

The Role of Psychological Capital and Adversity Quotient in predicting Career Adaptability Among Vocational High School Students

Ika Mujiani*¹, Maharani Tyas Budi Hapsari¹

¹Raden Masaid Islamic University Surakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding author:

*Ika Mujiani
ikamujiani@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background: Career adaptability is a crucial psychosocial resource for vocational high school students transitioning from school to work. Psychological Capital (PsyCap) and Adversity Quotient (AQ) are internal strengths assumed to support adaptive career development. **Objective:** This study examined the predictive roles of PsyCap and AQ in career adaptability among students at SMK Negeri 1 Miri. **Method:** A quantitative correlational design using multiple linear regression was applied. The sample consisted of 169 twelfth-grade students selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected using 1–5 Likert-scale questionnaires measuring PsyCap, AQ, and career adaptability. Classical assumption tests were conducted prior to analysis. **Results:** Both PsyCap and AQ significantly predicted career adaptability. PsyCap demonstrated a stronger predictive contribution ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) than AQ ($\beta = 0.311$, $p < 0.001$). Simultaneously, the two variables explained 32.7% of the variance in career adaptability ($R^2 = 0.327$), indicating a moderate predictive model. **Conclusion:** The findings emphasize the importance of proactive psychological resources in strengthening vocational students' readiness for school-to-work transitions. Integrating PsyCap and AQ development into vocational career guidance programs may enhance students' adaptive capacity and transition preparedness.

Keywords: Career adaptability; psychological capital; vocational high school students.

Abstrak

Latar Belakang: Adaptabilitas karier merupakan sumber daya psikososial penting bagi siswa sekolah menengah kejuruan dalam menghadapi transisi sekolah ke dunia kerja. Psychological Capital (PsyCap) dan Adversity Quotient (AQ) dipandang sebagai kekuatan psikologis internal yang mendukung perkembangan karier adaptif. **Tujuan:** Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis peran prediktif PsyCap dan AQ terhadap adaptabilitas karier siswa SMK Negeri 1 Miri. **Metode:** Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif korelasional dengan analisis regresi linier berganda. Sampel terdiri dari 169 siswa kelas XII yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner skala Likert 1–5 yang mengukur PsyCap, AQ, dan adaptabilitas karier. Uji asumsi klasik dilakukan sebelum analisis utama. **Hasil:** PsyCap dan AQ secara signifikan memprediksi adaptabilitas karier. PsyCap menunjukkan kontribusi prediktif yang lebih kuat ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) dibandingkan AQ ($\beta = 0.311$, $p < 0.001$). Secara simultan, kedua variabel menjelaskan 32,7% varians adaptabilitas karier ($R^2 = 0.327$), menunjukkan model prediksi yang moderat. **Kesimpulan:** Temuan menegaskan pentingnya sumber daya psikologis proaktif dalam meningkatkan kesiapan transisi sekolah-ke-dunia kerja pada siswa vokasi. Integrasi pengembangan PsyCap dan AQ dalam program bimbingan karier SMK berpotensi memperkuat kapasitas adaptif siswa.

Kata Kunci: Adaptabilitas karier; modal psikologis; siswa sekolah menengah kejuruan.

Introduction

Vocational high school is a critical phase in development where individuals are undergoing major life changes, physical, cognitive, social and emotional. It is the developmental process in which growth occurs towards adulthood. During this time, rapid changes in biological, cognitive, and psychosocial factors influence identity development and future orientation. These transitions can influence the psychological viability of vocational high school students towards career demands, affecting their ability to adjust to later work specifications. During the psychosocial stage of identity vs. role confusion, adolescents must develop a sense of self and figure out how they fit into society as long-term members. For young people who are in vocational high school education, this task of development is flanked by adult expectations to steer straight into working life upon completion of schooling.

Practitioners and researchers, have invested considerable time in preparing students technically for faster resumes upon graduation, but the impact on students who still struggle to transition from vocational education to career is minimal and often leaves them low in self-efficacy and without realistic optimism about success beyond school. Interviews with students and alumni at SMK Negeri 1 Miri showed that they were reluctant to choose their careers, unsure of professional competence, and even doubtful if the profession was in accordance with the passion. This is where adaptive capacity comes into play, as this skill helps in navigating transitions and a new professional landscape. Career adaptation is an important psychosocial resource to cope with labor market transformations. Career adaptation is related with expectation, clarity of future work goals (future work self) and academic self-efficacy in students which further leads to regular description of student Quality of life according to (Zeng et al., 2022; Zeng et al., 2024). Parental, teacher and peer support can also facilitate a number of career adaptation resources such as self-efficacy, control, attention and exploration (Hlad'o et al., 2019; Zeng et al., 2024). On the other hand, motivation and self-efficacy positively contribute to career adaptability, whereas fear of failure negatively influences it; improving self-efficacy is more effective than only promoting a high level of motivation.

Career maturity, future perspective, and vocational identity clarity are also factors affecting career adaptation. A clear vision for the future, as well as high career maturity, is predictive of adaptability in students (Jia et al., 2020). Adaptation to career transition includes According to (Wang et al., 2025), career adaptability is essential in career decision-making and transitions from school into the workplace, which can be mediated through self-efficacy of a person's career choice. Therefore, improving career adaptability involves enhancing self-efficacy and future orientation as well as social environments (Wang et al., 2025).

Career adaptability and career readiness are similar but distinct concepts. Career adaptability is an individual's psychosocial competence for coping with transitions, challenges, or changes in career life, which include resource like as self-confidence, curiosity, sense of control and concern about the future (Öztemel & Akyol, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023) On the other hand, career readiness is not only about a focus on how well an individual has prepared themselves for decision-making regarding their career and embarking into the world of work, which could include their understanding of their goals and how they perceive their own ability to succeed. Magnano et al. (2021) as research found that those who were more ready in terms of measuring whether higher career aspiration helps enhancing readiness and consequently self-efficacy, individuals with higher aspirations were also better at navigating transitions (Green et al., 2022) the Career Adaptive Construction Model (CCMA) suggests that adaptive readiness and adaptability resources affect both adaptive responses (e.g., related to psychological capital, job crafting and networking) and adaption outcomes (e.g., life satisfaction, work meaning (Pellegrino et al., 2025) So, adaptability is not only about a wider spectrum to navigate through but also an environment that evolves.

Thus, career adaptability is an essential competency in a complex and competitive labor market. Changes in technology, work models and globalisation are major challenges that require the ability to adapt quickly and effectively. Lack of adaptability can lead to more barriers to smoother transitions from school-to-work, and financial independence in the long run. A good career adaptation not only assures you in better handling the pressure of career shifts but also is the solution behind having a sustainable and productive life ahead (Nurul, 2023).

PsyCap, which refers to a positive mental state consisting of hope, efficacy (self-confidence), resilience and optimism. The goal-directed behaviour, we recover from obstacles at work (Ramirez-duran, 2025), and self-regulation that these four components of HERO provide. PsyCap leads to positive emotions that broaden thought-action repertoires and build psychological resources over time. It allows people to better transition from career exploration to action planning.

In the empirical study, PsyCap is positively related to career adaptability in different types of groups (students and employees) across different nationalities. Past studies have shown that PsyCap is positively

related to career adaptability, career engagement, and negatively associated with career anxiety (Zyberaj et al., 2022). Moreover, PsyCap mediates the effects of contextual factors, like social support, on adaptive career outcomes (Ramirez-duran, 2025). PsyCap students are more confident related to school-to-work transitions (Baluku et al., 2021). This theoretical unification highlights PsyCap as a psychological resource reinforcing adaptive career development.

Integrating the two theories positions PsyCap a generator of psychological energy, where Luthans et al. (2010) develops a career-relevant HERO (Hope, Efficacy, Resilience and Optimism) typology; Fredrickson describes its emotional processes that would generate health working conditions through the reciprocal process of planning for paths to goal accomplishment; control via self-regulation; exploration towards opportunity. Stoltz (1997) introduced the concept of Adversity Quotient, which is an individual's ability to respond well in the advent of adversity through CORE dimensions: Control, Ownership, Reach and Endurance. AQ validates that when obstacles hit, diminishing the perceived impact of those setbacks allows for taking personal responsibility in stressful times, strengthening resilience. AQ serves as a protective factor facilitating adaptive responses to career uncertainty among vocational students with academic pressures and internship-related challenges. PsyCap resilience enhances AQ by promoting recovery from setbacks and thus supporting adaptive processes in the construction of one's career. This mechanism is especially important for vocational school students who are under pressure from work experience and direct entry into the labor market.

According to recent study, AQ has positive correlations with self-resilience, academic achievement and career adjustment. (AQ was significantly related to achievement motivation, learning independence and academic performance among Indonesian students during the pandemic according (Sa et al., 2021) High AQ has a positive relationship with PsyCap and professional adaptation among nursing students (Gou et al., 2024), and plays a mediating role in alleviating the stress response and enhancing (Lu et al., 2024). Moreover, AQ and resilience-related dimensions including grit have been proven to be predictors for career success (Zhao & Sang, 2023), organizational commitment as well as readiness for career adaptability and academic performance (Shen et al., 2024). This is why AQ reinforces psychological resilience, which holds a critical role in promoting career adaptability and learning performance of vocational high school students within volatile challenges. While research on career adaptability is increasing, no study has examined PsyCap and AQ simultaneously in an Indonesian vocational education context. A multitude of existing studies in Indonesia emphasize PsyCap, either in employability or entrepreneurial readiness, but fail to construct a cohesive predictive framework that includes AQ (Sulistiobudi & Kadiyono, 2023) Recent research, for instance, discovered that PsyCap significantly impacts the employability and entrepreneurial readiness of vocational high school students in Indonesia on a large scale; however it did not simultaneously test AQ (Farradinna et al., 2023).

International studies also rarely examine PsyCap and AQ together within predictive models that link internal psychological strengths and adversity navigation mechanisms (Hlad'ó et al., 2019) Hence, a significant empirical gap has confirmed that the simultaneous contribution of PsyCap and AQ on career adaptability among Indonesian vocational students. A preliminary survey of 12th grade students at SMK Negeri 1 Miri revealed that in terms of Work Readiness: 55% of respondents said they "were not very far along," "were not ready," or "were still a little behind" (for example, "not at all prepared", "20%", "don't know yet"); only 25% said they were "quite far along" or "very far along", showing no use of proactive strategies such as portfolios or additional skills. The findings point to poor proactive planning, limited career curiosity and weak adversity skills in line with the CORE dimensions.

Vocational high school students are not career-ready yet (55% of responses indicate "not ready") according to low potential scores on PsyCap and (AQ) from pre-elimination survey data. These findings highlight the need to enhance career adaptability as a foundational psychosocial competency for vocational learners in light of responsive labor market challenges. Several past studies have indicated that career adaptability is highly affected by internal factors like PsyCap and AQ. Nonetheless, empirical studies that investigate PsyCap and AQ simultaneously as predictors of career adaptability in Indonesian vocational education still don't exist. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze PsyCap and AQ as predictors of career adaptability among vocational high school students. This study's relevance considers Indonesian labor statistics published by Central Statistics Agency (BPS), which showed socioeconomic disparities, where the unemployment rate of vocational graduates is also relatively high.

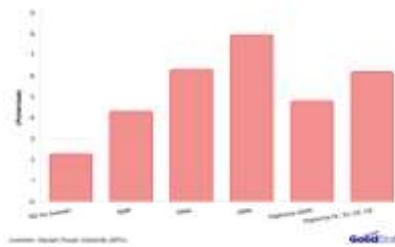


Figure 1. Open Unemployment Rate by Level of Education Completed as of February 2025

Theoretically, the purpose of this study is to broaden positive psychology literature research in vocational education context while practically contributing to career guidance and counseling programs that promote the development of students' mental resources. Based on these objectives of the research, this study formulated three hypotheses regarding the relationships among PsyCap, AQ, and career adaptability amongst students at SMK Negeri 1 Miri. H1: There is a significant positive relationship between PsyCap and career adaptability. H2: There is a positive relationship between AQ and career adaptability. H3 states that the joint impact of PsyCap and AQ has a major positive influence on career adaptability.

These conjectures also echo the study's goal of exploring whether PsyCap and AQ are potential predictors of career adaptability—one of them contributing to cure a work unreadiness rate among respondents who didn't get hired in the pre-elimination survey through psychological interventions directed to their vocational transitions.

Method

Research

This study employed a non-experimental quantitative approach using a correlational design with multiple linear regression analysis to examine the effects of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) and Adversity Quotient (AQ) on Career Adaptability among Grade XII students at SMK Negeri 1 Miri Sragen. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 27. Power analysis indicated adequate statistical power (0.80) at $\alpha = 0.05$ with a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$).

Population and Sample

The population consisted of 300 Grade XII students (ages 16-19, 52% male) at SMK Negeri 1 Miri Sragen—critical career planning phase. A sample of 169 students (56% response rate) was selected through cluster random sampling at 10 classes/majors as clusters. Simple random selection of 5 classes using random number table ($K=10, k=5$), with 34 respondents students/class $\times 5 = 169$. Slovin formula at $n = N / (1 + N.e^2) = 300 / (1 + 300 \times 0.05^2) = 169$ (5% margin of error).

Data measurement

Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire with a range of 1-5 (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree) to measure three main variables: PsyCap, AQ, and Career Adaptability. The PsyCap instrument was modified from Sadiyah (2018) based on the theory of Luthans et al. (2010) with 74 items measuring four dimensions (Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, Optimism), validity of 0.916-1.000, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.949. The AQ instrument was modified from Elsafir & Salim (2024) with 80 items measuring the CORE dimensions (Control, Ownership, Reach, Endurance), validity 0.916-1.000, and reliability 0.973; while CAAS was modified from Nurul (2023) based on Savickas (1997) with 68 items measuring (Concern, Control, Curiosity, Confidence) with validity of 0.916-1.000 and reliability of 0.968.

Data analysis

Data analysis used multiple linear regression in SPSS version 26 to test the simultaneous and partial effects of PsyCap (X1) and AQ (X2) on Career Adaptability (Y) in 169 respondents. Before the main analysis, classical assumption tests were conducted: normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov sig. 0.200 > 0.05), linearity PsyCap sig. 0.090 > 0.05; AQ sig. 0.082 > 0.05), multicollinearity (VIF 1.059 < 10; tolerance 0.944 > 0.10), heteroscedasticity (Glejser test: PsyCap sig. 0.664 > 0.05; AQ sig. and autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson 1.675 is considered safe).

Results
Characteristics

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Female	93	55.0
	Male	76	45.0
Age	16 year	9	5.4
	17 year	83	49.1
	18 year	52	30.8
	19 year	25	14.8
	DKV	51	30.2
Department	TKR	41	24.3
	ANIMATION	27	16.0
	TP	49	29.0

The characteristics in this study were conducted on a sample of 169 students with male and female criteria, aged 16-19 years. The data obtained showed that there were 76 males and 93 females. There were age groups: 5.4% were 16 years old, 49% were 17 years old, 30.8% were 18 years old, and 14.8% were 19 years old. There are four major departments at SMK 1 Miri, namely DKV with a sample size of 30.2%, TKR 24.3%, ANIMATION 16%, and Welding Engineering (TP) 29%.

Table 2. Assumption Test

Assumption Test	Criteria	Analysis Results	Decision
Normality	Sig.> 0.05	0.200	Data is normally distributed
Linearity	sig < 0.05	PsyCap = 0.090 A = 0.082	Linearity
Multicollinearity	Tolerance > 0.10 VIF < 10	0.944 1.059	No multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity	Sig.> 0.05	Psycap = 0.664 AQ = 0.723	heteroscedasticity
Autocorrelation	DW: 1.5-2.5	1.675	None

Table 3. Descriptive statistical test

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. deviation
Psychological capital	169	124	161	136.39	5.85
Adversity quotient	169	147	186	172.39	7.43
Career adaptability	169	110	176	139.11	10.44

Table 4. Model summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the estimate	DW
1	.572	.327	.319	8.62	1.675

Table 5. Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p Value
	B	SE	β		
(constant)	-36.464	19.6		-1.85	0.066
PsyCap	0.736	0.117	0.412	6.29	0.000
AQ	0.437	0.092	0.311	4.74	0.000

The F test is used to test the simultaneous effect of all independent variables on the dependent variable in multiple linear regression. Interpretation: Sig. F <0.05 = significant simultaneous effect (valid model).

Table 6. ANOVA (F-test)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p Value
Regression	5990.57	2	2995.29	40.31	0.000
Residual	12334.29	166	74.30		
Total	18324.86	168			

Hypothesis tests: Both predictors significantly predicted career adaptability PsyCap ($\beta = 0.412, p < 0.001$; AQ: $\beta = 0.311, p < 0.001$), with PsyCap showing stronger effect. Simultaneous influence was significant ($F(2,166) = 40.31, p < 0.001$).

The determination test (R^2) is used to measure the extent (%) of the influence of independent variables collectively on the dependent variable in regression. The results of the determination test show at table 7.

Table 7. Determination Test (R^2)

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R-squared	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.572	0.327	0.319	8.620

The relationship between PsyCap and AQ with Career Adaptability is moderate to strong (0.50-0.70). Then for $R^2 = 0.327$ or 32.7%: The two independent variables together can explain 32.7% of the variation in Career Adaptability. Adjusted $R^2 = 0.319$ or 31.9%: The effective contribution after correcting for sample size ($n=169$) remains consistent and reliable.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of 169 Grade XII students (55% female, 45% male) aged 16–19 years from four vocational departments. Descriptive statistics indicated generally high levels of Psychological Capital ($M = 136.39, SD = 5.85$) and Adversity Quotient ($M = 172.39, SD = 7.43$). Career Adaptability also showed a relatively high mean score ($M = 139.11, SD = 10.44$), although its greater standard deviation suggests wider variability among students in adaptive readiness.

Assumption Testing

Classical assumption tests confirmed that the regression model met statistical requirements. Normality was satisfied (Kolmogorov–Smirnov sig. = 0.200 > 0.05). Linearity was met for both PsyCap and AQ. Multicollinearity was not detected (VIF = 1.059; tolerance = 0.944). The Glejser test indicated no heteroscedasticity, and the Durbin–Watson value (1.675) suggested no autocorrelation. These results support the suitability of the regression analysis.

Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis revealed that both Psychological Capital and Adversity Quotient significantly predicted Career Adaptability. PsyCap demonstrated a stronger standardized contribution ($\beta = 0.412, p < 0.001$) compared to AQ ($\beta = 0.311, p < 0.001$). The overall model was statistically significant ($F(2,166) = 40.31, p < 0.001$), explaining 32.7% of the variance in Career Adaptability ($R^2 = 0.327$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.319$). These findings indicate a moderate predictive model in which proactive psychological resources play a central role in shaping adaptive career outcomes.

Discussion

The findings indicate that PsyCap demonstrates a stronger predictive contribution to career adaptability compared to AQ. Together, both variables explain a substantial proportion of variance in career adaptability among vocational students. The superior influence of PsyCap highlights the forward-acting power of HERO components (Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, Optimism), building early career agency through self-efficacy and optimism, aligned with Broaden-and-Build theory (Fredrickson, 2001) that expands cognitive focus for opportunity exploration. AQ also contributes significantly to career adaptability, suggesting that the ability to regulate responses to setbacks (Stoltz, 1997) plays an important complementary role in vocational transition readiness.

The moderate correlations among variables further suggest that PsyCap and AQ represent related but distinct psychological resources contributing to career adaptability. The greater variability observed in career adaptability compared to PsyCap indicates differences in how internal psychological resources translate into adaptive career outcomes, highlighting the importance of structured career development interventions.

This study extends previous research by simultaneously examining PsyCap and AQ within an Indonesian vocational education context, thereby contributing empirical evidence to Career Construction Theory regarding the role of internal adaptability resources. Practically, these findings suggest that vocational education programs may benefit from integrating structured PsyCap development and resilience training within career guidance curricula.

These findings are consistent with prior research emphasizing PsyCap as an internal psychological resource supporting adaptive functioning during career transitions (Zyberaj et al., 2022). PsyCap, with components such as self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, supports students to view their career future more positively and confidently, which aligns with evidence that adaptive resources enhance readiness and confidence during school-to-work transitions (Green et al., 2022). AQ has also been proven to be significant in improving students' ability to face challenges and obstacles. Previous studies indicate that AQ is positively associated with resilience and adaptive coping in educational and early career contexts (Gou et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2024). This supports the view that resilience-related competencies are relevant for strengthening vocational students' adaptive capacity.

High and stable PsyCap scores reflect students' strengths in self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, supporting their readiness to face vocational challenges. A high average AQ indicates a good ability to manage difficulties, although the variation is wider than that of PsyCap. Career Adaptability with the highest standard deviation underscores the need for intervention to reduce disparities in post-graduation career readiness. The combination of these two variables, PsyCap and AQ demonstrates a synergy that strengthens the career readiness of vocational school students in facing the ever-evolving changes and challenges of the world of work (Zhao & Sang, 2023; Wang et al., 2025). Therefore, interventions that strengthen psychological capital and the ability to cope with difficulties should be included in the career guidance curriculum to optimize students' psychological and practical readiness for the future.

The synergy between PsyCap and AQ, PsyCap, as a proactive resource that includes self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, synergizes with AQ as resilience to obstacles through elements of control, ownership, scope, and perseverance to enhance vocational students' career adjustment. This combination produces a simultaneous positive and significant effect on career adaptability, PsyCap demonstrates a stronger predictive contribution than AQ, with both variables together explaining a substantial portion of variance in career adaptability among the sample of 169 grade XII students at SMK Negeri 1 Miri. This synergy creates a positive psychological foundation of PsyCap complemented by the resilience of AQ in managing real difficulties, so that students are better prepared to face the transition from school to the world of work. Proactive agency in PsyCap operates through self-efficacy and control, which encourage individuals to set career goals, manage achievement paths, and explore adaptive opportunities in accordance with Career Construction Theory. Self-efficacy builds confidence to overcome challenging career tasks, while control facilitates self-regulation in facing change, resulting the strong the link between PsyCap and career adaptability demonstrates how proactive psychological strengths foster early career agency. This mechanism expands cognitive focus through positive emotions (Broaden-and-Build theory), enabling vocational high school students to plan their careers proactively.

PsyCap's resilience facilitates rapid recovery from career setbacks, while AQ's control dimension limits failure impact and fosters personal responsibility through ownership. This synergy reduces career anxiety and enhances adaptability, though future research should explore potential mediating mechanisms. Stable PsyCap levels reflect students' strengths in facing vocational challenges, while greater variability in career adaptability underscores the need for structured interventions. Pre-study surveys reveal substantial work unreadiness among vocational students, highlighting the urgency of strengthening internal psychological resources. These findings fill gaps in local research—where PsyCap and AQ are typically examined separately—and should be interpreted within Indonesia's vocational education context, where students transition directly into the workforce, unlike general university studies with less emphasis on immediate work entry. The absence of linearity issues further supports the model's applicability to dynamic educational settings.

This study reinforces previous findings that PsyCap and AQ are two important psychological Key elements significantly enhancing vocational students' career adaptability. PsyCap encompassing self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience establishes a strength foundation enabling individuals to approach their career futures with enhanced confidence and challenge readiness (Zyberaj et al., 2022). This aligns with the findings

of the study (Wulandari & Hasanati, 2024), which revealed a significant positive relationship between PsyCap and career adaptability in individuals newly entering the workforce.

Furthermore, the research findings are supported by evidence that AQ, as a measure of mental resilience and the ability to effectively manage difficulties, plays a crucial role in career adaptability readiness (Gou et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2024). People with elevated AQ levels typically exhibit greater psychologically resilient, able to cope with work stress and pressure, and more adaptive in facing career changes. This is in line with the results, who found a positive influence of AQ on the career adaptability readiness of Generation Z, and Zhao & Sang (2023), who stated that AQ can influence career success through increased resilience. The simultaneous relationship between PsyCap and AQ shows a sig value of 0.00, which is less than 0.05, indicating a consistent effect between PsyCap and AQ variables on the career adaptability of students at SMK Negeri 1 Miri. These results are in line with hypothesis 3, highlighting the importance of the synergy between these two constructs in shaping career adaptability. PsyCap provides a positive psychological foundation, while AQ strengthens the ability to manage and endure real difficulties during career transitions (Ramirez-duran, 2025; Wang et al., 2025). This model also supports the Career Construction Model of Adaptation theory, which emphasizes internal factors as crucial adaptation navigating the changing work environment (Teena et al., 2025). The considerable variation in career adaptation among individuals also indicates that other factors, possibly external ones such as social support, work environment, or previous experience, need to be considered in development program interventions (Zeng et al., 2024). Therefore, career guidance and vocational education programs should not only focus on improving PsyCap and AQ but also include the creation of a strong supportive environment.

This study provides relevant empirical contributions to the fields of positive psychology and education in Indonesia, while also opening up space for further research to explore moderating variables such as social support, motivation, and work environment pressure. Practically, these results can be used as a basis for developing training and career counseling modules that integrate psychological capital strengthening and mental resilience, in order to prepare vocational school students more effectively to face future career challenges. Then, contribution to career construction theory (CCT) in Indonesia, this study contributes to Savickas' (1997) CCT by confirming PsyCap-AQ as a proactive internal resource (self-ability/control) for adaptive career construction in the Indonesian context, where vocational high school students build career narratives through curiosity/self-confidence CAAS supported by AQ for failure navigation. In Indonesia, this unique contribution through empirical evidence in a vocational population vulnerable to poverty, the expansion of CCT from the West (Green et al., 2022) to local realities such as the pandemic and psychological-skill mismatch, suggests integrated career guidance interventions to enhance vocational transition readiness. Overall, the findings provide empirical support for Career Construction Theory by demonstrating that internal psychological resources are significantly associated with adaptive career outcomes among vocational students.

Certain limitations must be recognized. First, the cross-sectional approach restricts causal inferences from the observed associations. Second, self-report measures may generate common method variance. Third, sampling from a single vocational school limits broader applicability. Subsequent studies should adopt longitudinal methods and diverse data sources for enhanced validation.

Conclusion

This study supports all three hypotheses, demonstrating that PsyCap and AQ are key determinants of career adjustment among vocational. PsyCap shows a stronger predictive contribution than AQ, and together both variables explain a meaningful proportion of variance in career adaptability. The findings extend Career Construction Theory by providing empirical evidence that proactive psychological resources PsyCap and resilience-based capacities (AQ) function as internal adaptability resources within an Indonesian vocational education context. Practically, the results highlight crucial need to incorporate psychological capacity building into vocational career guidance programs to strengthen students' readiness for school-to-work transitions. Future research should employ longitudinal designs and examine contextual moderators, such as social support and institutional factors, to develop more comprehensive models of vocational career adaptation.

Recommendations

Practical Recommendations for Guidance Counselors

1. Weekly HERO PsyCap Workshops: Conduct 60-minute weekly sessions focusing on hope (career planning), efficacy (job interview simulations), resilience (failure case studies), and optimism (career success visualization) using 1-5 Likert pre-post scales for 169 Grade XII students, targeting PsyCap score increase from $M = 136.39$ to >145 .

2. CORE AQ Sessions: Implement internship failure reflection journals (Control, Ownership, Reach, Endurance) with pre-post evaluation, aiming for 10% career adaptability improvement from $M = 139.11$ ($SD = 10.444$).
3. Curriculum Integration: Embed PsyCap-AQ modules in mandatory SMK career guidance, monitor effectiveness via $R^2 = 0.327$ regression model.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. 2-3 Year Longitudinal Study: Test stability of PsyCap ($\beta=0.412$) and AQ ($\beta=0.311$) effects on actual work adaptation post-graduation, comparing against pre-survey (55% unreadiness).
2. Multi-School SEM Analysis: Examine latent relationships with mediators (career engagement) and moderators (social/teacher support) in >500 SMK student sample, combining CFA and regression.
3. CCT Enrichment: Validate PsyCap-AQ temporal dynamics within Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 1997) for Indonesian vocational contexts.

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