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Development and Validation of the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale in Italy

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Abstract: Although different assessment instruments have been developed to assess decent work, there is a need for a new instrument that takes into consideration the importance of decent work in achieving sustainable development. This article reports the development and psychometric requisites of the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale, that is, a parsimonious measure regarding the perception of decent work for an inclusive and sustainable career construction. Overall, the research involved 1626 Italian adults, 740 men (45.5%) and 886 women (54.5%), aged between 16 and 76 years (M = 26.17; SD = 9.42), that were randomly involved in 1 of the 5 studies. Study 1 developed the scale and found the unidimensional structure of the scale via exploratory factor analysis (EFA). In Study 2, we confirmed the unidimensional structure of the six items based on confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Study 3 examined the concurrent validity of the scale, finding positive correlations with meaningful work and life satisfaction. With Study 4, we provided measurement invariance across gender. Finally, Study 5 tested a model in which the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic view in career activities predicted decent work through career curiosity. Results provided strong psychometric support for Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale as a valid unidimensional instrument that, compared to the already existing scales, proposes the evaluation of decent work from a broad perspective that also looks at inclusion and sustainability.

Keywords: decent work; scale development; life design; sustainability

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1. Introduction

In 1999, the International Labour Organization [1] launched the Decent Work Agenda to address the inequities in employment and work, as a response to the challenges that globalization creates in the labor market. Since then, the concept of decent work has been deeply examined and discussed by global organizations and in the scientific literature regarding career guidance [2].

For example, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [3] has made the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Decent Work Agenda [1] an integral part of the vision to proceed in the direction of a more sustainable future for all. The importance of decent work in achieving sustainable development has been highlighted by Goal 8, which is to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". Moreover, the International Labour Organization [4] has recently underlined the need to rethink the current neoliberal economic model, promoting a social and fair economy to guarantee employment and decent work for all, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and the reduction of environmental issues (the overexploitation of natural resources and global warming) and social issues (social inequalities) [5,6].

In the scientific literature regarding career guidance, the decent work construct has come into focus due to the work of J. Guichard (and the researchers of the UNESCO

Chair on Lifelong Guidance and Counseling at the University of Wrocław) [7] in the context of the Life Design paradigm, to the work of D.L. Blustein and the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT; [8]), and, more recently, to the work of R. Young et al. [6] with the Contextual Action Theory [9]. Based on these theoretical frameworks, specific self-reports or qualitative procedures have been developed to assess decent work conditions, as perceived by workers [10]. However, in the last few years, within the framework of inclusive and sustainable Life Design, particular attention has been focused on the role of career guidance from a contextual perspective rather than an individual one, to promote the idea of decent work, associated with fair, inclusive, and sustainable development [7]. Currently, no assessment instruments consider the tendency of having decent work to contribute to a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable future [7]. Based on these premises, in this research, we present the development and evaluation of a new measure of decent work based on the framework of inclusive and sustainable Life Design, that is, Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale. We proposed a short and psychometrically adequate instrument that was well suited for research and practice in the field of career guidance and counseling for inclusion and sustainability. Moreover, we used this measure to test the relationship between the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic vision in career activities and the perception of decent work, through the mediational role of career curiosity. This research can contribute to the literature in two ways: firstly, the research develops a new measure that can be used in career guidance activities to assess the tendency of individuals to have decent work in one's career future, thus contributing to the construction of an inclusive and sustainable society; secondly, the research examines the mediational role of career curiosity between the social and equitable view of the economy and decent work, thus suggesting the importance of promoting these constructs to support the possibility to have decent work in one's career future.

1.1. The Construct of Decent Work

The concept of decent work can be considered a multidisciplinary one, as it combines elements regarding access to productive labor with qualitative dimensions that concern the rights of workers, along with social protection and the promotion of social dialogue [11].

Rantanen et al. [2] defined decent work as a unique social innovation with global coverage and analyzed this concept by studying the origins of decent work and its key principles in some ILO and UN documents. Starting from the definition proposed by the ILO in 1999, decent work is defined as a fundamental human right to aspire to, described as a collection of "opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity" [1]. After this definition, the ILO [12] extended the conceptualization of freedom, underlining the importance of allowing people to express their concerns and be involved in decisions that influence their lives. In other words, based on ILO [12], the characteristics of decent work are the following: (a) opportunities to have a job that is productive and delivers a fair income, (b) safety in the workplace and social protection for families, (c) prospects for personal development and social integration, (d) freedom for people to express their concerns, organize, and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and (e) equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

More recently, the ILO [13] has included the "decent work dimension" in the concept of work associated with sustainability. At the same time, the United Nations have determined the key role of decent work for sustainable development and, more specifically, for the achievement of a future global climate agreement [14], recognizing the importance of the efforts made to promote the exchange of information and knowledge regarding decent work for all.

1.2. Decent Work in the Life Design Paradigm

Based on constructivism [15] and the self-construction perspective [16], the Life Design paradigm aims to offer solutions to the challenges created by the current global changes, putting more emphasis on the importance of promoting access to decent work and a decent life [5].

As a new paradigm of career counseling, Life Design is essentially different from the classic career guidance models that are mostly oriented toward employability policies because it not only provides professional information, matches people with the expectations of employers, and trains them in job search, but it also aims to promote reflections and development of a new critical conscience of the self and the world [9].

Developed by an international team of researchers led by Mark Savickas, the Life Design paradigm sees the individual as a subject, designer, and builder of his/her life [17]. As a consequence, Life Design interventions are not focused on the determination of the best ways to choose a job, find a job, or adapt to the requests of the labor market. They promote reflections on the goals and meaning of human life, they help individuals to give subjective meaning to work, and they support them in finding their place in the world. The goal of Life Design is to help people define future perspectives—not necessarily connected to career—that give meaning to their lives, and to see these perspectives as a whole [18].

Life Design allows mixing of topics related to decent work with educational and counseling interventions. It is conceptualized in relation to the other aspects of life and as a central part of the construction of the self. Working experiences are one of the principal dimensions of the identity structure of an individual that can be described as a dynamic system of subjective identity shapes [19]. Each one of these shapes corresponds to a life domain in which people act in different ways and relate to themselves and others in specific ways.

Recently, in the Life Design paradigm, particular attention has been given to the importance of building futures based on inclusion, sustainability, human rights, and social justice in career, and life interventions for the construction and management of the personal project for decent work and a decent life for everyone [20]. Therefore, decent work is conceptualized as an opportunity to contribute to building inclusive and sustainable societies considering work not only from an individual perspective, but also from a social one, not only oriented toward the present, but also toward the future, as a contribution to future generations [8]. From this point of view, career guidance tends to promote career choices and career designs that are less 'ego-centric' and more directed to choose actions and activities that are positive, not only for one's own benefit, but that can also contribute, inspired by less self-centered values, to the creation of life contexts and conditions aimed at sustainable development [21].

1.3. Instruments to Assess Decent Work

Different measures have been created to assess decent work; one is the Decent Work Perception Scale [22], which is a scale based on Grounded Theory, considering three dimensions: full confidence, coexistence and tolerance, and respect and recognition. The Decent Work Questionnaire (DWQ; [23]), based on the definition of decent work provided by the ILO, assesses the individual perception of decent work through 31 items divided into 7 dimensions. Said dimensions are the basic principles and values of work: appropriate working hours, productive work, the fulfillment of citizenship, social protection, opportunity, health, and safety. The Decent Work Scale [24], within the PWF, was designed to assess the attainment of decent work among employed adults [24]. Based on the guidelines offered by the ILO, the instrument is composed of 15 items divided into 5 dimensions: physical and interpersonal safe working conditions (e.g., absence of physical, mental, or emotional abuse), hours that allow free time and adequate rest, organizational values that complement family and social values, adequate compensation, and access to adequate health care. This instrument is the most-used within the career guidance literature and has been validated

in different countries and with different samples, such as sexual minorities [25–27], and minoritized racial/ethnic groups [28].

As Haiming and Yan [10] pointed out, these three instruments are generally used with workers and consider a strictly individual perspective in assessing the working conditions and the subjective aspects associated with decent work, such as the satisfaction of personal needs and respect for human rights. However, following the recent theoretical development in the Life Design paradigm [7,29,30], there is a need for a new instrument that considers a definition of decent work that involves also the aspects associated with sustainability. All of this promotes a reflection on one's career future from an inclusive and sustainable perspective, both for workers and one who is about to choose a professional path.

1.4. Decent Work, Career Adaptability, and Tendency toward a Social and Equitable Socio-Economic Vision in Career Activities

In the last few years, there has been a great deal of interest in the scientific literature regarding the analysis of the predictive elements of decent work, in particular in the field of the PWT [31]. Said theory identifies decent work as the central mediator between contextual constraints and career and psychological results, based on the essential premise that granting decent work is fundamental to building a positive social identity [31,32]. In this research, we focus on two potential predictors of the tendency to consider the possibility to have decent work in one's own career future: view of the economy and career adaptability.

The PWT focuses particular attention on how decent work is deeply affected by contextual economic factors connected to the extent to which an individual has privileges and access to resources that promote freedom in career decision-making [33]. However, it is also important to focus on the predictive role that the tendency toward a conservative or ethical–social socio-economic view in career activities has on the perception of decent work, since it has not been studied yet.

Several studies have found significant differences between a more equitable and fair economic vision and a neoliberal one in terms of choices and behaviors toward the future (e.g., [34]). For example, ref. [35] underlined that the tendency toward an ethical–social socio-economic view in career activities was positively associated with career curiosity. This makes people consider various career paths, not only the ones offered by the economic market. In addition, Garzia et al. [36] highlighted that a fairer and more encouraging economic perspective allows the youth to be better able to critically examine social inequalities (for example, gender inequalities, such as women not being treated fairly in the workplace). Lastly, Hooley et al. [37] underlined that supporting a more ethical–social vision of the future may have a positive impact on social justice and spread social equality, influencing the way people design their future including, for example, the probability to be involved in decent work. On the contrary, a neoliberal economic vision seems positively associated with indifference toward social inequality, attributing its cause in professional contexts to the incompetence of the single individual [38].

Another predictor of having high expectations of attaining decent work refers to the capacity to adapt to changes in the world of work, which is career adaptability [39]. This construct seems to play a mediational role between contextual and economic constraints and the accessibility of decent work [39].

Career adaptability can be defined as "a psycho-social construct that denotes an individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks of vocational development" [40]. This construct, developed by the Career Construction Theory's model of self-regulation [40], includes four problem-solving and coping strategies or resources: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence [41]. Concern involves being conscious about and making plans for forthcoming transitions, with a hopeful attitude about the future. Control involves owning the future and feeling able to make suitable career-related decisions. Curiosity concerns exploring the self and the environment. Finally,

confidence regards problem-solving skills and resources to face difficulties, challenges, and impediments adequately.

Different studies have analyzed the relationship between career adaptability and decent work. Vilhjalmsdottir [42], for example, examined a group of young adults and found that high levels of career adaptability are associated with a higher income and a greater perception of experiencing decent work conditions. Zammitti et al. [43] observed that individuals with higher levels of career adaptability are characterized by a more complex view of decent work, that is, they consider more dimensions and aspects of decent work.

1.5. The Present Research

Considering the existing measures of decent work [10], this research aimed to develop a parsimonious measure regarding the perception of decent work for an inclusive and sustainable career construction, well suited for career researchers and counsellors. Specifically, based on the recent suggestions of the Life Design paradigm for inclusion and sustainability, we developed a short measure useful for research, counselling, and career guidance interventions with adults (workers and non-workers) to assess the tendency to consider the possibility to have decent work in one's career future. All of this was to address the challenge of creating a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable future. The present research aimed also to test the validity of the instrument, testing the relationship between the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic view in career activities and decent work, through the mediational role of career curiosity, as a dimension of career adaptability.

The standard, classical, test theory approach was used to develop and provide validation for the "Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale", where higher scores represent a higher tendency to consider the possibility of having decent work in one's own career future. Specifically, five main studies with five independent samples of Italian adults were conducted. Data were collected throughout 2022 and during early 2023. A period of approximately one month elapsed between the data collection of one study and the next, except in the case of the structural model, whose data collection was divided into two times, which were three months apart from each other. The first study was carried out in two phases to develop statements tapping the construct of decent work and then verify the instrument's psychometric requisites, such as reliability and the structure of the scale, by using item analysis and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The second study examined the factorial structure's stability, using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The third study examined the concurrent validity by testing hypothesized relationships with existing measures. The fourth study aimed to verify the factorial structure's gender invariance. The last study tested the hypothesized structural model, analyzing the relationships between decent work, the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic view in career activities, and career curiosity.

2. Study 1: Item Development and EFA

The first study goals were (a) to generate a range of items to represent the construct of decent work in an inclusive and sustainable perspective; and (b) to examine factorial structure and reliability of the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale. We expected a unidimensional factorial structure, representing the tendency to consider the possibility of having decent work in one's own career future. Moreover, as suggested Keszei et al. [44] and Tavakol and Dennick [45] for instruments under construction, internal consistency values of 0.60 may be acceptable.

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Item Development

A team of three experts in career guidance [46] generated an initial pool of seven items to assess the target construct. The items were created to promote a reflection on the

possibility of having decent work in one's career future. Decent work grants the respect of human rights, human dignity (for example, having a fair income, equal opportunities and treatment for all, and the possibility to express opinions and concerns), and respect for the environment and the planet (for example, it does not pollute but rather contributes to the well-being of the planet) [3,4].

Additionally, in constructing the items, following guidelines proposed by Clark and Watson [46], specific care was also undertaken to ensure that each item's wording was simple, accessible to all participants, and avoided complex or 'double-barreled' structuring.

The seven items had a Flesch–Kincaid Reading Ease score of 78.1 (scores closer to 100 indicate easier reading) and Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level of 4.9 (indicating items would be understood by 7.0 grade participants).

2.1.2. Participants and Procedure

To recruit the participants, the following inclusion criteria were taken into consideration: being of legal age (in Italy, this corresponds to 18 years), and having a good ability to read and understand the Italian language.

Participants were invited to take part in the research on a completely voluntary basis through the compilation of an online research form. To fill out said form, participants had to accept the consent. In the introduction of the form, the research goals and the coordinators' contact information were presented. Participants could abandon the research at any moment. No special instructions were given to participants other than that they were asked to answer all items as accurately as possible. Participants were also informed that, once the data had been processed, they would be individually presented with a personalized report of their results. Individual career counseling was available for those that asked for it. The administration phase lasted about 5 min. The maintenance of confidentiality concerning individual findings was assured, as quantitative findings were to be reported as a group.

According to the national legislation, this research was not subject to any kind of institutional ethics committee. However, all the deontological procedures provided by the Italian Society of Vocational Guidance (SIO) and by the Italian Association of Psychology were followed.

The same procedure was used for the subsequent studies.

Overall, 492 Italian adults participated in this study, 185 of whom were men (37.6%) and 306 were women (62.2%). One person preferred not to disclose his/her gender. The age of the participants ranged between 18 and 60 years (M = 26.92; SD = 7.02). Concerning educational qualifications, 7 participants had a middle school diploma (1.4%), 157 had a high-school diploma (31.9%), 208 participants had a bachelor's degree (42.3%), 112 a master's degree (22.8%), and, finally, 8 participants (1.6%) had a postgraduate certificate.

2.1.3. Measures

In this study, we used the preliminary version of Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale.

2.1.4. Data Analysis

We first evaluated the descriptive statistics of the items, reporting the mean, standard deviation, range, and normal distribution (e.g., skew, kurtosis). Moreover, we tested possible gender bias. Based on this preliminary result, a study with the aim of evaluating the invariance in the measurements across gender (see Study 4), i.e., whether there was equivalence in the construct assessed between the genders [47], was added.

We then performed an EFA to assess the factor structure of the scale. EFA was conducted using principal axis factor and promax rotation. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used as indicators of adequacy for an EFA—KMO value should be above 0.70 and Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant [48,49]. Following the literature on the topic, items with low commonality

(<0.20) and low factor loading (<0.40) were eliminated [50,51]. The number of factors was determined by multiple criteria: (1) parallel analysis [52], one of the most accurate methods to determine the number of factors to retain [53]; (2) the scree plot, which retains the factors based on the step that forms inside the graph [54]; and (3) Kaiser–Guttman criterion, which maintains factors exceeding the eigenvalue of 1.0 [55,56]. Parallel analysis was conducted using 100 random datasets [57].

McDonald's Omega value was used to determine the internal consistency.

2.1.5. Results

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the scale.

Item	M	DS	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Item 1	4.23	0.97	1–5	−1.41	1.76
Item 2	4.30	0.98	1–5	−1.51	1.84
Item 3	4.06	0.91	1–5	−0.81	0.39
Item 4	3.72	1.15	1–5	−0.57	−0.54
Item 5	4.14	0.97	1–5	−1.04	0.59
Item 6	4.05	0.97	1–5	−0.91	0.60
Item 7	4.68	0.61	1–5	−2.16	5.55

One item (item 7) with a non-normal distribution was eliminated.

The *t*-test revealed significant gender differences for two items (items 3 and 5; $p < 0.05$). In these items, women showed higher mean values than men (item 3: $Mean_{women} = 4.16$, DS = 0.85; $Mean_{men} = 3.89$, DS = 0.97; t = −3.24; $p < 0.001$) (item 5: $Mean_{women} = 4.25$, DS = 0.93; $Mean_{men} = 3.94$, DS = 1.00; t = −3.52; $p < 0.000$).

Results of parallel analysis suggested that a unidimensional structure can be investigated, as reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Parallel analysis results.

Variable	Real Data Eigenvalues	Mean of Random Eigenvalues	95th Percentile of Random Eigenvalues
1	2.526	1.148	1.212413
2	0.878	1.076	1.112576
3	0.770	1.024	1.054759
4	0.704	0.973	0.999049
5	0.610	0.922	0.957782
6	0.512	0.859	0.901972

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that the data were suitable for conducting an EFA; KMO value was 0.80 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$). Minimum communality was 0.21 (item 4), and this model explained 42.10% of the total variance. Additionally, scree plot suggested extracting only one factor (see Figure 1), and the eigenvalue of this factor was 2.53. Factor loadings were between 0.46 (item 4) and 0.69 (item 5). All factor loadings are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Factor loadings.

Item	Factor Loading
Item 1	0.60
Item 2	0.51
Item 3	0.47
Item 4	0.46
Item 5	0.69
Item 6	0.58

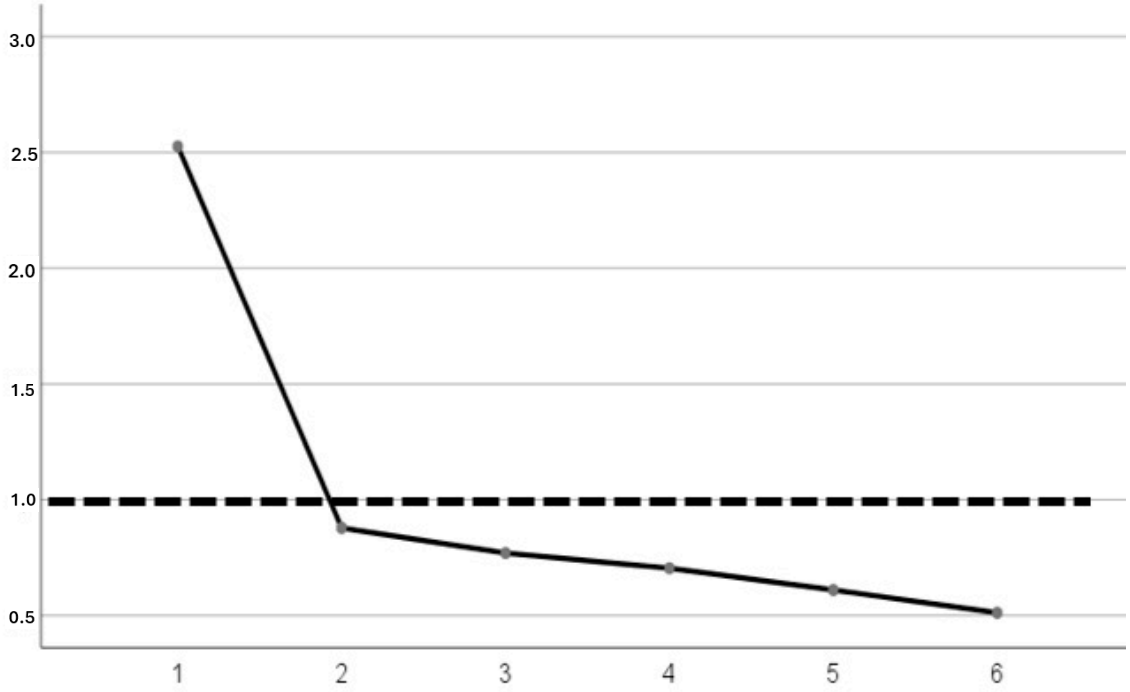

Figure 1. Scree plot.

In this study McDonald's Omega was 0.72.

3. Study 2: CFA

The second study was aimed at testing the unidimensional structure of Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale, using CFA with an independent sample [58,59].

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants and Procedure

Participants were 465 Italian adults, 209 (44.9%) men and 256 (55.1%) women, aged between 18 and 76 years (M = 28.36, ds = 10.93). Most of the participants, 211 people, had a bachelor's or master's degree (45.4%). The other participants had a secondary school diploma (110 participants, 30.3%) or a lower secondary school diploma (110 participants, 23.7%). Only 3 participants (0.6%) had a postgraduate degree.

The same procedure used in Study 1 was used.

3.1.2. Measures

In this study, we used the final version of the scale (6 items). This version is reported in Appendix A.

3.1.3. Data Analysis

CFA was conducted using LISREL 8.80 [60]. For the assessment of the model fit, we used the following indices: ratio between Satorra–Bentler chi-square test (SBχ^2, [61]) and degrees of freedom, which must be less than 3; Comparative Fit Index (CFI; [62]), which must have a value greater than 0.90 [62,63]; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; [64]), which must be less than 0.80 [64,65]; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR; [66]), which must be less than 0.80 [66]; and Goodness of Fit Index and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (GFI and AGFI; [67]) which must have values greater than 0.90 [66].

Lastly, McDonald's Omega value was used to determine the internal consistency.

3.1.4. Results

The tested model showed the following fit to the data: SB$\chi^2(9) = 9.82$, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.03 (C.I. 90% 0.00–0.01), SRMR = 0.03, GFI = 0.99, AGFI = 0.98. Explained variance (R^2) of the items was between 0.19 (item 4) and 0.43 (item 2).

McDonald's Omega value in this study was 0.73.

4. Study 3: Concurrent Validity

The aim of the third study was to assess concurrent validity by correlating the measure of decent work with other measures assessing meaningful work and life satisfaction. Meaningful work refers to experiencing one's own work as something meaningful, with a positive value for oneself and the community [68]. Life satisfaction refers to the subjective quality of life of people [69]. These dimensions were considered because previous research has highlighted the predictive role of decent work on meaningful and fulfilling employment [70] and satisfaction with one's own life and job [71]. Significant and positive correlations between decent work, meaningful work, and life satisfaction were expected, as these dimensions are generally considered positive aspects of organizational and psychological functioning [8,70].

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants and Procedure

The participants in this study were 441 Italian adults, 180 men (40.8%) and 261 women (59.2%), aged between 18 and 62 years (M = 28.48; SD = 9.55). Most of the participants had a bachelor's degree (181 participants, 41.0%) or diploma (173 participants, 39.2%). The others had a master's degree (80 participants, 18.1%) or a postgraduate degree (7 participants, 1.6%).

The same procedures used in Study 1 were used.

4.1.2. Measures

In this study, we used the final version of the scale (6 items), with a McDonald's Omega of 0.66.

Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI; [68]—Italian version [72]): It consisted of 10 items to assess meaningful work. Participants must answer on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (absolutely false) to 5 (absolutely true). Sample items include "I have found a meaningful career" or "I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful". In this study, McDonald's Omega was 0.84.

Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS; [73]): It was a one-dimensional measure of life satisfaction. It consisted of 5 items, statements towards which the participant had to declare the degree of agreement or disagreement on a 7-level Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items include "In most ways my life is close to my ideal" or "I am satisfied with my life". In this study, McDonald's Omega was 0.83.

4.1.3. Data Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess concurrent validity.

4.1.4. Results

Table 4 shows the correlation results. As expected, Decent work correlated positively with Meaningful work and Life satisfaction.

Table 4. Correlation between Decent Work and others measures.

	Meaningful Work	**Life Satisfaction**
Decent work	0.21 **	0.15 **

Note. ** = $p < 0.01$.

5. Study 4: Gender Invariance

The fourth study tested the gender invariance of the scale; this type of analysis was important because it allowed us to establish whether the items had a different psychological meaning between men and women [47] and to check whether the gender differences obtained may have resulted from item bias or whether they were real gender differences [74].

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants and Procedure

The participants were 519 Italian adults; 253 of them were men (48.7%) and 266 were women (51.3%). The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 76 years (M = 25.89; DS = 9.98). With regard to educational qualifications, they were distributed as follows: 194 participants had a secondary school diploma (37.4%), 107 had a high school diploma (20.6%), 148 had a bachelor's degree (28.5%), 62 had a master's degree (11.9%) and 8 participants (1.5%) had a postgraduate degree.

The same procedure used in Study 1 was used.

5.1.2. Measures

In this study, we used the final version of the scale (6 items), with a McDonald's Omega of 0.70.

5.1.3. Data Analysis

Following Little's [74] approach, two categories of invariance were assessed: the first referred to the psychometric properties of the scales and the second concerned the differences between the two groups in variances and averages [75]. With respect to the first category, we tested (1) Configural factorial invariance, which indicates whether the instrument measures the same latent variable in the two groups [76] and is obtained when the same factor loading pattern occurs between the groups [77]; (2) Metric factorial invariance, which indicates whether factor loadings are equivalent between groups [77]; and (3) Scalar invariance, which tests whether the measurement is operationally defined equally between boys and girls [75].

After testing the first category, we analyzed the second category of invariance. Specifically, we assessed the homogeneity of the variances and averages between the groups, to see whether they differed significantly [74]. Regarding the means, we expected differences between men and women, with higher average scores for men. Research about the differences between men and women in the field of decent work has shown that women are paid less than men and, thus, have a worse perception of their income [78], they perceive more obstacles throughout their careers [79], and they experience more work–family-related conflicts. As a consequence, women are less optimistic regarding the possibility of having a career [80]. These working conditions may promote in women a lower perception of having, in the future, decent work.

5.1.4. Results

The configural invariance showed good fit indices: χ^2 = 23.46 (df = 18), CFI = 0.99, NNFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.03 (CI_{90} = 0.0–0.07).

We then tested metric invariance. The model showed the following fit indices: χ^2 = 25.77 (df = 23), CFI = 0.99, NNFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.02 (CI_{90} = 0.0–0.06). As also highlighted in Table 5, no significant differences emerged between the two models (p = 0.80). Furthermore, the RMSEA value of this model was within the 90% RMSEA confidence interval of the previous model, and the CFI changes were less than 0.01 (ΔCFI). These results show the invariance of items when measured between the two groups.

We therefore proceeded with the scalar invariance. Scalar invariance showed the following fit indices: χ^2 = 34.21 (df = 28), CFI = 0.98, NNFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.03 (CI_{90} = 0.0–0.06). Moreover, in this case, there were no significant differences between this model and the previous one (p = 0.13). The other results also showed a good fit of the

model: the RMSEA value of this model was within the 90% RMSEA confidence interval of the previous model, and the CFI changes were less than 0.01 (ΔCFI). Overall, these tests showed invariance of items when measured across men and women.

Table 5. Fit indices for the nested sequence in the multiple factor analysis and latent mean-level differences.

	χ^2	*df*	*p*	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δ*df*	*P*	RMSEA	RMSEA 90% CI	CFI	NNFI	SRMR	Latent Mean: Man	Latent Mean: Woman
Configural invariance	23.46	18	0.17	-	-	-	0.035	0.000–0.069	0.990	0.983	0.036	-	-
Weak invariance	25.77	23	0.31	-	-	-	0.022	0.000–0.057	0.995	0.993	0.035	-	-
Strong invariance	34.21	28	0.19	-	-	-	0.028	0.000–0.059	0.988	0.988	0.038	-	-
Homogeneity of variance	36.26	29	0.16	2.04	1	0.15	0.030	0.000–0.059	0.987	0.986	0.050	-	-
Latent mean invariance	68.67	29	<0.001	34.46	1	<0.001	0.071	0.049–0.093	0.926	0.924	0.035	3.85	4.18

Finally, the homogeneity of the variances between men and women was demonstrated (see Table 5), but the invariance of the factor means was not supported. Specifically, men showed greater tendency to consider the possibility of having decent work in their career future than women.

6. Structural Model

The fifth study examined the relationships between decent work, the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic view in career activities, and career curiosity. As highlighted by Zhao et al. [81], improvement of new generation employees' career adaptability may not be systematized if we only explore them from the perspective of the individual. It is crucial to analyze the contextual factors that might affect the designation of decent work. In line with this, as mentioned above, Duffy et al. [33] considered the role that contextual economic constraints may have on career adaptability and on decent work. Furthermore, ref. [35] found a relationship between the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic view in career activities and career curiosity. Based on these previous studies, it was expected that the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic view in career activities was positively related to the tendency to consider the possibility of having decent work in one's own career future, directly and indirectly, through the mediating role of career curiosity. Therefore, it was hypothesized that career curiosity fully mediated the relationship between the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic view in career activities and decent work.

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 150 Italian adults; 92 of them were men (61%) and the 58 were women (39%). The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 25 years (M = 18.01; ds = 1.34). With regard to educational qualifications, they were distributed as follows: 15 participants had a secondary school diploma (10%), 120 had a high school diploma (80%), 12 had a bachelor's degree (8%) and 3 had a master's degree (2%).

6.1.2. Measures

This study used the final version of the scale. In this study, McDonald's Omega was 0.83.

Career Adapt-Abilities Scale—Italian Form (CAAS; [82]): The instrument was made up of 24 items, the same as in the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale—International Form [41]. Participants responded to each item on a scale from 1 (Not strong) to 5 (Strongest). The 24 items combined to give a total score, which indicated career adaptability, and were also divided into four subscales that measured the adapt-ability resources of concern (e.g., "Realizing that today's choices shape my future"), control (e.g., "Counting on myself"), curiosity (e.g., "Investigating options before making a choice"), and confidence (e.g., "Working up to

my ability"). In this study, only the subscale Curiosity was used. The McDonald's Omega was 0.92.

Thoughts about future development and economy in career field [83]: This measure was an 11-item scale to analyze thoughts with a conservative vision of economics (five items, e.g., "In order to promote employment and personal fulfillment, we should give more importance to competition because it encourages people to put more effort into their actions and develop new ideas.") and thoughts with a more equitable and supportive conception (six items, e.g., "People need to take action in order to reduce poverty and unemployment. If they do not struggle to look for a job by themselves, they will never find it."). Participants responded to each item on a scale ranging from 1 (you judge that thought extremely unsuitable) to 5 (you judge that thought completely suitable). As reported by Nota et al. [21], such a questionnaire is a psychometrically valid and reliable measure. In this study, we used only the subscale composed of six items for assessing thoughts with a more equitable and supportive conception. McDonald's Omega was 0.77.

6.1.3. Procedure

The measures were presented at two different times, three months apart. In the first administration, the measures *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale-Italian Form* and *Thoughts about future development and economy in career field* were presented. In the second administration, participants filled out the *Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale in Italy.*

To conduct mediation analyses, it would have been desirable to collect data in three moments, but, when this is not possible, two-phase data collection is certainly better than cross-sectional data collection [84]. The literature has discussed the time interval that must elapse between one administration and another [85,86]. Selig and Preacher [86] suggested not using too long-time intervals, as the effects may disappear.

6.1.4. Data Analysis

Preliminary analysis: Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations were computed. In addition, three preliminary T tests were carried out to verify if there were any significant across-group differences in tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic vision in career activities, career curiosity, and decent work in relation to gender.

Mediational analysis: The hypothesized model was tested through structural equation modeling, SEM (MPLUS 7, [87]). The constructs of tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic vision in career activities, career curiosity, and decent work used in the study were represented by a single-measure variable. Thus, we followed the advice of Little et al. [88] to create item parcels for latent constructs, and, using a specific balancing technique (item-to-construct), we created two parcels for each dimension.

In order to examine the model's fit, we used the maximum-likelihood (ML) estimation method [89]. We chose the chi-square test, which is by far the most used goodness-of-fit index [89], but, as it is highly affected by model complexity and sample size, we included other indices to obtain better assessment of model fit: CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR.

6.1.5. Results

Preliminary Analysis

Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations are summarized in Table 6. Positive correlations were observed among tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic vision in career activities and career adaptability, and among career adaptability and decent work (see Table 6). Three *t*-tests revealed no significant gender differences with regards to tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic vision in career activities—$t(148) = 0.121$, $p = 0.729$, career curiosity—$t(148) = 0.199$, $p = 0.428$, and decent work—$t(148) = 1.495$, $p = 0.223$ (see Table 1).

Table 6. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations.

				Men		Women	
	Ω	**2**	**3**	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**
1. Social Economy	0.77	0.168 *	0.324 **	22.13	3.73	23.83	3.50
2. Curiosity	0.92		0.17 *	23.48	3.35	23.65	3.48
3. Decent Work	0.83			22.48	3.79	23.60	4.52

Note: Ω = McDonald's Omega; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$.

Structural Model

The hypothesized fully mediated model (Model A; see Figure 2) had a good fit with the data: $\chi^2(6) = 11.36$, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.04. Furthermore, the bootstrapping results revealed that the indirect effect of career curiosity was significant (95% CI = [0.01, 0.10]).

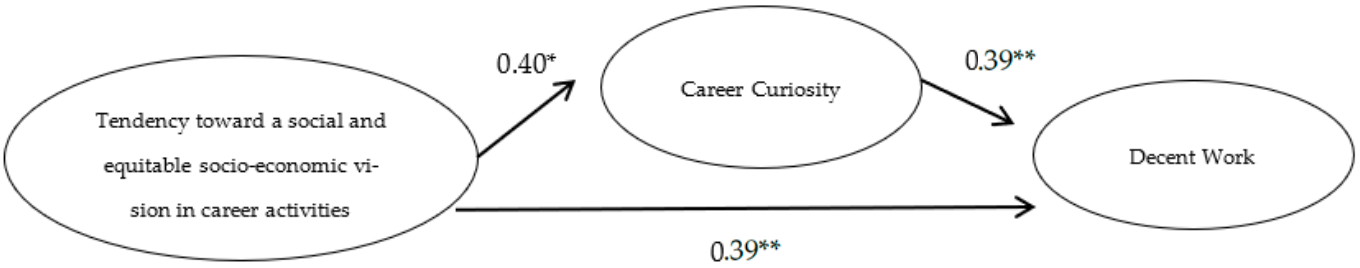

Figure 2. Significant standardized parameter estimates in the partially mediated model. Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

7. Discussion

The goal of this research was to describe the development and validation of the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale in the Italian context as a measure of decent work. For this purpose, we conducted five studies.

In the first study, we created the items of the scale and tested the factorial structure through an exploratory factor analysis. Following the guidelines reported in the literature [48,49], the items were found to be suitable for the EFA: they presented a good commonality and a percentage of variance explained value of 42.10%. The parallel analysis underlined the possibility to extract only one factor. Reliability was studied through McDonald's Omega value, which presented an acceptable limit. The factor loadings of the items were loaded on a single factor, with acceptable values. The initial results suggested that the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale is a unidimensional instrument with good psychometric properties to be used with Italian adults.

The second study confirmed the factorial structure of the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale. Results confirmed the structure of the instrument as unidimensional, underlining that the different aspects of decent work (for example, respect for human rights, the dignity of every human being, the environment, and the planet) saturate in a single construct. The solution detected showed good fit indices. All the items had R^2 values between 0.19 and 0.43, which means that they were good indicators of the construct.

The third study assessed the concurrent validity of the instrument. The Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale positively correlated with the other two constructs: meaningful work and life satisfaction. These results are supported by the literature, since having a good job can predict the meaningfulness of the work itself. Decent work leads to meaningful work by helping workers to satisfy their needs for social connection [90], promoting the realization of individuals in their life and the work itself [91]. Moreover, the perception of being able to have a decent job in the future may help with

the instability in the world of work nowadays, allowing one to imagine a better life [92], in turn encouraging a better life quality [93,94].

The fourth study examined the gender invariance in the scale and confirmed a configural, metric, and scalar invariance. This meant that no item presented bias connected to gender. The Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale measures the same hypothesized dimension both in men and women. After having established gender invariance, we verified if there were differences between men and women in the measured construct. We detected, as hypothesized, some differences between men and women, with men showing a greater tendency to consider the possibility of having decent work in their own career future.

Gender issues connected to the world of work are a matter that creates strong social, economic, and political tensions. Women have a lower income compared to men and a lower probability of reaching an important and well-paid employment status [95,96]. In some professional environments, women are marginalized because of the existing inequalities in family leave, the care for children and the elderly, and workplace safety [95]. The results of our study are in line with the literature and support the idea that, also on a personal level, women's future is characterized by a less optimistic view.

With the fifth study, we wanted to evaluate a partial mediational model between the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic view in career activities and decent work through career curiosity. Fit indices confirmed the hypothesis. The mediating role of career curiosity on the relationship between the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic view in career activities and the perception of decent work suggested that the tendency toward a social and equitable socio-economic view predicted career curiosity, which in turn was positively connected to decent work. An ethical–social view of the economy may promote a higher curiosity and exploration of different career paths, not only those that the economic market tends to offer [35]. As also suggested by Duffy et al. [97], career curiosity, as a dimension of career adaptability, is associated with an increased sense of choice in one's career, as well as the analysis and exploration of the various professional paths more in line with decent work for the individual, other people, and the environment. These results also highlighted the importance of analyzing the role of contextual factors in developing the propensity for a good and decent job. This is in line with the study of Masdonati et al. [93] that remarked that the access to decent work is limited by social and contextual factors, such as economic thoughts, and these, in turn, predict fulfilment at work and general well-being.

Thus, the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale presents good psychometric properties in the Italian context. It is a unidimensional instrument that, compared to the already existing scales, proposes the evaluation of decent work from a broad perspective that also looks at inclusion and sustainability. It supports a vision of decent work as an opportunity to contribute to building inclusive and sustainable societies. This idea of decent work is oriented towards the future and not just the present. Furthermore, compared to existing decent work measures, the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale is a short instrument that allows the construct to be assessed with only a few items. This could be an advantage for future research and practice.

8. Implications for Practice and Research

This research has both practical and theoretical implications. From a practical perspective, the instrument can be used in individual and group career counseling activities to encourage people to reflect on future decent work. In career interventions, the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale can be used in pre- and post-test to assess the efficacy of career interventions that aim to promote the idea of decent work from an inclusive and sustainable perspective. Moreover, the mediational model hypothesized shows that decent work is influenced by a social and equitable view of the economy and career curiosity. This means that it is necessary to design career guidance activities that

promote a view of the economy from a social and equitable perspective by taking into consideration career curiosity. This may contribute to an idea of work that includes not only personal needs, but also contextual ones (for example, respect for the environment).

Regarding research implications, the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale represents a valid instrument that can support researchers in analyzing the tendency to consider the possibility of having decent work in one's career future. Moreover, in line with the studies by Duffy et al. [97], the present research adds to the dimensions that precede decent work and the idea that people have about the economy. Having a positive view of the economy is associated with an inclusive and sustainable view of decent work.

9. Limitations and Directions for Future Studies

The obtained results are to be read while considering a series of limitations. Firstly, the total percentage of the variance explained was below the recommended minimum limit suggested by the literature [98]. Future studies should verify which other factors may be added in favor of decent work from an inclusive and sustainable perspective. Secondly, the predictive validity of decent work measured through the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale has not been tested. Future studies may take into consideration the possibility to test this validity type. Thirdly, some variables connected to the sample that may influence the perception of decent work (such as a social vulnerability, a migration story, or income differences) have not been considered. This implies that future research should also be carried out with specific samples. We did not assess the test–retest validity. Future research may fill this gap to obtain an even more reliable decent work measure. Another limitation concerns the fact that we had no information about the professional status of the participants. A final limitation is that, for Study 5, data were collected in two phases. However, although some authors suggest that three times are needed, others consider two-phase data collection adequate [84].

10. Conclusions

This research describes the development and initial validation of the Decent Work Scale for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction, a new measure of decent work. Dissimilar to existing measures that focus on an individual perspective, the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale proposes a measure of decent work that considers aspects of inclusion and sustainability. Five studies conducted on samples of Italian adults have shown that the scale is a valid and reliable instrument. Overall, the Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale provides a useful framework for measuring decent work from an inclusive and sustainable perspective.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Future Construction Scale.

Instructions The following statements are about some important aspects of the work that you may have in the future. Consider them one by one and specify if and how much you agree with them, keeping in mind that 1 means "Definitely NO, this is not what I think about the work I will have in the future". 5 means "Definitely YES, this is what I think about the work I will have in the future". You can obviously also choose the other numbers (2, 3, 4) that represent the middle positions.
1. People must not accept work in a place that does not grant everybody the right to also freely express their opinions about the work performed;
2. People must accept working uniquely in places in which they are accepted for who they are (regardless of gender, age, ethnic group, religion, political orientation, etc.);
3. In a workplace, the feelings and needs of workers must be a priority and considered by everyone with respect and attention;
4. People must not accept working in a company that produces objects and materials that are harmful for the environment;
5. Even with a high income, people must not accept working in a place where they feel they are not treated with dignity;
6. People must not accept a job if a fair pay is not provided.

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