The Italian Version of the *Career Self-Management Scale*

Alessandro Lo Presti and Alfredo de Angelis[1]

Abstract

In an increasingly unstable labor market, career self-management represents a key competence enabling individuals to maintain employability and adaptability through career behaviors. However, despite the theoretical and empirical relevance of this construct, no validated instrument was available for its assessment in the Italian context. This study examined the validity and psychometric properties of the *Career Self-Management Scale* (Sturges et al., 2010) among Italian employees through two complementary studies. Study 1 tested the construct validity of the scale using confirmatory factor analysis on 217 employees. Results supported the three sub-dimensions, including networking, visibility, and mobility-oriented behaviors, and showed good model of fit indices and high reliability. Study 2, conducted on 237 employees, examined convergent and predictive validity. Career Self-Management correlated positively with self-directed career management, career adaptability, and career insight, and was associated with higher objective career success. These findings confirm that the Italian version of the *Career Self-Management Scale* is a valid and reliable instrument for assessing career self-management behaviors. The study contributes to the cross-national validation of the construct and provides a useful tool for future research and interventions aimed at promoting employability and career success.

Keywords

Career self-management, Confirmatory factor analysis, Career adaptability, Career insight, Self-directed career management, Objective career success.

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La Versione Italiana della *Scala sull'Autogestione della Carriera*

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Sommario

L'autogestione della carriera rappresenta una competenza chiave che consente agli individui di mantenere l'occupabilità e l'adattabilità. Tuttavia, nonostante la rilevanza teorica ed empirica di questo costrutto, a oggi non era disponibile nessuno strumento validato in italiano. Questo studio ha esaminato la validità e le proprietà psicometriche della *Career Self-Management Scale* (Sturges et al., 2010) attraverso due studi complementari. Lo Studio 1 ne ha testato la validità di costrutto utilizzando l'analisi fattoriale confermativa su 217 lavoratori/lavoratrici dipendenti. I risultati hanno supportato le tre sottodimensioni, che includono i comportamenti orientati al networking, alla visibilità e alla mobilità, e hanno mostrato buoni indici di adattamento del modello e un'elevata affidabilità. Lo Studio 2, condotto su 237 lavoratori/lavoratrici dipendenti, ha esaminato la validità convergente e predittiva. L'autogestione della carriera è risultata correlata positivamente con l'autodirezione di carriera, l'adattabilità di carriera e l'insight di carriera, ed è stata associata a un più elevato successo di carriera oggettivo. Questi risultati confermano che la versione italiana della *Career Self-Management Scale* è uno strumento valido e affidabile. Lo studio contribuisce alla validazione transnazionale del costrutto e fornisce uno strumento utile per studi futuri e interventi volti alla promozione dell'occupabilità e del successo professionale.

Parole chiave

Autogestione di carriera, Analisi fattoriale confermativa, Adattabilità di carriera, Insight di carriera, Autodirezione di carriera, Successo professionale oggettivo.

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The Italian Version of the *Career Self-Management Scale*

In an increasingly unstable labor market, workers can no longer rely on linear and predetermined career paths, as organizations offer fewer guarantees of growth and stability, and career transitions are becoming more frequent (Kundi et al., 2025). In this context, *career self-management* emerges as an essential component for ensuring employability and adaptability, since «[it] may be the only way to navigate through a turbulent world» (King, 2004, p. 113).

The concept of career self-management originates from the earliest definitions of *career management*, understood as «the process by which individuals [...] identify a career goal, and engage in career strategies that increase the probability that career goals will be achieved» (Noe, 1996, p. 119). Over time, this perspective has evolved to recognize the active and autonomous role of individuals in directing their professional pathways, leading to the definition of career self-management as «a dynamic process, involving execution of a set of co-occurring behaviours [...] [which] may be deployed with strategic intent, in a premeditated rational fashion, but they may also be used in an improvised manner as a response to the immediate demands of a particular situation» (King, 2004, p. 119).

More recently, the conceptualization of career self-management has been seen as a process of action regulation and resource management through which individuals intentionally build, maintain, and use personal and contextual resources by setting goals, planning, monitoring their actions, and processing feedback to achieve positive career outcomes (Wilhelm & Hirschi, 2019, pp. 119-120).

Given these premises, career self-management represents a crucial adaptive behavior in today's volatile labor market, enabling individuals to actively shape their professional trajectories, maintain employability, and enhance their overall career success through intentional and self-directed development efforts (Sturges et al., 2010). «A number of studies support the notion that career self-management is positively related to career wellbeing» (Wilhelm & Hirschi, 2019, p. 125). Indeed, research on this construct is valuable because it shows how individuals can improve their career success, both subjectively in terms of satisfaction and engagement, and objectively through salary and advancement, by intentionally building personal and contextual resources that sustain effective professional development across the lifespan (Wilhelm & Hirschi, 2019).

During the 2000s, interest in career self-management grew significantly, and several authors conducted studies to gain a deeper understanding of the construct. In 1996, Noe conducted a study in the United States using a multidimensional questionnaire that operationalized the construct of career management through the integration of two validated self-report scales: the *Career Exploration Survey* (CES) developed by Stumpf et al. (1983) and the *Career Strategies Inventory* (CSI) developed by Gould & Penley (1984).

These scales were aimed at assessing distinct phases of the career management process. The procedure was complemented by supervisor evaluations, in which managers assessed employees' performance and developmental behaviors. Building on Noe's (1996) conceptual framework, Sturges and colleagues (2002) extended the study of career management, distinguishing between organizational career management (OCM), which refers to the practices provided by the organization to facilitate employees' development, and career self-management (CSM), which concerns the behaviors that individuals engage in to manage their own career progression.

Their longitudinal study of British graduates examined how both organizational career management practices and individual self-management behaviors were related to organizational commitment during the early years of employment. In operationalizing the construct, the authors identified three distinct dimensions of career self-management: networking, visibility, and mobility-oriented behaviors, which together represented an important refinement and evolution of the construct (Sturges et al., 2002).

The factorial structure of their scale demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties, as later studies reported acceptable reliability levels for all three dimensions of the scale (Sturges et al., 2010).

Further evidence of the theoretical soundness and cross-national applicability of the career self-management construct was provided by the studies conducted by De Vos and Soens (2008). These authors conducted their research in Belgium with employees who had participated in career counseling, using a shortened version of Sturges et al.'s (2002) scale to measure career self-management behaviors. Their findings confirmed that individuals with a self-directed, values-driven approach to their careers reported higher levels of career satisfaction and perceived employability.

More recently, Zhang and Liu (2023) expanded this line of research by examining the cross-cultural validity of the career self-management construct in China.

Building on Sturges et al.'s (2002) theoretical framework, they developed and validated a culturally adapted instrument, the *Career Self-Management Scale for the Chinese Context* (CSMS-CC), which retained the behavioral core of networking, visibility and mobility-oriented behaviors while integrating dimensions that reflect relational and developmental aspects specific to the Chinese cultural environment. Their results further confirmed the construct's structural stability and theoretical relevance across different cultural and organizational settings.

Originally, the *Career Self-Management Scale* was developed and validated in the United Kingdom within a career context characterized by «flat organizational

structures, few established career paths, and little formal organizational career management policy» (Sturges et al., 2010, pp. 118-119).

Over time, the scale has proven to be a robust and theoretically grounded instrument, with satisfactory reliability, factorial stability, and cross-national relevance (De Vos & Soens, 2008; Zhang & Liu, 2023).

However, the *Career Self-Management Scale* developed by Sturges et al. (2010) has not yet been validated in the Italian context. Addressing this gap is essential to ensure that the scale reliably captures career self-management behaviors among Italian employees. Therefore, the present research includes two complementary studies aimed at examining the validity and psychometric properties of the *Career Self-Management Scale* within the Italian workforce.

Study 1 investigates the scale's construct validity through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), while Study 2 examines its convergent and predictive validity with respect to theoretically related career variables.

Study 1

The aim of this study is to test the construct validity of the CSM scale on a sample of Italian employees through confirmatory factor analysis. We expect that the scale's items will load on their respective sub-dimension by also showing adequate factor loadings. We also expect the scale to show adequate reliability values.

Method

Participants

The sample of this study consisted of 217 Italian employees working in various professional contexts. Their mean age was 44.95 years (*SD* = 12.64). On average, participants reported 18.03 years of education (*SD* = 3.05; three missing values) and a general tenure of 19.38 years (*SD* = 12.42; one missing value). Their average organizational tenure was of 12.67 years (*SD* = 11.08; two missing values) with an average of 32.23 working hours per week (*SD* = 12.28). As for gender, 146 participants (67.3%) were women, while 71 (32.7%) were men. Regarding employment contracts, 175 participants (81.4%) held a permanent contract, 35 (16.3%) held a fixed-term contract and 5 (2.3%) held a precarious form of employment (two missing values).

Concerning professional profiles, 6 participants (2.9%) were blue-collar workers, 152 (73.1%) were white-collar workers or technicians, 29 (13.9%) were

middle managers, and 21 (10.1%) were top managers (nine missing values). Three participants (1.4%) worked in the primary sector, 17 (7.9%) in the secondary sector, and the majority, 196 participants (90.7%), in the tertiary sector (one missing value). Finally, 151 participants (69.6%) were employed in the public sector, 65 (30%) in the private sector and 1 (0.5%) in the non-profit sector (one missing value).

Measure

Career self-management (Sturges et al., 2010) was assessed through an 8-item scale (e.g., «I have built contacts with people in areas where I would like to work»). Responses were assessed through a 5-point Likert scale (1 = «*completely disagree*», 5 = «*completely agree*»).

Procedure

Participants were recruited within public and private organizations that had agreed to participate in our study. A weblink to an online questionnaire was sent to HR offices, who then shared it with their employees. In the instructions to the questionnaire, it was clearly stated that participation was voluntary and that respondents may quit the study in any moment.

Data analysis

Before data collection, the scale was translated following the back-translation procedure outlined by Brislin (1980). After checking for multicollinearity (i.e., correlations higher than $r = 0.85$) and non-normality (i.e., skewness > 3; kurtosis > 10) (Weston & Gore, 2006), structural equation modelling analyses (Lisrel 9.3) using maximum likelihood estimation methods were used for computing confirmatory factor analyses (hereafter, CFA).

Different factorial models were compared, first of all, by means of χ^2 and degrees of freedom (despite highly negatively affected by sample size) and recurring to the following goodness of fit indices: RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation), and SRMR (standardized root mean square residual) for whom scores lower than .05 mean excellent fit, and scores between .05 and .08 good fit (Ullman, 1996); CFI (comparative fit index), and NNFI (non-normed fit index) for whom scores higher than .90 mean good fit (Hoyle, 1995); finally, AIC (Akaike information criteria; Browne & Cudeck, 1993) for whom smaller values can be considered as indicating higher potential for replication of the model.

Cronbach's alphas and McDonald's omegas were used for calculating the scale's reliability.

Results

Asymmetry scores ranged between -.43 and .06, while Kurtosis scores ranged between -.82 and -.44. The highest correlation was between item #7 and item #8 (r = .74), lower than the threshold for multicollinearity (Weston & Gore, 2006).

Then, we contrasted three different factorial solutions through CFA: M1 encompassed all items loading on one single factor; M2 encompassed three correlated latent variables (i.e., sub-dimensions), each one with its respective indicators; M3 included a second-order factor explaining the three CSM sub-dimensions and their respective indicators (i.e., items).

As can be seen from Table 1, both M2 and M3 showed good and equivalent goodness of fit indexes, indicating that CSM can be used either through its three separate sub-dimensions or as a unitary construct.

Table 1

Comparison between alternative factorial models

Model	χ^2	df	RMSEA	CFI	NNFI	SRMR	AIC
M1	199.22	20	.20	.79	.70	.09	1436.70
M2	65.65	17	.12	.94	.91	.05	1309.13
M3	65.65	17	.12	.94	.91	.05	1309.13

Note: M1 = one-factor model; M2 = three correlated factor model; M3 = second-order factor model.

Hereafter, we examined M3 factor loadings, as well as the sub-dimension loadings on the second-order factor (i.e., CSM). As can be seen from Table 2, all items loaded on their respective sub-dimension, showing loadings ranging from .61 to 1.00.

Table 2

CFA standardized item loadings on their respective factors

Item [Italian translation]	Factor		
	NB	VB	MB
1 – I have got myself introduced to people who can influence my career [Mi sono presentato/a a persone che potrebbero avere un'influenza sulla mia carriera].	.61		
2 – I have talked to senior management at company social gatherings [Ho parlato con l'alta dirigenza agli eventi sociali dell'azienda].	.70		

Item [Italian translation]	Factor		
	NB	VB	MB
3 – I have pushed to be involved in high profile projects [Ho spinto per essere coinvolto/a in progetti di alto profilo].	.81		
4 – I have built contacts with people in areas where I would like to work [Ho costruito contatti con persone nelle aree in cui mi piacerebbe lavorare].	.78		
5 – I have made sure I get credit for the work I do [Mi sono assicurato/a di ottenere credito/riconoscimento per il lavoro che svolgo].		.82	
6 – I have made my boss aware of my accomplishments [Ho reso il mio capo consapevole dei miei successi].		.77	
7 – I have made plans to leave this organization if it cannot offer me a rewarding career [Ho pianificato di lasciare questa organizzazione qualora non potesse offrirmi una carriera gratificante].			1.00
8 – I have made plans to leave this organization once I have the skills and experience to move on [Ho pianificato di lasciare questa organizzazione una volta che avrò le capacità e l'esperienza per andare avanti].			.71
Factor's loading on the second-order CSM factor	.93	.94	.61

Note: NB = networking behavior; VB = visibility behavior; MB = mobility-oriented behavior; CSM = career self-management.

Testing for the scale's reliability, it showed a Cronbach's alpha of .87, and a McDonald's omega of .87.

Discussion

The results of Study 1 provided solid empirical evidence supporting the adequacy of the Italian version of the *Career Self-Management Scale*, replicating the factorial structure of the original construct developed by Sturges et al. (2010). Testing three alternative factorial models through CFA, the results indicated that both the M2 (three-correlated-factor) model and the M3 (second-order factor) model showed equivalent and good goodness of fit indices. Moreover, the items loaded on their respective sub-dimensions, showing adequate factor loadings.

This finding is crucial because it demonstrates that the construct of career self-management (CSM) can be conceptualized in two valid ways: (a) as a unitary construct (second-order factor, M3); and (b) as a set of three distinct, but correlated, sub-dimensions (M2). The equivalence between M2 and M3 suggests that, depending on the research objective, researchers can choose

whether to focus on the overall CSM construct or its specific components. The reliability indexes were also very satisfactory. Overall, this demonstrates that the CSM scale may be used in empirical studies examining career self-management behaviors.

Study 2

The aim of this study is to test the convergent validity of the Italian version of the CSM scale by examining its zero-order correlations with similar constructs, namely self-directed career management (Briscoe et al., 2006), career adaptability (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012), and career insight (Day & Allen, 2004). Moreover, we aim to test its predictive validity by examining its zero-order correlation with a measure of objective career success (Lo Presti & Elia, 2020).

Method

Participants

The sample of this study consisted of 237 Italian employees working in various professional contexts. Their mean age was 40.89 years (*SD* = 13.32; five missing values). On average, participants reported 17.20 years of education (*SD* = 5.66; seven missing values) and a general tenure of 17.38 years (*SD* = 12.20; five missing values). Their average organizational tenure was of 11.67 years (*SD* = 11.46; four missing values) with an average of 35.03 working hours per week (SD = 11.46; four missing values).

As for gender, 157 participants (67.1%) were women, while 77 (32.9%) were men (three missing values). Regarding employment contracts, 180 participants (76.6%) held a permanent contract, 43 (18.3%) held a fixed-term contract and 12 (5.1%) held a precarious form of employment (two missing values). Concerning professional profiles, 20 participants (8.7%) were blue-collar workers, 168 (73.4%) were white-collar workers or technicians, 33 (14.4%) were middle managers, and 8 (3.5%) were top managers (eight missing values).

Two participants (0.9%) worked in the primary sector, 25 (11%) in the secondary sector, and the majority, 200 participants (88.1%), in the tertiary sector (ten missing values). Finally, 120 participants (51.1%) were employed in the public sector, 113 (48.1%) in the private sector and 2 (0.9%) in the non-profit sector (two missing values).

Measures

Career self-management (Sturges et al., 2010) was assessed through the 8-item scale (e.g., «I have built contacts with people in areas where I would like to work») tested in Study 1. Responses were assessed through a 5-point Likert scale (1 = «*completely disagree*», 5 = «*completely agree*»). Cronbach's α was .81.

Self-directed career management. We used the Italian version (Lo Presti et al., 2011) of the *Protean Career Attitude Scale* (Briscoe et al., 2006). We used self-directed career management (eight items; e.g., «I am responsible for my success or failure in my career») and value-driven orientation (six items; e.g., «In the past I have sided with my own values when the company has asked me to do something I don't agree with»). Responses were collected via a five-point rating scale (ranging from 1 = «*completely false*» to 5 = «*completely true*»).

Career adaptability was assessed by means of the 24-item *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale* (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012; Italian version by Di Fabio, 2016) which included four sub-dimensions: concern (e.g., «Thinking about what my future will be like»), control (e.g., «Taking responsibility for my actions»), curiosity (e.g., «Looking for opportunities to grow as a person»), and confidence (e.g., «Learning new skills»). Responses were assessed through a 5-point scale (1 = «*not strong*», 5 = «*strongest*»). Cronbach's α was .96.

Career insight was assessed through the 7-item scale (e.g., «I have a specific plan for achieving my career goal») developed by Day & Allen (2004) (Italian version by Lo Presti et al., 2022). Responses were assessed through a 5-point Likert scale (1 = «*completely disagree*», 5 = «*completely agree*»). Cronbach's α was .78.

Objective career success. We used the scale developed by Lo Presti and Elia (2020). The scale consists of three items (i.e., «I had career advancements», «I increased my income», «I reached senior, or in any case relevant, hierarchical positions»), assessing the extent to which respondents, in the last three months, reached these objectives comparatively lower or higher than their colleagues did. Responses were assessed through a 5-point scale, from «*well below my colleagues*» (1) to «*well above my colleagues*» (5). Cronbach's alpha was: .88.

Procedure

The same procedure as in Study 1 was followed in Study 2.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations were used to describe study variables and their inter-associations.

Results

Table 3 depicts the descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations between study variables.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations between study variables

	M(SD)	CSM	SDCM	CA	CI
CSM	3.11 (0.93)	–			
SDCM	3.40 (0.82)	.36***	–		
CA	3.83 (0.81)	.45***	.42***	–	
CI	3.35 (0.61)	.45***	.47***	.64***	–
OCS	3.02 (0.88)	.27***	.32***	.24***	.37***

Note: CSM = career self-management; SDCM = self-directed career management; CA = career adaptability; CI = career insight; OCS = objective career success; *** $p < .001$.

CSM positively correlated with self-directed career management ($r = .36$, $p < .001$), career adaptability ($r = .45$, $p < .001$), career insight ($r = .45$, $p < .001$), and objective career success ($r = .27$, $p < .001$). All the study's variables showed positive inter-correlations.

Discussion

The Italian version of the CSM scale showed positive and significant zero-order correlations with convergent measures of self-directed career management (Briscoe et al., 2006), career adaptability (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012), and career insight (Day & Allen, 2004).

Moreover, it showed a positive zero-order correlation with a predictive measure of objective career success (Lo Presti & Elia, 2020). Such evidence further confirms that the CSM scale may be used in empirical studies examining career self-management behaviors and their associations with other career-related variables.

General discussion

Despite the increasing attention devoted to career self-management as a core competence for navigating contemporary and unstable labor markets, no validated instrument was available for assessing this construct in the Italian context.

Previous research demonstrated the psychometric soundness of Sturges et al.'s (2010) *Career Self-Management Scale* in the United Kingdom, Belgium, and China, yet differences in organizational practices, labor structures, and career systems suggested the need to test its applicability among Italian employees.

This study therefore addressed a significant empirical and cultural gap by providing the first systematic validation of the *Career Self-Management Scale* in Italy.

The present study aimed to examine the validity and psychometric properties of the *Career Self-Management Scale* among Italian employees through two complementary studies. Study 1 tested the construct validity of the scale using confirmatory factor analysis while Study 2 examined its convergent and predictive validity with theoretically related variables: namely self-directed career management, career adaptability, career insight, and objective career success.

The findings of Study 1 confirmed that the Italian version of the *Career Self-Management Scale* replicated the factorial structure of the original instrument, showing good model fit indices and high reliability. All items loaded on their respective sub-dimensions, i.e., networking, visibility, and mobility-oriented behaviors, demonstrating the stability of the construct.

In Study 2, CSM showed significant positive correlations with self-directed career management, career adaptability, and career insight, confirming convergent validity. Moreover, its positive association with objective career success provided evidence of predictive validity. Overall, the Italian version of the scale proved to be a reliable and valid measure for assessing career self-management behaviors.

This validation supports the cross-national robustness of the career self-management construct, confirming that career self-management behaviors, including the sub-dimensions of networking, visibility, and mobility-orientation, maintain their structural coherence across diverse cultural and organizational settings.

In terms of practical implications, this Italian version may be therefore used in career counselling and vocational interventions to support clients in gaining awareness of their levels of career self-management, especially in the cases of either voluntary or involuntary career transitions.

As for study limitations, this study utilized self-report questionnaires for all scales, so measurement can be subject to biases, such as the social desirability or common method variance. Secondly, Study 1 and, especially, Study 2 were conducted at a single point in time preventing any claim of cause-and-effect relationships between career self-management and the related variables (e.g., objective career success). Thirdly, while this study focused on construct validity (i.e., CFA in Study 1) and convergent and predictive validity (i.e., zero-order correlations in Study 2), discriminant validity (i.e., whether CSM is sufficiently distinct from other constructs it should not measure) was not tested.

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