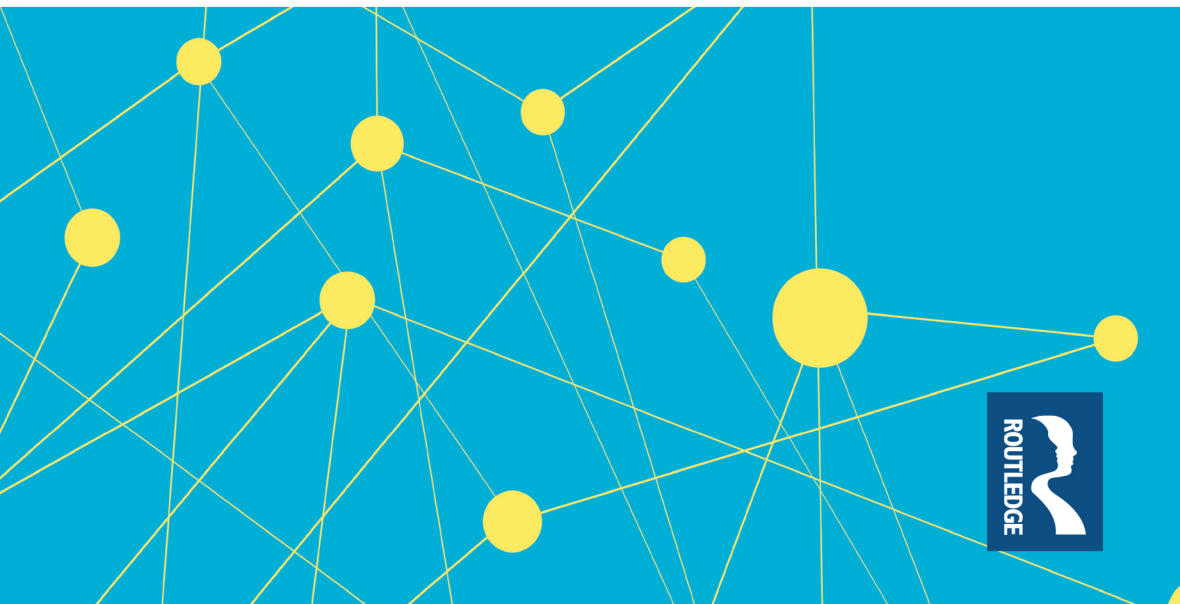




ADAPTABILITY IN ADOLESCENTS

FORGING HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING

Harry Nejad and Fara Nejad



Adaptability in Adolescents

This book discusses a newly developed concept of adaptability capacity and development as an extension of Charles Darwin's work on adaptability. It looks at how the human mind uses adaptability resources to deal with life-changing, challenging, and varying circumstances and conditions. The volume presents an integrative process model that assesses the roles of socio-demographic and ability covariates, personality, and other dispositional presage factors in predicting psychological well-being outcomes, such as life satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem. While exploring the concept of adaptability capacity, the volume focuses on making children and adolescents mentally, emotionally, and behaviourally adaptable. It discusses general and domain-specific constructs relevant to phenomena such as self-regulation, resilience, buoyancy, and coping mechanisms. The book focuses on the development and utilization of treatments to assist individuals in becoming positively adaptable and achieve a higher degree of positive well-being and self-actualization.

An important contribution, this book will be of interest to students, researchers and teachers of psychology, educational psychology, and social work. It will also be helpful for academicians, mental health professionals, social workers, psychiatrists, counsellors, and those working in related areas.

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Dedication: My beloved father, he was my beacon, compass, and pillar whom I looked up to and could always safely and comfortably lean on. May he rest in peace. And to my mother, for her ample support and love, to my mother who sacrificed her entire life, aspirations, hopes, and health for her children, her husband, and her own family. She is an inspiration to the people around her. She is a true example of adaptability, resilience, and buoyancy. Wishing her a long life.

My wife, Farideh, who stood by me when I was lost and frail. When it was dark and hopeless, she became the true warrior to battle the wickedness thrown at us. She defended herself and me with her resilience, patience, and love. You deserve the best!



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The Philosophy of Helping Others

A significant goal of counselling is to facilitate the construction of learning and reality. Learning is making sense of understanding and experiences. Understanding is achieved through a collaborative conversation between one's environment, personal resources repertoire, and schemata; hence, learning emerges in various circumstances and contexts. While I believe almost every individual is capable of learning, the desire to learn new concepts and skills may well be a significant predictor of mastering such new concepts and skills.

Learning can be facilitated and taught through opportunities that empower learners to become inquirers and take ownership of their learning journey. Concurrently, counsellors (educators) need to evince that they are equally interested in the clients, as learners, as capable inquirers, and in the learning process. They must also genuinely demonstrate that they respect and accept the learners as individuals and for who and how they are without prejudice, hypercritical mindset, and demeanour. Moreover, I believe individuals are emergent self-organizing systems who develop and learn as long as they are presented with learning opportunities that are to some extent challenging and within their Zone of Proximal Development, provided they are placed under adult guidance and with a more capable and knowledgeable peer utilizing the cultural tools, e.g. language to facilitate this process of meaning-making, understanding, and learning.

Consequently, counsellors must be facilitators and catalysts who promote and encourage learning in theory and action. They should celebrate differences as much as similarities and promote inclusiveness. While they are cognizant that the therapeutic setting is an opportunity for individuals to work their issues out, they also commemorate that every person is unique; hence their needs might also be unique. Therefore, facilitators should adapt their approach to meet such individuals and their unique and special needs.

They must encourage learning by creating a non-threatening, tolerant, accepting, and inviting counselling session and environment where stimulating dialogue and conversation are welcomed and nurtured. Discussions need to be treated as interconnected, emphasizing that everything clients learn fits together into a holistic understanding of their world, from which they develop their personal schemata and worldview. Through such a belief system, learners and clients become inquirers, and learning becomes part of their daily endeavours,

which can be flourished and harnessed through an eclectic approach to counselling, therapy, and education.

Ultimately, one of the most significant concepts I hope to convey to my clients is that learning is a journey that never ends, and almost every individual is capable of it. Accordingly, I see myself as a lifelong learner, and the learning process includes improving myself professionally and personally.

Dr. Harry Nejad PhD

List of Abbreviations

ABS	Academic Buoyancy Scale
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority
ACM	Adaptive Change Model
ALS	Adaptive Learning System
APA	American Psychological Association
ARC	Australian Research Council
CBT	Cognitive-behavior Therapy
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
EFA	Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis
EM	Expectation Maximisation
ESB	English-speaking Background
ESEM	Exploratory Structural Equation Modelling
FC	Factor Correlations/Variances
FL	Factor Loadings
HBE	Human Behavioral Ecology
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
REBT	Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SES	Socio-economic Status
SRL	Self-regulated Learning
SWLS	Satisfaction with Life Scale
TTM	Transtheoretical Model
WHOQOL	World Health Organization Quality of Life



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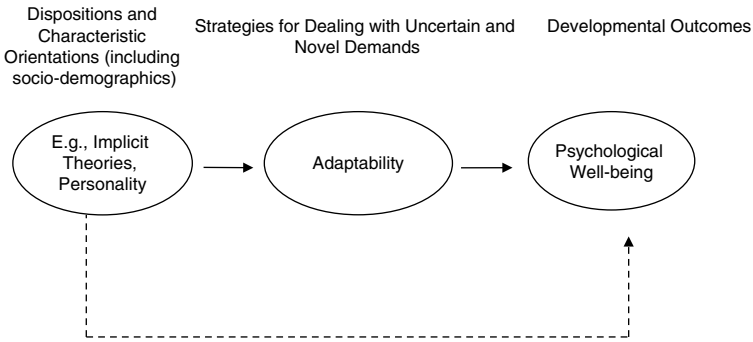
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1 Introduction

It may sound a cliché to say that life presents many situations and circumstances that represent significant ambiguity and novelty; however, it is known to humankind that we begin our negotiations with life challenges and changes from the day we are born. Thenceforth, it is only reasonable to claim that learning more about our regulatory mechanism is as significant as our survival mechanisms, *inter alia*, sleeping, eating, breathing, etc. Hence, research investigating individuals' cognitive, behavioural, and emotional responses to negotiate such situations and circumstances seem vital and significant. This cognitive, behavioural, and emotional regulation in the face of ambiguity (uncertainty) and novelty (new or unfamiliar situations and conditions) is denoted as adaptability (Martin, Nejad, et al., 2012; 2013). In every person's developmental phases, there are times when novelty and ambiguity are particularly salient and influential in shaping later pathways. Adolescence is considered one such period and is the developmental focus of the Adaptability study. Accordingly, the Adaptability study assessed youths' cognitive, behavioural, and emotional regulation. It also examined the dispositional factors that predict adaptability and their effect on psychological well-being that takes the form of general self-esteem, life satisfaction, emotional instability, and sense of meaning and purpose. This procedure is referred to as the 'adaptability model' or 'adaptability process' (see Figure 1.1).

The adaptability framework theorized here lines up with significant models of traits and strategies applicable to optimal human outcomes, for example, it is informed by Buss and Cantor's (1989) suggested paradigm of human functioning and growth also the subsequent applications of their work in the educational context (Martin et al., 2001a; 2001b; 2003). Buss and Cantor proposed that people's trait inclinations affect their approaches to handling life challenges. Accordingly, there is an association between dispositions and context that influences the development of approaches (e.g., adaptability) that are exercised to navigate life changes and challenges, guiding to improved psychological well-being (e.g., general self-esteem, satisfaction with life) (Kyl-Heku & Buss, 1996). Learning more about this developmental course may shed light on how dispositions and traits can be adaptively expressed to describe the faculty to deal with life ambiguity and novelty (Cantor, 1990). Accordingly, the present

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Note. Dashed paths are not central to the investigation's substantive aim. Still, they are included to consider all variances in the model and to evaluate the unique effects attributable to factors of primary interest.

Figure 1.1 A hypothesized adaptability process model.

study looks at a model in which trait make-ups and dispositional dimensions are depicted as personality and implicit beliefs about intelligence and ability. Moreover, the well-being outcome is shown as psychological well-being construct (see Figure 1.1).

This consolidative and multi-dimensional assessment and understanding of adaptability is based on numerous theoretical, applied, and methodological approaches (including coping, resilience, and buoyancy) to provide a complete research framework aligned with the Adaptability study interests. The adaptability framework claims that adaptability extends coping, resilience, and buoyancy models. Yet, it is, however, distinct in several ways, for example, it is not related to adversity per se (as the other factors are); instead, it concentrates on ambiguity and novelty in life (Martin, Liem, et al., 2012; Martin, Nejad, et al., 2013; Nejad, Nejad, & Farahani, 2021).

Another theory relevant to adaptability research is self-regulation (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 1995, 2008; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1997). Adaptability, however, is different from self-regulation because it is explicitly concerned with a tripartite context involving cognition, behaviour, and emotion regulation. In comparison, self-regulation manages to be more behaviourally and cognitively fixated and oriented (Cleary, Callan, & Zimmerman, 2012; Cleary & Chen, 2009). Nonetheless, it is essential to observe that investigators such as Pekrun and colleagues have suggested that emotion regulation (as a component of self-regulation) is attained through cognitive evaluation and some physiological precursors and encouragements (2002). Additionally, another significant factor in the study's framing is the literature within the domains of adaptation models (e.g., Howes & Lewis, 2009; Martin, Nejad, et al., 2012; 2013; Motamedi, 1977; Walker et al., 2004), evolutionary psychology (e.g., Barrett, Dunbar, & Lycett, 2002; Burghardt, 2009; Buss, 1995; Cosmides & Tooby, 1987; Fullan & Loubser, 1972; Geary, 2008; Quine, 1981; Smit &

Wandel, 2006; Smith, 2000; Sweller, 2004; Tooby & Cosmides, 1992) and positive psychology (e.g., Seligman et al., 2009; 2005). The Adaptability study describes these and explains the role of such concepts and knowledge in operationalizing adaptability and its associated processes.

With an eye on the substantive-methodological context, the adaptability investigation:

- a made use of a cross-sectional and longitudinal study design;
- b included relatively large samples;
- c ascertained the construct validity of adaptability and the complete set of measures relevant to its procedures and methods; and
- d applied fitting multivariate statistical approaches and techniques to empirically study the hypothesized links in the adaptability process model within and across time.

Across these structures, the investigation included several methodological components that reinforced its robustness and validity. It had longitudinal data central to its design; hence, the study allowed adjustments in prior variance in well-being outcomes. The study also examined relevant covariates and thus provided a better sense of the unique variance attributable to adaptability. Finally, the emphasis on youth was central because development through this phase of life offers many experiences of doubt and novelty.

Informed by the preceding information, the Adaptability study aimed to disentangle sets of intertwined concepts and constructs, broadening recent work into cognate areas such as adaptation, coping, resilience, buoyancy, and self-regulation. In doing so, the Adaptability investigation's findings had the potential to:

- 1 Validate recent preliminary measurement work into adaptability;
- 2 Broaden earlier studies into cognate constructs by refining cognitive, behavioural, and affective repertoires that individuals modulate as they face life's ambiguities and novelties;
- 3 Describe the differences between constructs relevant to ambiguities and novelty (i.e., adaptability) on the one hand, and constructs relevant to adversity (i.e., buoyancy, resilience, coping) on the other;
- 4 Extend self-regulatory investigation by measuring a tripartite adaptability construct that includes modifications in cognition, behaviour, and emotion;
- 5 Describe and clarify the complex nature of relations between adaptability, its predictors, and its psychological well-being outcomes;
- 6 Shed further light on features and elements that may support adolescent development, particularly about the genuine nature of ambiguity and novelty that are typically characteristic of this stage of life;
- 7 Prove the utility of substantive-methodological synergies in deriving reliable and valid findings that hold implications for academics, researchers, and practitioners alike;

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- 8 Propose conceptual and methodological implications for future research that relate to positive youth development and the situational uncertainty and novelty inherent in this developmental process;
- 9 Conclude from findings to identify applied implications for psycho-educational policy and practice.

Chapter 1 summarizes the guiding body of work supporting the hypothesized adaptability process model. Chapter 2 provides the contextual setting involving the formulation of the links proposed in the theorized model. It, further, discusses the theoretical issues pertinent to the Adaptability study and its constructs.

The chapters following Chapter 2 provide further details about analyses and the discussion and implications of findings. Chapter 3 presents the general conjectures and methods, and the central hypothesis. Chapter 4 presents describes details concerning the Time 1 psychometrics properties of the instrumentation supporting and strengthening the hypothesized adaptability model. This chapter also evaluates the Time 1 relation between adaptability, its predictors, and the well-being outcomes that are predicted by it. It also shows Time 2 psychometric testing as well as tests of the Time 2 adaptability process model. Furthermore, Chapter 4 offers psychometric findings for the longitudinal sample as well as the results of the longitudinal adaptability process model.

Chapter 5 details the cross-sectional and longitudinal investigations, the significance of results for psycho-educational research and conceptualizing, the relevance to psycho-educational intervention, as well as an examination of limitations and suggestions for future research. Chapter 6 provides a further detailed discussion concerning factors predicting adaptability and factors being predicted by adaptability, which will outline suggestions and recommendations to practitioners, psycho-educational researchers, and other stakeholders. Chapter 7 provides a discussion of the role and relevance of adaptability in Indian culture, and Chapter 8 provides concluding remarks.

In summary, adaptability denotes the proper changes and adjustments in cognition, behaviour, and feeling in response to new or ambiguous conditions and situations in life. Following prior psychometric work on adaptability, the current work investigates dispositional predictors (personality, implicit theories) of adaptability and the extent to which adaptability predicts psychological well-being (self-esteem, life satisfaction, meaning and purpose, and emotional instability). The authors suggest that the Adaptability study holds potential conceptual, applied, and methodological implications for researchers and practitioners seeking to effectively assist children and young people in dealing with their ever-changing world.