

# Chapter 1

## Future Fit Career Wellbeing: An Introductory Chapter



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*Future-fit career wellbeing is about building a future narrative that articulates a vision of the future work self in relation to historical versus shifting circumstances and the opportunities and professional options perceived by the individual. Opportunities and options are generated by the individual as a professional intrapreneurial evolving self, and as a positive, proactive agent capable of crafting a sustainable career in unprecedented times of evolutionary technological change and transformation (The authors).*

### 1.1 Introduction: Future-Fit Career Wellbeing

This book “*Theory, research and dynamics of career wellbeing: Becoming fit for the future*”, is timely in its reflection on the notion of future-fit career wellbeing. Scholars and practitioners agree that the dynamic and exponential evolution of technological developments, smart digital innovations and automation will have a revolutionary impact on people’s career-life experiences. This book fills an important gap in current career research by addressing the under-researched phenomenon of people’s career wellbeing in the rapid transformational unfolding of the digital era. Conceptualisations of career wellbeing are rare and, as evidenced also in this book collection of chapters, often intertwined with the construct of subjective wellbeing. An evaluation of the wide array of viewpoints presented in the chapters of this book, led us to proffer as a starting point a fresh perspective on what we mean by the notion of “future-fit” career wellbeing. Building on the basic tenets of positive psychology, we take a strength-based approach to position career wellbeing as an

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element of optimal human functioning and personal growth through self-regulatory career development. Career wellbeing is anchored in the work and life-career space, and as such we conceptualise the term as *individuals' long-term contentment with their career outcomes, career achievements, career changes, and their sustainable employability amidst the complexities of the contemporary work environment* (Bester, Coetzee, Ferreira, & Potgieter, 2019).

The nature of people's work, occupations and careers will frequently shift in the contemporary context conditions of Industry 4.0. Careers and the form of jobs and occupations will be of an unpredictable, constantly shape-shifting nature within an employment context that is exponentially impacted by accelerated technological innovations which require rapid upskilling and agile flexible adaptation. The notion of "future-fitness" will in this regard remain a constant refrain in people's thoughts about their sustainable employability and career agility as aspects of their career development in the digital era. We therefore adopted the notion of "future-fit" career wellbeing.

Career wellbeing denotes subjective cognitions and affect that allude to positive perceptions of, and feelings of contentment or satisfaction about the career-life. A strength-based perspective on future-fit career wellbeing allows career counselors to help clients view the constant shifts and unexpected turns in their career-lives as opportunities to use their psychosocial strengths and skills to craft positive experiences in their work and jobs such as self-regulatory, intrapreneurial psychological flexible engagement, thriving, flow, and adaptability, all of which facilitate experiences of long-term contentment, satisfaction, and wellbeing. How people craft their careers and employment, and select, adapt to, shape and develop within the digital employment context, will be managed and regulated by them as agents of their career development.

Building on the arguments of Dik, O'Connor, Shimizu, and Duffy (2019) and Toporek and Cohen (2017), strength-based strategies help clients identify accessible career paths in unprecedented technologically-transforming occupational times. We argue that individuals' contentment with their career outcomes, career achievements, career changes, and their sustainable employability amidst the complexities of the contemporary work environment relates to their personal narratives about the self in relation to their experiences of the environment with which they interact. The classical personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955) posits that individuals are innovative scientists that, in response to stimuli and experience, constantly shape and reshape their personal schemas (i.e. understanding and interpretations of experiences) to prepare for and predict events and consequences of behaviour. A strength-based approach to future-fit career wellbeing helps to articulate personal narratives that help clients to address difficult and traumatic or tumultuous situations in need of change and adaptation through a lens of agency, perseverance, growth, potentiality, capability, and strength.

Table 1.1 provides an overview of the core categories relevant to the conceptualisation of future-fit career wellbeing that emerged from the various chapters in this book (i.e. forms of career wellbeing; personal aspects of future-fit career wellbeing, and conditions of future-fit career wellbeing). The chapters highlighted

**Table 1.1** Categories and elements of the conceptualisation of future-fit career wellbeing

Categories of future-fit career wellbeing	Elements of future-fit career wellbeing	
	Self-regulatory elements	Person-situation interaction elements
Forms of career wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person’s satisfaction with their career-related decisions, career changes and career outcomes over the long term (Bester, Chap. 4)</li> <li>• The various positive outcomes associated with successful career development across the lifespan (Hirschi &amp; Wilhelm, Chap. 6)</li> <li>• The personal experiences of individuals, reflected by constructs such as career or life satisfaction, and satisfaction with objective indicators such as salary level, number of promotions, and health (Hirschi &amp; Wilhelm, Chap. 6)</li> <li>• Cognitive-affective state of positive psychological functioning fostered by the personal agency belief that one has the required capabilities to craft a meaningful life-career even amidst adverse circumstances (Coetzee, Chap. 7)</li> <li>• Emotions that refer to several career features: career transitions, interpersonal relationships, relationship with the organisation, work performance, sense of purpose, learning and development, and work—life issues (Steiner &amp; Spurk, Chap. 8)</li> <li>• An important aspect of individuals’ lives that keeps them regularly engaged in sustainable livelihood activities which promote their social, financial, physical, community, and mental wellbeing; level of satisfaction which employees have with their careers over time (Aderibigbe &amp; Chimucheka, Chap. 9)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjective feelings of contentment, happiness and satisfaction experienced in life and in work (Bester, Chap. 4)</li> <li>• The cognitive judgement of individuals’ satisfaction with their lives and the affective behaviour that individuals display when interacting with their environments (Bester, Chap. 4)</li> <li>• Career wellbeing is an outflow of thriving at work (Rothmann et al., Chap. 5)</li> <li>• An all-encompassing construct consisting of focus on an individual’s cognitive, spiritual, physical and social experience within the confines of work (Chinyamurindi, Chap. 14)</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table 1.1** (continued)

Categories of future-fit career wellbeing	Elements of future-fit career wellbeing	
	Self-regulatory elements	Person-situation interaction elements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An individual's long-term contentment with their career outcomes, career achievements, career changes and their sustainable employability amidst the complexities of the contemporary work environment (Ferreira, Chap. 10)</li> <li>• Dimensions of job satisfaction, job involvement, affective organisational commitment, work engagement, positive and negative emotions and moods at work, intrinsic motivation, thriving and vigour (Potgieter, Chap. 12)</li> </ul>	
Individual (personal) aspects of future-fit career wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive personality traits toward engaging in career self-management (i.e. the process of intentionally building, maintaining, and using various personal and contextual resources through processes such as goal setting, mapping the environment for resources, planning, monitoring actions, and feedback-processing in a way that leads to positive career outcomes (Hirschi &amp; Wilhelm, Chap. 6)</li> <li>• Motivational states of "can do", "reason to", and "energized to" (Hirschi &amp; Wilhelm, Chap. 6)</li> <li>• Career self-management capability (i.e. capacity for psychological adaptation, career adaptability, intrapreneurial self-capital, work self-efficacy, and relational career capital) (Coetzee, Chap. 7)</li> <li>• Mood, health (Potgieter, Chap. 12)</li> </ul>	

(continued)

**Table 1.1** (continued)

Categories of future-fit career wellbeing	Elements of future-fit career wellbeing	
	Self-regulatory elements	Person-situation interaction elements
Conditions that enable or thwart future-fit career wellbeing	<p><b>Enabling self-regulatory (personal) conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging in job crafting opportunities (Rothmann et al., Chap. 5)</li> <li>• Task focus, i.e. focusing behaviours and attention on job tasks and responsibilities; exploration, i.e. experimentation, innovation, risk-taking, and discovery to stretch and grow in new directions; and heedful relating, i.e. looking out for one another to heedfully connect to the social/relational environment (Rothmann et al. Chap. 5)</li> <li>• Developing personal career resources (knowledge, skills, networks, motivations) (Steiner &amp; Spurk, Chap. 8)</li> <li>• Awareness of career cognitions, career resources, perceptions of career success and employability (Engelbrecht, Chap. 11; Koekemoer &amp; Olckers, Chap. 13)</li> <li>• Developing supportive workplace friendships (Ferreira, Chap. 10; Potgieter, Chap. 12)</li> <li>• Engaging in work-family enrichment; managing family responsibilities, work schedule flexibility (Koekemoer &amp; Olckers, Chap. 13)</li> <li>• Engaging in interventions to improve employees' mood and physical health (Potgieter, Chap. 12)</li> </ul> <p><b>Thwarting conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work-job demands and resources; job strain, work stress and burnout (Potgieter, Chap. 12)</li> <li>• Work-home challenges (Chinyamurindi, Chap. 14)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Enabling organisational conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing the psychological contract (Bester, Chap. 4)</li> <li>• Purposeful and meaningful work experiences, positive work-related relationships, work autonomy, employability, environmental mastery and learning and development. (Bester, Chap. 4)</li> <li>• Ability-enhancing HR practices (selection, training and development); motivation - enhancing HR practices (job security, promotion and performance-related pay), and opportunity-enhancing HR practices (autonomy and communication) (Rothmann et al. Chap. 5)</li> <li>• Social and organisational support (Hirschi &amp; Wilhelm, Chap. 6)</li> <li>• Supportive work conditions (i.e. career planning, discussions, development opportunities) (Coetzee, Chap. 7)</li> <li>• Career conditions and resources (e.g., training opportunities; financial incentives), and nonwork resources (e.g., satisfying hobby; spouse support) can foster career wellbeing (Steiner &amp; Spurk, Chap. 8)</li> <li>• Financial benefits and opportunities for career growth challenges (Chinyamurindi, Chap. 14)</li> <li>• Rehabilitation processes such as work adjustment with reasonable accommodation for those persons with neuromuscular disorders (Mpofu et al., Chap. 15) and</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table 1.1** (continued)

Categories of future-fit career wellbeing	Elements of future-fit career wellbeing	
	Self-regulatory elements	Person-situation interaction elements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neuromuscular disorders (ND) —genetic conditions and autism disorder (Mpofu et al., Chaps. 15 and 16)</li> </ul>	<p>people with autism spectrum disorder (Mpofu et al., Chap. 16) through technological inventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heidegger care (attentive care); supportive relations (Elley-Brown, Chap. 17)</li> </ul>

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self-regulatory and person-situation interaction elements of the conceptual categories of future-fit career wellbeing.

**Self-regulatory elements of future-fit career wellbeing** The various conceptualisations of career wellbeing emphasise key aspects such as long-term sustainability of positive cognitions and affect pertaining to satisfaction in various career-life domains based on personal and objective career experiences across the lifespan. Personal aspects that are associated with the state of career wellbeing pertain to proactive personality traits, career self-management capability, intrinsic motivational states, mood and physical health. Self-regulatory career wellbeing seems to be facilitated by enabling conditions such as engaging in job crafting opportunities, behaviours such as task focus, exploration and innovation, and heedful-relating; building personal career resources such as knowledge skills, networks, and positive supportive workplace friendships; managing work-life balance through work-family enrichment opportunities and negotiating flexible work schedules through the use of technology; and engaging in interventions that help one manage one's mood and physical health. Thwarting conditions of career wellbeing include work-job demands, lack of supportive personal resources and capabilities in managing job strain, work stress and burnout as well the skills and resources to manage work-life balance. Genetic conditions such as neuromuscular disorders and autism disorder also thwart career wellbeing.

**Person-situation interaction elements of future-fit career wellbeing** The conceptualisations of career wellbeing also highlighted positive feelings and experiences in the domain of person-work life interaction. Career wellbeing seems to be a consequence of individuals' cognitions about, and the affective behaviour flowing from the person—work environment interaction experiences. Organisational conditions that facilitate career wellbeing include the organisation's management of the psychological contract, purposeful and meaningful work experiences, workplace relationships, and human resource (HR) practices that are ability-enhancing (i.e. selection, training and development), motivation-enhancing (i.e. job security, promotion, performance-related pay), and opportunity-enhancing (i.e. autonomy and

communication). Work conditions that include financial benefits, career planning and development opportunities and discussions, and nonwork resources such as spouse support also seem to facilitate career wellbeing. An important aspect of the digital workplace is that technological advancements can be utilised to create conditions that support the participation of people with special needs (i.e. neuromuscular disorders and autism disorder) in career development and meaningful work. Finally, the notion of ethical attentive care based on Heidegger philosophy is introduced as an important aspect of future-fit career wellbeing support.

Future-fit career wellbeing is about building a future narrative that articulates a vision of the future work self in relation to historical versus shifting circumstances and the opportunities and professional options perceived by the individual. Opportunities and options are generated by the individual as a professional intrapreneurial evolving self, and as a positive, proactive agent capable of crafting a sustainable career in unprecedented times of evolutionary technological change and transformation.

This book collection on future-fit career wellbeing is a preamble to an evolving scholarly narrative on conditions and factors that shape and reshape people's career wellbeing. The chapters offer ideas for future research that will help scholars to extend and refine the conceptualisation of future-fit career wellbeing. The chapters also suggest practices that may potentially inform career interventions that help clients become agile careerists in Industry 4.0. Future-fit career wellbeing is about individuals who have the capabilities and supportive conditions that help them capitalise on their psychosocial strengths and capabilities in a manner that facilitates forward career movement and growth for their personal contentment and wellbeing.

## 1.2 Introduction: Outline of the Book

The book is divided into three parts: Part I (Career management and the future workplace), Part II (Psychosocial factors of career wellbeing) and Part III (Career wellbeing of people with special needs). The three parts as illustrated below represents an overview of the elements influencing "future fit" career wellbeing (Fig. 1.1).

Part I of the book, *Career management and the future workplace*, comprises six chapters that illustrate the management of future fit career wellbeing in the contemporary context of Industry 4.0 from various perspectives. These perspectives include smart technology, artificial intelligence, robotics and algorithms (STARA) (Chap. 2), sustainable careers in the decent work context (Chap. 3), career success through the lens of the psychological contract (Chap. 4), career crafting, human resource management practices and thriving in the workplace (Chap. 5), career wellbeing from a career self-management perspective (Chap. 6) and the value of future-fit psychological career self-management capabilities (Chap. 7) which are relevant for not only the wellbeing of employees, but also to assist individuals and

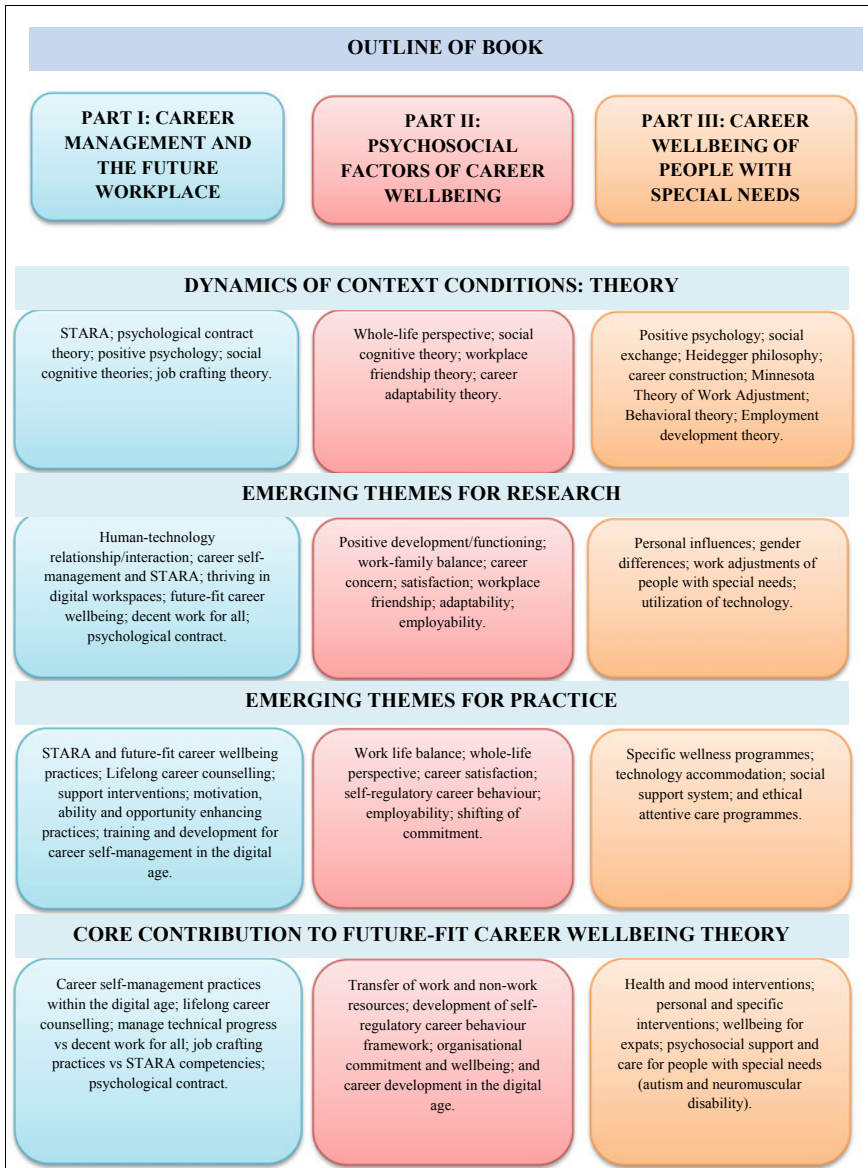


Fig. 1.1 Outline of the Book (Authors’ own work)

organisations manage their careers and their career wellbeing in the future workplace.

Part II of the book (Chaps. 8, 9, 10 and 11), *Psychological factors of career wellbeing*, positions future fit career wellbeing within the pervasive influencing



context of the VUCA and digital landscape which demands innovative thinking regarding the psychological factors that influence individuals' career wellbeing within the dynamically shifting contemporary work environment. The authors make a compelling case for future fit career wellbeing that speaks to the psychological needs of a well-balanced, well-adapted and employable individual. Articulating a whole-life perspective on career concerns and career success, as well as highlighting the role of workplace friendship, career adaptability, organisational commitment and employability, these psychological factors came across as being crucial in the enhancement of employees' future-fit career wellbeing.

Part III, *Career wellbeing of people with special needs*, comprises six chapters (Chaps. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17) that illustrate the dynamics of career wellbeing in terms of attentive ethical care toward the unique career wellbeing needs of different groups of people. The chapters also explore technology-enabling work adjustments for people with autism and neuromuscular disability. The dynamics of personal influences such as mood, health and biographical differences, career success, career wellbeing of expatriates, employees with special needs and care perspectives are highlighted in this part of the book. The basic idea is that different personal influences of employees can have an impact on their future-fit career wellbeing. The interplay between these personal influences should be considered and understood in terms of career wellbeing interventions. The authors highlight key insights that inform future-fit career wellbeing practices.

In a nutshell, the various sections demonstrate that career wellbeing interventions and practices should take into account the changing nature of work and jobs which is influenced by the technological advancements of the digital era and knowledge economy. Future-fit career wellbeing should include individuals' satisfaction with their career, their personal experiences, their emotions, their life-long contentment with their career outcomes, their level of satisfaction with their job, and opportunities for decent work amidst a technological-revolutionised work context. The various personal aspects related to future-fit career wellbeing are explained as individuals' proactive personality traits, their intrinsic agentic-motivational state, the career self-management capabilities they cultivate, and awareness and management of their mood and state of health.

We acknowledge that career wellbeing, and specifically future-fit career wellbeing, is an under-researched phenomenon and that the chapter contributions only provide a snapshot of the theory, research and dynamics of relevance and interest in the contemporary work context. The audience for this book is advanced undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate students, as well as scholars and practitioners in career wellbeing and career development settings. In addition, organisational decision-makers, human resource managers and professionals, wellness counselors, and public policy makers will have an interest in this book. We trust that the readers of this book will find the theory, reported research and practices that illuminate the dynamics of career wellbeing helpful to enrich their own understanding of the psychological factors underpinning future-fit career wellbeing. We hope that the thoughts and suggestions presented in the various chapters will stimulate further research endeavours that will contribute to much needed innovative evidence-based

career wellbeing practices that benefit both employees and their organisations in the rapid transformational unfolding of the digital era.

Enjoy reading the book!

The Editors

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