

## Article

# Italian Entertainment Professionals' Sustainable Employability: What Factors to Consider? A Network Analysis

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**Abstract:** Sustainable employability (SE) refers to a worker's extensive set of capabilities to make a valuable and healthy contribution over time. Due to the high fragmentation and precariousness of their working conditions, entertainment professionals' SE is at risk. Methods: By considering valuable work, health, productivity, and long-term perspective capabilities as expressing entertainment professionals' SE, this study explored the unique pattern of associations among entertainment professionals' SE, conversion factors at personal (i.e., intrinsic motivation) and contextual levels (i.e., work–health balance external support and health climate, SE policies and social policies), and SE outcomes (i.e., life and job satisfaction and task performance), descriptive and network analyses were conducted in a sample of 123 Italian entertainment professionals. Results: Italian entertainment professionals' SE was associated with factors at all levels of conversion. Conversion factors at the organizational level (i.e., SE policies and social policies) had a higher predictability (i.e., practical potential) in the SE network, compared to factors at the personal level (i.e., intrinsic motivation). Conclusion. This study added empirical evidence to SE models based on the capability approach, by showing the central role of contextual factors in the development of an extensive set of entertainment professionals' capabilities.

**Keywords:** entertainment professionals; sustainable employability; conversion factors; network analysis; precariousness



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## 1. Introduction

In the aging and postmodern world of work, maintaining and fostering all workers' sustainable employability (SE) is key issue both from a societal and personal perspective. Indeed, on one hand, a greater and prolonged labor force participation is fundamental to economically sustain societies. On the other hand, work itself can promote people's health, if meeting basic conditions, and become a central stage for achieving personal ambitions and values. SE's authentic meaning is exactly at the interplay of gaining and maintaining employment, and, thus, employability, and preserving workers' and organizations' wellbeing in a valuable manner [1]. Individuals, employers, and policy-makers have the shared responsibility to cooperate in order to achieve such a win–win goal. Rather than focusing on workers' employability in the form of an individual's active adaptability to market demands and transitions [2], this study addresses the sustainable facet of employability. This facet specifically refers to the complementary roles of workers, employers, and governments in the maintenance of workers' health and in the promotion of a valuable working life over a prolonged period of time. In this sense, addressing sustainable employability fits into the global goal of pursuing inclusive decent work by also fostering sustainable economic growth [3].

Despite a nonunique consensus in the literature, the most comprehensive model of SE addresses its definition as follows: "Sustainable employability means that, throughout their working lives, workers can realize tangible opportunities in the form of a set of capabilities.

They also enjoy the necessary conditions that allow them to make a valuable contribution through their work, now and in the future, while safeguarding their health and welfare. This requires, on the one hand, a work context that facilitates them, and on the other hand the attitude and motivation to exploit these opportunities" (p. 74) [1]. Such a definition rests its foundation on the capability approach (CA), an economical approach that truly emphasizes the people's freedom and agency of choosing what to value and, therefore, what to seek to achieve. On this basis, each human deserves equal individual and public opportunities for development [4]. When applied to the work context, the CA underlines that a person is sustainably employed when enjoying real opportunities or capabilities to maintain a job while preserving health and contributing to something valuable. The set of capabilities that each worker is able and enabled to gain is, therefore, crucial, even more than actual functioning that could be (negatively) influenced by several personal or contextual factors.

Although SE has initially been thought of in relation to aging workers [5], workers with disabilities [6], or some specific categories of workers (e.g., nurses [7] or construction workers [8]), applying the CA to the study of SE makes clear how SE intrinsically concerns workers of all ages, health statuses, and professions, as all deserve to be sustainably employed. This paper focuses on Italian entertainment professionals' SE and, more specifically, on factors involved in the promotion of these professionals' SE, for at least three reasons that will be argued below.

First, the literature on factors affecting employee SE is still limited. Scholars have only started identifying the impacting role of some personal factors (i.e., organizational awareness, self-knowledge, willingness to compromise, fear of stigmatization [9], and vertical trust [10]) and contextual factors (i.e., development opportunities [11], professional development [7], teamwork [10], relationship with co-workers and supervisors, autonomy and equipment sufficiency [12], leadership [9,13], HR practices [13], and SE policies [14]) on SE. Furthermore, definition and modeling of SE is still not univocal across the literature. If considering the most influential model of SE proposed by [1], empirical studies addressing the exact position of different elements in the model are still scarce. Overall, none of the existing studies specifically focused on entertainment workers so far. Studies focusing on the sustainability of the Italian work context, which is traditionally represented by some peculiarities, are also limited (e.g., [15]).

Second, the entertainment industry, being both in expansion and mainly populated by atypical contracts, may serve as a model for how the work market, organizations, and individuals are undergoing similar changes, and how to face them [16]. Indeed, entertainment workers, working in the artistic and entertainment field, are historically the first gig workers, engaged in performing arts, normally occasional or unique, and with a single contract [17]. Nowadays, these professionals are one of the most fragile groups in terms of the instability and intermittence of their work patterns [17]. In Italy, the majority of them also face critical economic conditions and scarce access to social protection [17,18]. As a consequence, their SE is particularly at risk and urgently deserves to be attended.

Third, due to the ontological flexibility of their profession [19], and to the need for creative workers to continuously invest resources and time to improve their employability, an individual perspective of employability still prevails in the entertainment industry [20]. Moreover, entertainment workers' strategies and objectives are socially portrayed as driven by internal and personal motives rather than impacted by work, economic, and political contexts [21]. Therefore, we argue that a sustainable perspective to these professionals' employability, integrating personal and contextual factors, is missing. Artists' work is, per definition, creative and innovative, potentially emancipatory, and enrolled in social processes of interaction [19]. Consequently, it seems not far positioned from an SE perspective as framed under the lens of the CA, to the extent that such a perspective strongly emphasizes the personal and societal value of work. Adopting an SE perspective while addressing factors involved in the building and maintenance of entertainment workers' employability may, thus, be particularly appropriate.

Following the abovementioned literature limitations and reflections, our study aims to explore how and which personal and contextual factors are involved in the promotion of SE outcomes (i.e., life and job satisfaction and task performance) among Italian entertainment professionals, while adopting an SE perspective, which considers entertainment professionals' SE as an extensive set of capabilities. To meet this objective, we will first outline the main features and employment characteristics of entertainment professionals in Italy, and then propose an SE model for the entertainment industry, based on Van der Klink et al.'s theory [1]. By using a network analysis, a pattern of unique associations between elements of such a model (i.e., conversion factors, SE and SE outcomes) will be depicted and insights provided.

### 1.1. Who Are Italian Entertainment Professionals?

Work in the entertainment sector includes live performances (theatre, music, dance, and circus activities), cinema, radio, television, and audiovisual, with some overlap in the visual performing arts as well as in the broader cultural sector [22]. In this sector, professions and jobs with a high artistic, cultural, and creative content (e.g., composers, directors, actors, singers, dancers, and also costume and set designers) coexist with non-artistic but highly specialized support occupations (e.g., stage photographers, sound technicians, tailors and make-up artists, administrators, legal experts in the sector, salespeople, and agents and representatives) and with non-artistic and non-specialized occupations, such as cloakroom and mask makers, cleaners, porters, carpenters, and security guards, which are nevertheless indispensable for the performance of activities [22]. While musicians and dancers often have defined educational backgrounds, the educational and apprenticeship background of most entertainment workers is varied and open, as well as frequently informal and uncertified. Furthermore, there is no automatic association between performing arts workers and performing arts enterprises: not all entertainment workers are always employed exclusively by performing arts institutions or enterprises [22]. Due to this high heterogeneity, quantification of entertainment workers is challenging [22,23]. In 2018, entertainment workers were estimated at about 142,000 [24], or 0.6–1.4% of the total Italian employed population [22]. Even considering quantification challenges, the sector is registering a global expansion: despite having been strongly negatively impacted during COVID-19 [17], it is increasingly influential in developed economies, shifted towards a creative economy [25]. Nowadays, together with work digitization and innovation, the sector is under continuous transformation, registering the rise of new forms of creativity [22,26].

Peculiar employment and welfare challenges characterize the Italian entertainment sector. First, among artists, even among successful actors or musicians, experiencing a situation of multiple job holding or a combination of activities is very frequent. This is both due to the strong intermittence and discontinuity of periods of actual activity and the general need for elevating wages. Entertainment professionals often manage more than one occupation at the same time: for example, they carry out two part-time occupations, one of which is continuous and regularly paid, and the other occasional and paid little or not at all. Furthermore, the career paths of these workers may, over time, alternate between periods of unemployment and periods of employment, and also include mobility between sectors (e.g., to teaching or to commerce) [22]. Overall, income inequality and discontinuity is inherent both to the precariousness of the job and the nature of the artistic production [23]. For example, the times of conception, production, and gestation of the artistic product, as well as the periods of training and study, are productive, as they are necessary to achieve a final product, but not remunerated nor protected [23]. As a result, new social shock absorbers suited to the abovementioned vulnerability and income intermittence are required [23].

High fragmentation is the second distinguishing trait of entertainment workers' positions. Fragmentation characterizes the job itself, due to the technical and functional division of labor among diversified professionals [23], the need for dealing with multiple clients and firms, and the impossibility to perform in the same show or work in the same place over the long term [17]. Contractual profiles are frequently very heterogeneous (e.g., employees,

VAT numbers, co.co.pro, on-call), with a high degree of self-employment [17]. Illegal, gray (i.e., anomalies in unpaid working hours, practice or workdays, and/or including activities not foreseen in the contract [27]), black, or informal labor are also widespread. At the same time, some form of social insecurity or insurance irregularity are common [17,23]. Such a plurality of atypical contractual forms worsens the elaboration of effective norms and health and safety measures, and causes a reduction in bureaucratization and the public and institutional recognition of the sector [17,23]. Entertainment professionals themselves have only recently started joining communities, unions, or associations and initiating collective mobilizations to exercise their rights and representation [17,23].

### *1.2. Entertainment Professionals' Sustainable Employability*

The capability set, depicting several valuable opportunities an employee may enjoy at work, best defines SE [1,28]. In agreement with the literature revisions on the effectiveness of SE interventions [28], SE opportunities are described to be related to at least four classes: (1) valuable work capabilities, considering perception of harmony with the organization regarding the availability of knowledge, personal resources, and skills; (2) health capabilities, considering health, vitality, and wellbeing opportunities; (3) productivity capabilities, referring to opportunities of safety, cost-effectiveness, and the use of the right competencies to adequately perform the job; (4) long-term perspective capabilities, concerning the sustainability of valuable, healthy, and productive work over time.

Both Van der Klink et al.'s [1] and Picco et al.'s [28] models of SE mention that specific conditions are required to develop an extensive set of capabilities. Such conditions can be considered as conversion factors as, if they are available at the workplace, they can convert existing personal and contextual resources (i.e., personal abilities and capacities, and work inputs, such as task structure and work demands) into tangible capabilities. Robeyns [29] assumed that conversion factors to be articulated at three levels: (1) a personal level, referring to job social skills, energy levels, or motivation; (2) a work level, related to, for example, power relationships and work climate, or other factors specific to the work environment; (3) an organizational level, implying both organizational policies and societal legislation.

Due to the aforementioned characteristics, entertainment professionals' employment conditions may be a threat to their SE. In particular, such conditions can significantly put at risk entertainment workers' set of (a) valuable work capabilities, as entertainment workers' perception of value fit with their organization, and skills' development may be compromised rather than fostered by a work situation of multiple job holding and discontinuity; (b) health capabilities, as the loss of usual work routine, safety challenges, heavy physical and cognitive workloads, or difficulties in accessing public health and social measures may impact the development of these capabilities; (c) productivity capabilities, as the experienced role ambiguity, a high work pressure, or the need for exercising autonomy skills to perform effectively may affect the development of such capabilities; and (d) long-term perspective capabilities, as the preservation of a valuable, healthy, and productive job over time may be impacted by precarious work conditions. As a consequence, entertainment professionals' life and job satisfaction and task performance can be critically affected. Indeed, overall life and job satisfaction are good measures of entertainment professionals' attainment of what it is important and valued in their life and work, respectively [30,31]. At the same time, task performance is a good measure of the degree of achievement of entertainment professionals' work goals, given their set of capabilities [14,32,33].

Many personal and contextual factors affect the development of an extensive set of capabilities, and, therefore, entertainment workers' functioning. On a personal level, a high intrinsic motivation, defined as the motivation to engage in a behaviour because of the inherent satisfaction of the activity [34], has the potential to significantly favor the development of entertainment workers' capabilities [1,34]. On a contextual level, and, more specifically, on a work level, a positive workers' perception of external support on work–health balance and a favorable health climate in terms of health prevention

within the organization may also facilitate the development of workers' capabilities, by the provision of supporting healthy work conditions [35]. Finally, on a contextual and, more specifically, organizational level, both appropriate SE policies and, at a broader level, social policies may significantly stimulate the development of entertainment workers' capabilities. Indeed, SE policies that are organizational practices potentially improving SE [36] aim to: (1) embracing a coherent vision and strategy for SE; (2) adopting a structural approach for health promotion, career, knowledge and skills development, and attention to work–life balance; (3) allocating resources to working on health, development and work–life balance; (4) integrating HRM practices in the scope of SE; (5) enable employees to prepare plans and inform them about SE organizational strategies; (6) creating a “learning organization” culture in which employees are respected and valued [37]. Such actions could, therefore, be particularly important to contribute to entertainment workers' sustainable careers through the development of healthy enterprises [36]. At the same time, political actions, specifically tailored to entertainment professionals and aimed at (1) ensuring fair wages, (2) protecting health and safety, (3) ensuring contractual stability, (4) recognizing the value of the artistic profession, and (5) promoting professional growth have the potential to improve the set of entertainment workers' capabilities [38]. When it comes to addressing entertainment professionals' employability under a sustainable perspective, it then could be particularly important to consider all the abovementioned classes of capabilities, personal, work, and organizational conversion factors, and SE outcomes or functioning. Figure 1 provides an SE model for entertainment professionals, including all the cited elements.



**Figure 1.** SE model for entertainment professionals. SE policies: sustainable employability policies.

### 1.3. Study Hypotheses

In regard to the above premises and the presented SE model for entertainment professionals, we hypothesized the following:

**H1:** Considering Italian entertainment professionals' SE, conversion factors at all levels of conversion (i.e., personal and contextual levels) are relevant. In particular, personal conversion factors (i.e., intrinsic motivation) and contextual conversion factors, at the work level (i.e., work–health balance, external support, and health climate), and organizational level (i.e., SE policies and social policies), are positively associated with entertainment professionals' SE. This last point is conceived as the set of entertainment professionals' valuable work, health, productivity, and long-term perspective capabilities.

**H2:** Entertainment professionals' SE (in the form of a set of valuable work, health, productivity, and long-term perspective capabilities) is positively associated with SE outcomes or functioning (i.e., life satisfaction, job satisfaction and task performance).

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Population, Design, and Procedure

An online cross-sectional survey, with the aim of assessing conversion factors at the personal, work, and organizational level, as well as SE and SE outcomes, was administered on a sample of 123 Italian entertainment professionals who ranged in gender, age, education, and profession (65.9% male, 39.3 years old on average, 36.6% possessing a high school diploma, and 61.8% employed in the artistic field at the time of compilation). The sample's

complete descriptive statistics (i.e., age, gender, educational level, artistic education, artistic role, occupation, other occupation, type of artistic contract, job tenure, and working hours) are shown in Table 1. Through the use of Facebook and LinkedIn, participants were primarily found in Northern Italy. Respondents were made aware of the study, given the option to decline participation, and encouraged to contact the authors via email with any questions they may have had about it. The respondents' privacy was maintained, and data were handled in a private, anonymous manner. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology of the University of Milano-Bicocca (RM-2021-414).

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of the total sample (N = 123).

Variable	Total Sample
Age (mean)	39.3
Gender (%)	
Men	65.9
Women	34.1
Educational level (%)	
Middle education	1.6
Secondary education	36.6
Post-secondary education or bachelor's degree	35.8
Master's degree	17.1
Post-degree master or PhD	8.9
Artistic education	
Academy or vocational school diploma	37.4
Conservatorium	15.4
Other professional courses	30.9
Other	16.3
Employed in the artistic field at the survey moment	
Yes	61.8
Artistic occupation	
Actors, singers, dancers, mimes, performers	33.3
Musicians, songwriters, authors	24.4
Make-up artists, costumers, set designers	1.6
Stagehands, propmen, technicians, stage managers	4.9
Directors, choreographers, writers, screenwriters	13.0
Other	22.8
Other occupation	
Yes	72.3
Type of artistic contract	
Open-ended contract	11.8
Fixed-term contract	17.1
Occasional performance	43.3
Other	27.6
Artistic job tenure	
Less than 1 year	1.3
1–5 years	13.2
6–15 years	32.9
16–25 years	28.9
More than 25 years	23.7
Working hours in the artistic field	
Up to 2 h	10.5
2–4 h	22.4
6–8 h	34.2
More than 8 h	32.9

## 2.2. Measures

- (a) Personal and contextual factors (personal, work, and organizational conversion factors). The intrinsic motivation scale from the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale [34] was used to measure entertainment workers' motivation in its au-

tonomous multidimensions, as a personal conversion factor positively related to optimal functioning [34]. Respondents answered on a scale ranging from 1 “not at all” to 7 “completely”, with higher scores indicating higher levels of motivation (intrinsic motivation: 3 items,  $\alpha = 0.93$ ). The Work–Health Balance questionnaire (WHBq) [35], External Support scale, (ES, 6 items,  $\alpha = 0.89$ ) and Health Climate scale (HC, 5 items,  $\alpha = 0.94$ ) were used to assess entertainment workers’ perception of external support for their work–health balance and organizational health climate as work conversion factors particularly associated with SE functioning [35]. Participants answered on a scale ranging from 1 “Strongly disagree” to 5 “Strongly agree”. Ten items from the Business Scan [37] were adapted to assess SE policies as an organizational conversion factor capturing the employee perception of availability of organizational policies aimed at promoting SE. The response scale ranged from 1 “not at all” to 5 “very much”, with higher scores indicating higher levels of SE policies (10 items,  $\alpha = 0.92$ ). Six items were developed ad hoc to capture the perceived level of existing social policies targeting entertainment workers, as an organizational conversion factor. Respondents answered on a scale ranging from 1 “not at all” to 5 “very much”, and higher scores indicated higher levels of social policies (Social policies: 6 items,  $\alpha = 0.93$ ).

- (b) Sustainable employability (SE). The Capability Index (CI) was used to measure entertainment workers’ SE [39]. The questionnaire consists of four scales: (1) valuable work capabilities (8 items,  $\alpha = 0.88$ ); (2) health capabilities (6 items,  $\alpha = 0.89$ ); (3) productivity capabilities (6 items,  $\alpha = 0.90$ ); (4) long-term perspective capabilities (8 items,  $\alpha = 0.88$ ). The response scale ranged from 1 “not at all” to 5 “very much”.
- (c) Functioning. Three items were used to measure entertainment workers’ task performance, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction as fundamental indicators of SE functioning [1]. To measure the employee task performance [32,33] respondents answered on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 “no work goal achieved” to 10 “all work goals achieved”. Another item was used to measure the employee overall life satisfaction [30]. Respondents rated their answers on a 7-point Likert scale (1 “extremely dissatisfied”, 7 “extremely satisfied”). One item was also used to measure employee job satisfaction [31]. The item measures the employee overall satisfaction with his/her job. Respondents rated their answers on a 7-point Likert scale (1 “extremely dissatisfied”, 7 “extremely satisfied”). Overall, one-item measures were chosen to capture SE functioning, i.e., to detect inclusive evaluations of entertainment professionals’ task performance and global (life and job) satisfaction, respectively.

### 2.3. Data Analyses

Descriptive and reliability analyses were first conducted by means of IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). Second, a network analysis was performed. Before performing this analysis, data were multiply imputed using the mice R package, which uses a full-information maximum likelihood procedure. A specific goal of network analysis is to examine statistical association patterns in multivariate psychological data that quantify phenomena that are best described at the system level [40]. Due to the high-dimensional nature of data used to measure SE elements among entertainment professionals, performing such an analysis seemed to be especially pertinent. Network analysis, as a method, aims to investigate the structure of interactions in multivariate data by fusing multivariate statistics and network science. This psychometric technique’s specific focus is on the patterns of pairwise conditional dependencies seen in the data. When two variables are probabilistically dependent while controlling for all other network factors, they are said to be conditionally associated [40]. This conditional association, in normal multivariate cross-sectional data, like the ones used in this study, can be estimated by means of (regularized) partial correlations among network variables. In more detail, if the data are continuous, the Gaussian graphical model (or partial correlation network) can be used to model the joint probability distribution of a set of variables, as it describes the statistical (in)dependence relationships for the set of variables under consideration [41].

In this model, the network nodes stand in for the dataset's variables, while the links or edges between them reflect the pairwise conditional associations between variables while conditioning on the other variables. A missing edge signals that two nodes are conditionally independent, given the others. The multivariate pattern of conditional (in)dependencies that distinguishes the joint distribution of variables at the construct-level aggregate can thus be revealed, and insights into it be provided.

In our study, we considered network nodes to be conversion factors at the personal level (i.e., intrinsic motivation), at the work level (i.e., work–health balance external support and health climate), and at the organizational level (i.e., SE policies and social policies); SE refers to the set of valuable work, health, productivity, and long-term perspective capabilities; and SE outcomes refer to job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and task performance. Edges were selected by means of the Gaussian graphical model, using regularized estimation procedures. Following the estimation of the network structure, the resulting network can be described using particular indices. In our investigation, we concentrated on node strength, which expresses how strongly each variable is conditionally associated with the other variables, as it is the most pertinent indicator of centrality to psychological networks [42,43]. In order to determine the practical relevance of edges, we also evaluated nodewise predictability, which measures how much variance in a node is explained by its neighbors [44]. Finally, network stability and robustness were investigated in order to support scientific inference. We estimated a Gaussian graphical model using the *qgraph* R package [41], combining graphical lasso regularization with EBIC model selection. This procedure requires the estimation of the variance–covariance matrix and produces a parsimonious network of partial correlation coefficients [41]. Using the extended Bayesian information criterion, we chose the lambda parameter for the graphical lasso ( $\gamma = 0.50$ ). To calculate Pearson correlations, the *cor\_auto* function from the *qgraph* package was utilized. The network was shown using the *plot* method (*qgraph*). The *centralityPlot* function from the *qgraph* package was used to estimate node strength and predictability. A bootstrapped 95% intervals technique with 10,000 subsamples was used to measure the robustness and stability of the network [41]. Through case-dropping bootstrapping with 15,000 subsamples, the stability of the centrality index (node strength) was finally evaluated [41].

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Descriptive Analyses

Means and standard deviations for study variables are reported in Table 2. Italian entertainment professionals scored quite highly on task performance and slightly above average on the other SE outcomes, namely job and life satisfaction. On productivity, valuable work, and long-term perspective capabilities entertainment professionals scored (somewhat) above average, but they instead scored below average on health capabilities. Entertainment professionals scored very highly on intrinsic motivation, but very low, below average, or slightly above average on SE policies, work–health balance health climate, and work–health balance external support, respectively.

#### 3.2. Entertainment Professionals' Sustainable Employability Network

The estimated SE network is depicted in Figure 2, Panel 1. The findings imply that all SE elements are positively (blue lines) related to one another. Some of them had thicker lines between them, indicating stronger associations.

The set of health, valuable work, productivity, and long-term perspective capabilities were arranged in a rhombus-like pattern at the core of the network. All categories of capabilities were positively associated, with the association between health and productivity capabilities, and between productivity and valuable work capabilities, being particularly strong. The association between productivity and long-term perspective capabilities was the weakest. The central component of the model, the rhombus, appeared to build a bridge between at least two other groups of variables.

**Table 2.** Means and standard deviations (SD) for study variables (N = 123).

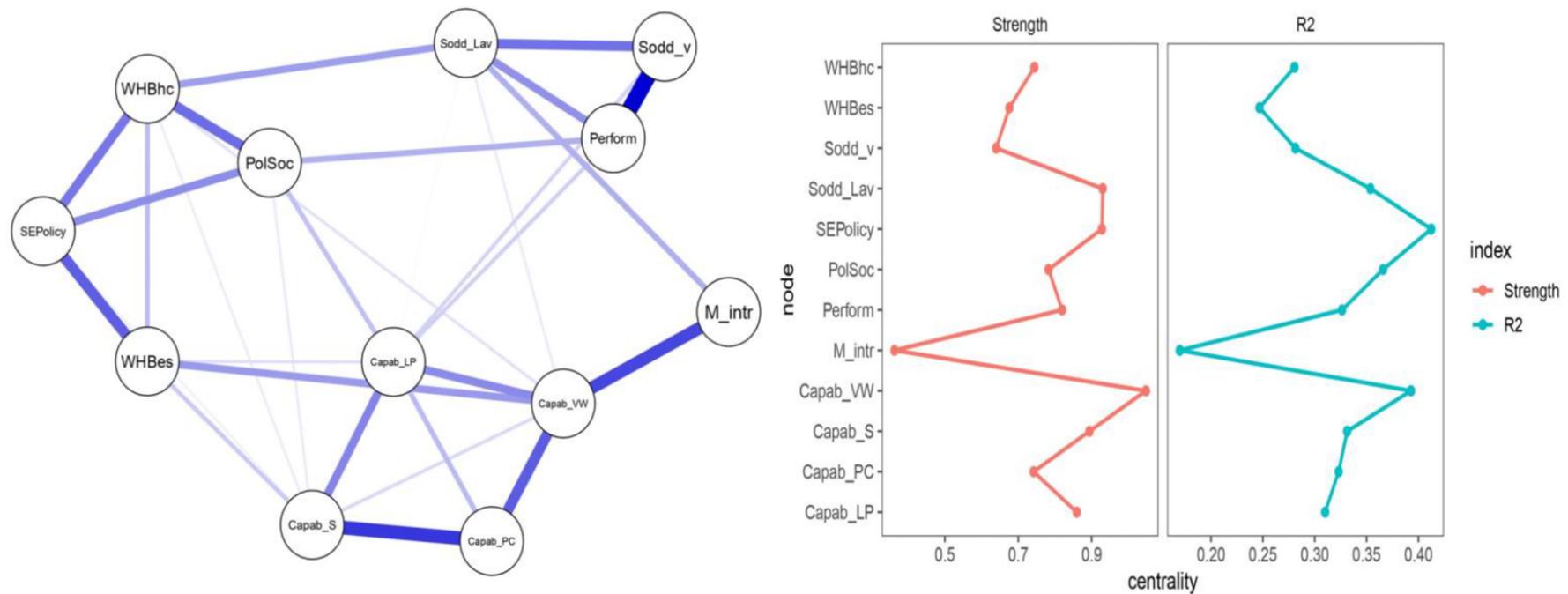
Variable	Scale Range	Mean (SD)
Sustainable Employability (SE)		
Health capabilities	1–5	2.96 (0.73)
Productivity capabilities	1–5	3.60 (0.75)
Valuable work capabilities	1–5	3.58 (0.76)
Long-term perspective capabilities	1–5	3.04 (0.73)
Conversion Factors		
Intrinsic motivation	1–7	5.92 (0.97)
Sustainable employability policies	1–5	2.01 (0.70)
Work–health Balance health climate	1–5	2.82 (1.08)
Work–health Balance external support	1–5	3.10 (0.89)
Social policies	1–5	1.86 (0.83)
SE Outcomes		
Job satisfaction	1–5	3.67 (0.70)
Life satisfaction	1–5	3.24 (0.87)
Task performance	0–10	7.03 (2.10)

On the right and left sides of the network, one could find two different sets of conversion factors, at the personal and work or organizational level, respectively. On the right side of the network, intrinsic motivation, as a personal conversion factor, was highly connected to valuable work capabilities. On the left side of the network, a factor at the work level, work–health balance external support, was quite highly positively associated with valuable work and health capabilities. Among factors at the organizational level, social policies were positively connected to long-term perspective capabilities, and more slightly, to health and valuable work capabilities. Both work–health balance external support (work level) and social policies (organizational level) were also strongly linked to work–health balance health climate (work level) and SE policies (organizational level).

In the upper part of the network, an SE outcomes' group of variables was associated with both groups of conversion factors (at the personal level and work or organization level, respectively). In particular, job satisfaction was both positively related to intrinsic motivation and work–health balance health climate. Among the set of capabilities, it was, more slightly, associated with valuable work capabilities. On the contrary, among conversion factors, task performance was positively associated only with social policies, and, among the set of capabilities, with long-term perspective ones. Job satisfaction and task performance, with a higher association, were also linked to life satisfaction.

Figure 2, Panel 2 estimates the nodes' strength and predictability while also highlighting their significance to the SE system and their possible application. High strength and predictability nodes in particular are frequently regarded as more potential candidates for systemic intervention [40,44]. The findings imply that among the SE network's nodes, valuable work capabilities, followed by SE policies, were the strongest and most predictable variables. Social policies also scored high in terms of strength and predictability. Intrinsic motivation exhibited the lowest strength and predictability.

Stability and accuracy analyses must be taken into account in order to determine whether or not the disparities in strength estimates are interpretable. The SE network's stability and resilience are shown in Figure S1 of the Supplementary Materials. Results show that it is easier to interpret the order of edges in the network (for potential causal relationships) in correspondence with some smaller shaded areas, namely the least sizable bootstrapped CIs, while additional caution should be used in correspondence with other bigger areas, such as the largest bootstrapped CIs. Statistics with quantiles from the bootstraps are displayed in Table S1 in the Supporting Materials. Finally, the case-dropping bootstrap CS-coefficient, which measures the stability of node strength, shows that this centrality index performs adequately because it meets the cutoff of 0.25 from our simulation study, required to consider the metric stable, and, thus, interpretable ( $CS(\text{cor} = 0.7) = 0.35$ ) [41].



**Figure 2.** Panel 1 (left side). Network model of entertainment professionals' SE. Positive connections are represented by blue edges; stronger relationships are represented by thicker edges. Panel 2 (right side). Node strengths (Strength) and predictability (R2) for all nodes in the network of SE data. Explanation of variables names, grouped by SE model for entertainment professionals' main elements: 1. Conversion factors. M\_intr = Intrinsic motivation; SEPolicy = Sustainable Employability policies; PolSoc = Social policies; WHBhc = Work–health balance health climate; WHBes = Work–health balance external support. 2. Sustainable employability. Capab\_S = Health capabilities; Capab\_PC = Productivity capabilities; Capab\_VW = Valuable work capabilities; Capab\_LP = Long-term perspective capabilities; 3. Functioning. Perform = Task performance; Sodd\_v = Job satisfaction; Sodd\_Lav = Life satisfaction.

#### 4. Discussion

Building on an SE perspective which uses CA as a theoretical base [1,4], this study addressed factors linked to entertainment professionals' SE at the personal and contextual levels (i.e., the work level and organizational level). Because this population is particularly characterized by flexible and precarious occupations and creative and idiosyncratic work processes [21], we have recognized that an interplay of individual and contextual factors shape an extensive set of capabilities to valuably function at work, in terms of job and life satisfaction and task performance. In adopting the SE perspective, we have also developed a theoretical framework for understanding the role of these factors in the context of Italian entertainment work.

Our hypotheses, concerning the positive association of intrinsic motivation as a conversion factor at the personal level, work–health balance external support, and health climate, at the work level, and SE policies and social policies, at the organizational level, with SE (i.e., the set of valuable work, health, productivity and long-term perspective capabilities) (H1), and with SE outcomes (i.e., life and job satisfaction and task performance) (H2) were confirmed. Such a pattern of unique associations identified by network analysis proved to be a potent visualization tool to advance understanding of SE and the theorization of the dynamical processes involved in its promotion among Italian entertainment professionals [40]. Even though SE modeling is inherently flexible in terms of its elements' consideration, the network visualization we generated answered the literature question on the precise placement of various categories of SE elements (e.g., conversion factors and functioning) [13]. Furthermore, our examination of the SE model of entertainment professionals was multidimensional, arising from the interaction of intra-individual and inter-individual levels [45]. Thus, it provided useful insights on links between these two levels of interactions [40]. The unique identified pattern of associations overall constitutes a demonstration of the influence of personal and contextual conversion factors on the concrete chances, in the form of capabilities, to accomplish valuable goals related to the entertainment professionals' work and life [1,4].

The core of entertainment professionals' SE network included valuable work, health, productivity, and long-term perspective capabilities, which were associated with both conversion factors and SE outcomes. Considering that capabilities have been said to better express SE [13], this is a remarkable finding in terms of scholars' alignment on SE meaning and SE position within a network of related variables. A clearer bond between SE and its outcomes in terms of sustainable life and career, expressed by satisfaction and productivity, was outlined [46]. The finding that valuable work capabilities, capturing the employee opportunities of realizing his/her values, were strongly and positively associated with job satisfaction, and that, at the same time, long-term perspective capabilities were positively associated with entertainment professionals' task performance, definitely goes in the direction of current literature emphasizing the cruciality, for the present-day workers, of value of work and time mindset in relation to SE and quality of working life [1,13]. This is particularly relevant when faced with high fragmentation and discontinuity in working positions and low sectorial recognition, as in the case of Italian entertainment professionals [23]. Second, a deeper understanding of the links between SE and conversion factors at the individual and contextual levels was depicted. Productivity capabilities and tapping opportunities for developing the right knowledge and competencies to adequately perform the job were associated with conversion factors only through valuable work, health, and long-term perspective capabilities, while opportunities in terms of perceived utility, wellbeing, and vitality maintenance over the long term (i.e., valuable work, health, and long-term perspective capabilities, respectively) were directly and positively connected with conversion factors both at the individual and contextual levels. Or, in other words, factors at the personal and contextual levels were directly related to the employability components concerning the opportunities of valuable and healthy work over time, rather than by the employability component concerning, more traditionally, opportunities of skills' development (i.e., productivity capabilities). This is an interesting finding, giving strength

to the need for adopting a sustainable approach to employability, overcoming the mere conception of employability as skills' accumulation [1].

In the entertainment professionals' SE network, conversion factors at the organizational (i.e., SE policies and social policies) level had a higher practical relevance compared to factors at the personal level (i.e., intrinsic motivation). First, intrinsic motivation (personal level) was positively associated only with valuable work capabilities. On the other hand, among factors at the organizational level, social policies were positively connected to valuable work, health, and long-term perspective capabilities. Moreover, social policies were strongly and positively linked to work–health balance health climate (work level) and SE policies (organizational level). As a result of their high interconnections, social policies had very high strength in the network. SE policies and social policies also had the highest levels of predictability (i.e., the highest potential for systemic interventions [40,44]), compared to intrinsic motivation, which had the lowest predictability in the network. Overall, this result goes in the direction of recent literature review findings, depicting the important role of contingency factors at the interface between the worker and his/her environment, and in the relationship between job insecurity and workers' performance [47]. Furthermore, in line with previous studies detecting the importance of organizational policies for firefighters' SE [48] and for workers collaborating with robots [14], this result confirms the key role of conversion factors at the organizational level in fostering entertainment professionals' SE. In this sense, despite the study's limitations, such as the sample size, this finding contributes cracking the dominant discourse around the individual responsibility for SE of Italian entertainment professionals [20]. Indeed, entertainment professionals' strategies in sustaining their employability are mainly portrayed as being determined by internal, personal factors rather than being impacted by the political and economic environment in which they operate [21]. Entertainment professionals' careers are normally pursued beyond a single setting, with the consequent need for high autonomy, skills and individual initiative in building social networks and catching employment opportunities [19]. However, we showed that considering entertainment professionals' intrinsic motivation and passion for their work as main determinants of their SE is limited, due to the higher predictable links between adequate organizational factors (i.e., SE and social policies) and entertainment professionals' SE. Finally, scholars have underlined how adopting a "paradoxical lens" can be particularly appropriate while addressing workers' SE [49]. We argue that our finding should be interpreted more deeply in light of such a lens, due to the inherent contradictions of creative work [25]. If each artist considers his/her work as valuable, exceptional, idiosyncratic, and far from labor market logics, then industrial and political context and economic institutions should be reintegrated rather than neglected in the analysis of factors affecting entertainment professionals' SE [21].

#### *4.1. Limitations and Future Directions*

Despite the evidence provided in this study on the interplay of factors involved in entertainment professionals' SE and the key role of organizational factors, some limitations should be highlighted. First, this study used cross-sectional data. Although the network model analyzed in this study can be utilized to produce causal hypotheses [40], causal conclusions must be drawn cautiously, and experimental and longitudinal designs should be used in future research to support these hypotheses. Causal interpretations may also be made easier by including SE interventions in the SE network structure [40]. Then, in order to more effectively capture the temporal dimension of SE, longitudinal designs are advised [50]. Second, the results' generalizability to entertainment professionals and other working populations characterized by high precariousness should be interpreted cautiously because to the sample's relatively small size and convenient nature, which aggregated employed and unemployed entertainment professionals at the moment of the survey. Although the network gaussian model is unique in its ability to match SE data [40], this investigation still has to be repeated with more various samples of entertainment professionals, while discriminating for their occupational condition, and among other classes

of workers particularly affected by labor market changes. It is important to evaluate the SE network's invariance as well [40]. Third, as all of our measurements were self-reported, concerns about overestimation of identified connections and common method variance are raised. Finally, future research could take into account various operationalizations of SE elements as network nodes, since this study concentrated on particular personal (i.e., intrinsic motivation) and organizational variables (i.e., SE policies and social policies). This is particularly significant from a methodological standpoint since, according to Borsboom et al. [40], the network structure is determined by the variables that are included in the network itself. As a result, significant nodes may have been overlooked, which would have changed the SE network's structure.

#### 4.2. Practical Implications

Depending on our study results', several recommendations can be made for practitioners, agencies, and firms aimed at promoting entertainment professionals' SE. Our sample of Italian entertainment professionals reported relatively low levels of SE policies and social policies, compared to, for example, intrinsic motivation. However, due to the high predictability of these organizational factors, agencies and firms should focus on creating and applying specific practices and procedures, including putting into action a vision and plan that supports SE, helping to create a culture of "learning organizations" and incorporating HRM practices within the parameters of SE [37]. On a broader scale, political actions specifically tailored to entertainment professionals and aimed at, for example, ensuring fair wages and contractual stability, protecting health and safety, recognizing the value of the artistic profession, and promoting professional growth, should be developed, in order to support the enlargement of entertainment professionals' capabilities. On this line, an Italian Legislative Decree has recently reorganized and revised the shock absorbers and allowance for the introduction of an indemnity of discontinuity in favor of workers in the entertainment sector (Decreto legislativo 30 novembre 2023, n.175). Such actions are particularly relevant in light of the difficulties experienced by Italian creative workers in accessing social safety nets and could be further fostered by leveraging (spontaneous) collective mobilization and unionization [23]. A direct and positive path between conversion factors at the organizational level and factors at the work level was also highlighted, indicating the relevance for practitioners of building a supportive organizational climate in terms of health and wellbeing preservation, and supervisor's openness and support for work–health balance practices [35]. As our results showed, these practices have the potential to significantly contribute to the development of Italian entertainment professionals' health capabilities that nevertheless scored quite below average among our sample. As detected by a previous study involving workers of the Italian public sector, Italian entertainment professionals reported quite high levels of productivity capabilities and task performance, compared to lower reported levels of health capabilities [15]. Sensitization of Italian employers to comprehensive SE interventions aimed at simultaneously building productivity and health capabilities is, therefore, advocated. Finally, our study found valuable work capabilities to be highly strong and predictable in SE network of entertainment professionals, remarkably suggesting the importance of enabling workers to achieve meaningful work goals and valuable contributions in order to boost their (job and life) satisfaction and task performance.

#### 5. Conclusions

This study shed light on the suitability of adopting a sustainable perspective for the study and promotion of SE among particularly vulnerable working populations, such as entertainment professionals. This approach helped to reveal the complex interplay of factors impacting the access and maintenance of a sustainable job over time, by giving weight both to professionals' personal agency and contextual conversion factors. This study showed how factors at the organizational level, i.e., SE policies and social policies,

had a crucial role in the development of entertainment professionals' SE, overcoming the individual dominant perspective applied to their employability.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/su16020663/s1>, Figure S1: Representation of robustness and stability of the SE network for entertainment professionals; Table S1: Quantiles of the bootstraps for each SE network edge.

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