung (2006) as the sample was from particular companies. No incentives were offered to the respondents.

A majority of the respondents were male (55.6%), non-Macau residents (75.5%), from Mainland China (72.8%), and under 40 years old (82.6%). They had completed at least a college-level education (66.0%). Most of the respondents had worked in the company for less than three years (52.1%) at the time the study was conducted.

3.2. Measurement tools

3.2.1. Career adaptability

Career adaptability (CA) was assessed with the 24 items in the Career Adaptability Scale (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Answers were obtained using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not strong; 5 = Strongest). The CAAS had demonstrated reliability and was tested in 13 countries, including China (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). A sample item is: "Taking responsibility for my actions." The scale had a reported reliability of 0.92 (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

3.2.2. Turnover intentions

The turnover intentions (TI) were measured with the three-item scale from Tett and Meyer (1993). Answers were obtained on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree). A sample item is: "It is likely that I will search for a job in another organization." The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale on Chinese samples was 0.89 (Chan & Mai, 2015).

3.2.3. Career satisfaction

Career satisfaction (CS) was measured using five items from the Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS; Greenhaus et al., 1990). Answers were obtained using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). A sample item is: "I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for income." The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale has been reported as 0.88 (Greenhaus et al., 1990), and in Chinese sample was 0.86 (Chan & Mai, 2015).

3.2.4. Promotability

Promotability was assessed with the four-item scale based on earlier studies (Tolentino et al., 2013). Answers were on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree). A sample item is: "If my boss wants to select someone to succeed him in his position, it will be me." The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale has been reported as 0.84 (Tolentino et al., 2013).

3.3. Questionnaire design and translation

The research questionnaire was designed with anonymity in mind, to encourage the respondents to give their answers without any stress or worries by protecting their privacy. This step is important to enhance the authenticity of the research (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2002). Two sets of questionnaires were prepared. The first set was adapted from the original English version of the measures published by previous researchers. The second set was prepared based on the measures adapted by Chinese researchers

(e.g., Hou et al., 2012; Ma & Liu, 2011) and back-to-back translation method. Respondents were free to choose the version they preferred.

3.4. Pilot study and statistical analysis

A pilot study was conducted prior to the mass distribution of the survey, to determine whether the measurement tools were suitable for their intended use. The six respondents involved in the pilot study took approximately ten minutes to answer the questionnaire. No modifications were made to the questionnaire since the respondents had no adverse comments about its timing, wording or formatting. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 22) was used for the data analysis. Descriptive statistics (to provide the means and standard deviations of all variables), reliability statistics (to assess the internal consistency of each scale), correlation statistics (to measure the linear association between variables) and regression analysis (to test the hypotheses) were used. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed to check the validity of all constructs.

4. Results

4.1. Scale reliability and hypothesis testing

The EFA results for each construct indicated factor loadings appropriate to explain each construct. The CFA results showed Chi-square = 1176.82, $df = 511$, Chi-square/ $df = 2.31$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.97, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.06, and TLI = 0.96. Since a model fit is reasonable when CFI is above 0.90 and TLI is greater than 0.90, the model is acceptable for the current study.

The results for the mean scores and zero-order correlations among the four variables (CA, CS, promotability and TI) appear in Table 1. All the tested variables were significantly correlated with each other in the directions of the tested hypotheses. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of all the four scales (CA, CS, promotability and TI) was 0.95, 0.86, 0.85 and 0.89 respectively, indicating the strong reliability and internal consistency of the studied variables.

4.2. Hypothesis testing

A series of regression analyses were conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. In order to test the mediating effects of promotability and CS on CA and TI, four conditions had to be fulfilled (Baron & Kenny, 1986). First, the independent variable (CA) must have a significant association with the mediating variables (promotability and CS). Second, the independent variable (CA) should be significantly related to the dependent variable (TI). Third, the mediating variables (promotability and CS) should be linked to the dependent variable (TI). Fourth, when the dependent variable (TI) is regressed on both the independent variable (CA) and the mediating variables (promotability and CS), the effect of the independent variable must be less than the observed value in the second condition. If the beta of the independent variable becomes less but remains significant, it indicates a partial mediating effect, while an insignificant beta indicates a full mediating effect.

In testing the mediating effect, when the demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, education and tenure) were first entered as control variables in a regression analysis with promotability as a dependent variable (see Table 2), all the control variables explained 8.30% of the total variance of promotability (Model 1). Both age ($\beta = .23, p < 0.01$) and gender ($\beta = .12, p < 0.05$) were positively related with promotability, so H2b was supported. When CA was added in the second step, Model 2 (see Table 2) explained 16.60% of the total variance of promotability. Similar to the previous model, both age ($\beta = .17, p < 0.01$) and gender ($\beta = .11, p < 0.05$) remained significant. In this model, CA ($\beta = .29, p < 0.001$) was positively related to promotability. Therefore, half of the first condition was fulfilled and H2a was supported. Similar steps were carried out for CS as the dependent variable in Model 3 and 4. Model 4 explained 10.30% of the variance of CS. CA ($\beta = .33, p < 0.001$) was positively linked to CS. Therefore, the other half of the first condition was fulfilled and H5 was supported. The impact of the control variables was different from promotability. Tenure ($\beta = -.14, p < 0.05$) was significantly linked to CS while age and gender were insignificant.

Table 1
Correlation matrix between all study variables.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Career adaptability	3.95	.66	(0.95)							
2. CA-concern	3.84	.71	.95**	(.90)						
3. CA-control	4.17	.74	.85**	.77**	(.87)					
4. CA-curiosity	3.70	.79	.89**	.82**	.62**	(.85)				
5. CA-confidence	4.03	.73	.90**	.81**	.66**	.74**	(.88)			
6. Career satisfaction	3.32	.76	.30**	.34**	.19**	.31**	.31**	(0.86)		
7. Promotability	4.22	1.37	.36**	.40**	.22**	.35**	.34**	.25**	(0.85)	
8. Turnover intentions	3.33	1.51	-.13*	-.15**	-.13**	-.05	-.14**	-.31**	-.25**	(0.89)

Note. Figures in brackets are Cronbach's alphas.

** Correlation was significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation was significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2

Results of multiple regression analyses on promotability and career satisfaction.

Variables	Promotability		Career satisfaction	
	Model 1:	Model 2:	Model 3:	Model 4:
	Standardized β	Standardized β	Standardized β	Standardized β
<i>Control variables</i>				
Age ^a	.23**	.17**	.13	.05
Gender ^b	.12*	.11*	-.05	-.10
Education ^c	.04	-.01	.03	-.02
Tenure ^d	.04	.07	-.17*	-.14*
<i>Predicting variables</i>				
Career adaptability		.29***		.33***
F statistic	10.20***	16.04***	1.8	9.59***
Adjusted R ²	.08	.17	.01	.10
R ² Change		.08		.09

Note. ^a: 1 = below 40 years old, 0 = 40 years or above; ^b: 1 = male, 0 = female; ^c: 1 = college or above, 0 = high school or below; ^d: 1 = less than 4 years, 0 = 4 years or above.

* $p < 0.05$.** $p < 0.01$.*** $p < 0.001$.

In order to satisfy condition two, similar steps were carried out with TI as the dependent variable (see Table 3). The results in Model 6 explained 2.40% of the variance of TI; none of the control variables were significant and CA ($\beta = -.17$, $p < 0.01$) was negatively related with TI. Thus condition two was satisfied and H1 was supported.

Model 7 (see Table 3) also fulfilled condition three. Both mediators (promotability and CS) were negatively and significantly related to TI. They explained 16.50% of the variance of TI. Thus condition three was satisfied, and both H3 and H6 were supported. In Model 8, when TI was regressed on the independent variable (CA) and mediators (promotability and CS), the two mediating variables remained significant; the effect of CA had been reduced from $-.17$ to $-.01$ and it became insignificant. As a result, condition four was fulfilled and both H4 and H7 were supported. In other words, both promotability and CS fully mediated the relation between CA and TI.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between CA, promotability, CS and TI. As hypothesized, CA is positively linked to CS and promotability, but negatively linked to TI. Moreover, both CS and promotability are negatively linked to TI,

Table 3

Results of multiple regression analyses on turnover intentions.

Variables	Turnover intentions			
	Model 5:	Model 6:	Model 7:	Model 8:
	Standardized β	Standardized β	Standardized β	Standardized β
<i>Control variables</i>				
Age ^a	.03	.06	.12	.12
Gender ^b	.04	.05	.02	.02
Education ^c	.08	.11	.11	.10
Tenure ^d	-.09	-.10	-.14*	-.14*
<i>Predicting variables</i>				
Career adaptability		-.17**		-.01
<i>Mediating variables</i>				
Career satisfaction			-.30***	-.29***
Promotability			-.23***	-.24***
F statistic	1.12	2.85*	14.06***	11.35***
Adjusted R ²	.00	.02	.17	.16
R ² Change (vs. Model 5)		.02	.16	.16

Note. ^a: 1 = below 40 years old, 0 = 40 years or above; ^b: 1 = male, 0 = female; ^c: 1 = College or above, 0 = High school or below; ^d: 1 = less than 4 years, 0 = 4 years or above.

* $p < 0.05$.** $p < 0.01$.*** $p < 0.001$.

and they mediated the association between CA and TI. The results show that management and HR practitioners can directly impact the TI of their employees by paying more attention to these two factors reflecting career success, namely, CS and promotability. The relations observed are consistent with expectations from the career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), and the results help us to gain deeper insights into factors affecting the TI of Chinese employees.

The findings provide further support to the extant literature, in terms of the positive association between CA, and promotability (e.g., Tolentino et al., 2013) and CS (e.g., Chan & Mai, 2015; Tolentino et al., 2013); a negative association between CA and TI (e.g., Ferreira et al., 2013; Omar & Noordin, 2013; Savickas et al., 2009); a negative relation between promotability and TI (e.g., Carson et al., 1994; Porter & Steers, 1973); and a negative association between CS and TI (e.g., Chan & Mai, 2015; Kang et al., 2015; Nauta et al., 2009). Since CA enables person–environment integration, it is expected that enhancing employees' positive outlook concerning their career can increase their general satisfaction. Similarly, the positive link between promotability and adaptability indicates that adaptable employees have healthier impressions of their career progression.

Consistent with Savickas (2013) career construction model of adaptation, the findings imply that employees who display adaptive skills tend to acquire CS and promotability. For example, promotable employees may reflect deeply on their potential for promotion and use their internal resources (confidence, curiosity, control, and concern) to develop good work habits and competencies, and be seen as promotable by preparing for jobs with higher growth opportunity. Promotable employees may also have less intention to quit since they may feel that they are being prepared by their supervisor for higher positions. Thus, adaptable employees would think more about quitting when they perceive that they cannot achieve career success in the organization, when they have the capabilities, and when viable job opportunities exists.

The finding on the mediating relation of promotability between CA and TI is new. The mediating effect of both promotability and CS between CA and TI indicates that when one perceives himself/herself as adaptable to changes at work and able to develop their career (Savickas, 1997), they would be more optimistic about achieving career goals, and therefore less inclined to leave because they are satisfied with their achievement. It appears that employees' decision to voluntarily leave is not only due to their capabilities and adaptability but also their satisfaction with career and opportunities for upward mobility. The findings also suggest that CS and promotability is a stronger predictor of TI than CA. Collectively, the findings support the notion that CA is an essential capability in vocational management (Savickas et al., 2009).

Following the suggestion from Savickas and Porfeli (2012) that adaptability is highly sensitive to context and age, and Chan and Mai's (2015) suggestion to verify and compare the findings across different demographics, this study found that male employees 40 years old and below perceived that they have higher opportunities for getting a promotion. This finding reflects the resilience of the structure in this Chinese male-dominated society where the residents still hold on to values, perceptions and beliefs that younger male employees can advance faster in organizations than their female colleagues due to vertical and horizontal segregation, and traditional gender roles. Although gender and age is not significantly linked to CS, tenure was negatively linked to CS, implying that newer employees are less satisfied with their career. Newer employees were also less likely to consider abandoning their jobs; perhaps because they wanted to accumulate more work experience before looking for better opportunities elsewhere.

CA refers to personal resources that encourage individuals to have proactive career behaviors (Savickas, 2013; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). CA can increase the possibility of obtaining an appropriate occupation, thus improving CS and promotability. Since CS and promotability is critical to employees' intention to stay, and since employees' ability to adapt to boundaryless work environments is essential (Savickas et al., 2009), efforts to establish a positive organizational culture are vital to retain employees. For example, management could better retain the talented employees by encouraging and stimulating the employees to improve their marketability, knowledge and skills by adopting proactive strategies to engage in continuous learning. Since trainings can improve work quality (Koen et al., 2012), management may be prudent to invest more resources (e.g., providing learning opportunities and incentive programs) to help employees to enhance their adaptability and develop career capabilities and competencies—improving various interpersonal and technical skills, while building employee confidence not only to fulfill job requirements, but to cope, make successful moves and negotiate diverse tasks. By providing opportunities to use their professional skills, and access to training or learning opportunities, employees might perceive that they have greater chances for promotion. Realizing and understanding that the negative relation between promotability and TI exists, management can also implement a fair and transparent promotion policy using clear requirements (i.e., minimum tenure in the organization, performance records, etc.) and measurable outcomes rather than depend on the subjective evaluation of the immediate supervisors.

5.2. Implications

5.2.1. Theoretical implications

First, the findings established the distinctive role of CA, promotability and CS in predicting the turnover decision. This conclusion suggests that career support practices that cultivate a sense of satisfaction may evoke higher levels of loyalty among the employees. Second, promotability and CS is a stronger predictor of TI than CA. Third, the new finding on the mediating effect of promotability opens new avenues to future research. Future researchers may further explore other career success factors/outcomes impacting the underlying processes for turnover.

5.2.2. Practical implications

First, this study further demonstrates the usefulness of the CAAS as a tool to detect possible signs of turnover on Chinese employees. Second, the findings imply that HR practitioners should consider professional development efforts to prepare employees

for higher positions or for dealing with the dynamic workplace. Important interventions that enhance employees' adaptability, competencies, confidence, promotability and CS, innovativeness and passion include mentoring, regular performance appraisal, and subsidies to attend skills training and continuing education. Third, since rewards are useful in retaining high performers (e.g., Trevor, Gerhart, & Boudreau, 1997), the pay dispersion in the organization should be high; otherwise HR practitioners need to find other ways to increase job satisfaction (Judge, Piccolo, Podsakoff, Shaw, & Rich, 2010). Fourth, fair performance appraisal and feedback on required competencies and qualifications that employees lack but that are necessary for promotion are vital, so that employees know exactly what they need to work on, and to avoid perception of inequity in the workplace. Finally, at the individual level, since CA comprises a set of resources that allow individuals to cope with current and anticipated challenges and transitions, employees should perhaps be more cognizant of their ability to adapt, improve their ability to adapt, and be more prepared to adapt in the world of work (Savickas, 2013).

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study has several limitations. First, using samples from one industry in a collectivistic society dominated by Chinese values limits the generalizability of the findings. Different industrial sectors may have distinctly different employment cultures that could influence employee attitudes. Second, the reliance on self-reporting data for all variables from the same source also runs the risk of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Third, the cross-sectional nature of the study and the focus on TI rather than actual turnover could not provide support for establishing causality. Finally, while the sample reflects the profile of the workforce, the unique labor market situation and regulations on employment—such as returning to employees' home country to wait out six months before re-applying for another job in this city (Government of Macau Special Administrative Region, 2015)—could affect the turnover decision.

Based on the limitations, future investigation should examine if the results could be reproduced in sub-groups in relation to certain professions, in other industries and in other cultural settings. The cooperation from peers or managers may be useful to minimize distortion from self-serving bias. Future research may use the longitudinal design and multi-source data to find out the cause–effect linkage among the variables proposed in the model and to determine the effect on actual turnover behavior. Since systems for promotions are frequently political in nature (e.g., Markham, Harlan, & Hackett, 1987), and since advancements are one of the main ways for employees to accomplish career success, more investigations that addresses promotability should prove valuable. Furthermore, since organizational support can build up employees' job-related skills, knowledge and ability (e.g., Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986), future research should examine the mediating role of CA between perceived organizational support and turnover.

5.4. Conclusion

CA positively predicted promotability and CS. CA, promotability and CS negatively predicted TI, and promotability and CS mediated the relations between CA and TI. Our results suggest that enriching employees' CA, satisfaction and promotability can help to reduce employees' turnover.

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