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The Influence of Career Adaptability and Willingness to Compromise on Work Readiness: A Study of Student's School to Work Transition in Supporting SDG 4

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The transition from higher education to the workplace represents a critical stage that requires students to possess adequate psychological resources and career competencies. This study aims to examine the influence of career adaptability and willingness to compromise on students' work readiness during the school-to-work transition while highlighting its contribution to SDG 4 (Quality Education) through the development of employability competencies. **Method:** This study employed a quantitative descriptive approach using a correlational research design. The population consisted of 119,260 university students from seven universities in West Sumatra, Indonesia. A total of 210 students were selected using incidental sampling techniques. Data were collected using career adaptability, willingness to compromise, and work readiness instruments. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, and multiple linear regression analysis. **Results:** The findings indicate that students demonstrated high levels of career adaptability and willingness to compromise, while their work readiness was categorized as moderate. Career adaptability significantly contributed to work readiness by 24.1%, while willingness to compromise contributed 11.3%. Simultaneously, both variables explained 27.5% of the variance in students' work readiness. **Novelty:** This study highlights the importance of strengthening career adaptability as an educational strategy to improve graduate employability and support SDG 4 by promoting quality education that prepares students for sustainable career development.

INTRODUCTION

The rising unemployment rate among recent graduates can be influenced by several factors, including a mismatch between academic curricula and labor market demands, unrealistic job expectations, and the lack of specific skills that are not adequately taught in formal education (Bukartaite & Hooper, 2023). The lack of competencies and in-demand skills is the reason for many companies rejecting graduates, even though those who demonstrate work readiness with high intellectual aptitude will still be considered by companies (Sellars et al., 2018). Final-semester students should improve their hard and soft skills to increase their competitiveness and meet the requirements of potential employers (Chiu et al., 2016). Those who are in the school-to-work transition should acquire additional skills that may not be fully addressed in university (Hettich, 2020). During this transition, they determine which career path they will take (Gleason, 2018). Given the increasing competitiveness of the workplace, students should proactively seek out job opportunities and training programs to acquire in-demand skills (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Individual resources that enable individuals to overcome challenges and grab opportunities during the school-to-work transition are referred to as career adaptability. The school-to-work transition involves on-the-job training, apprenticeships, cooperative education agreements, or other programs designed to prepare students to enter the workforce (Bank, 2018). Work readiness is characterized by an individual's resources necessary for successful entry into the job market (Suarda et

al., 2017). Career adaptability helps students to enhance their resources (Vos et al., 2021). Students with a high level of career adaptability are more likely to exhibit confidence and anticipation when solving complex problems related to career decisions (Force, 2020). The school-to-work transition involves on-the-job training, apprenticeships, cooperative education agreements, or other programs designed to prepare students to enter the workforce (Bank, 2018). School-to-work transition is a systematic approach that introduces students to a work-based philosophy, connecting their prior learning to unlock their career potential (Neumark & Joyce, 2000).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is quantitative descriptive using correlational method. The research population consists of 119.260 students from seven universities in West Sumatra (Yunita et al., 2022). The samples were taken by incidental sampling (Trotochaud et al., 2014). The instruments are career adaptability, willingness to compromise, and work readiness. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, and multiple linear regression (Hughes, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1. The results of multiple linear regression analysis on the influence of career adaptability (X1) and willingness to compromise on students' work readiness (X2)

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		
	B	T	Sig
Constant	21.149	2.878	0.000
Career Adaptability (X ₁)	0.229	3.473	0.000
Willingness to Compromise (X ₂)	-.097	-1.076	0.283

Discussion

The analysis shows that H0 is rejected due to the significant positive contribution of career adaptability to student work readiness. In contrast, willingness to compromise has a negative, albeit non-significant, effect on student work readiness (Öztemel & Akyol, 2020). Together, career adaptability and willingness to compromise explain 27.5% of the variance in students' work readiness (Bank, 2018). Based on the hypothesis, career adaptability and willingness to compromise influence the students' work readiness during the school-to-work transition (Ayvaz & Karacan-Özdemir, 2024).

The result R-squared of R 0.525 suggests a strong relationship between career adaptability, willingness to compromise, and student work readiness (Lin&Lo, 2023). The R-squared value of R 0.525 also indicates that career adaptability and willingness to compromise together explain 27.5% of the variance in student work readiness. The remaining 72.2% of the variance is influenced by other factors (Wee, 2013).

Career adaptability is characterized by an individual's capacity to prepare for career transitions, particularly those that are unplanned (Vos et al., 2018). Career adaptability is a psychosocial construct characterized by four aspects: concern, preparation, motivation, and resilience (Johnston, 2016). Meanwhile, willingness to compromise refers to accepting career paths that may deviate from the initial preferences (Xu, 2011). This construction is related to an individual's ability to adapt to unwanted career paths (Creed & Gagliardi, 2014).

Willingness to compromise is a concept to see how a stable individual reacts to a career decision (Barth & Jong, 2017). This stable characteristic allows them to respond effectively to new and challenging situations (Harguindeguy et al., 2013). It may depend on the challenges each individual faces, such as internal factors requiring significant effort to achieve desired career goals or external factors stemming from environmental influences (Luo et al., 2023). Willingness to compromise refers to accepting career paths that may deviate from the initial preferences (Xu, 2011).

This research contributes to the identification of factors influencing school-to-work transition (Scaglioni et al., 2018). This research can help lecturers, career counselors, and program planners to develop an effective program to support students during school-to-work transition. School-to-work transition is an important period for university students (Baan et al., 2022) because they have to adapt to new environments, develop new skills, and build professional networks at the same time. This research will help students get a better understanding of the expectations and challenges related to school-to-work transition, enabling them to prepare more effectively (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study confirms that career adaptability is a fundamental factor influencing students' work readiness during the school-to-work transition. Students with stronger career adaptability demonstrate greater capacity to manage career uncertainty, adjust to workplace demands, and develop confidence in entering professional environments. The findings reveal that career adaptability significantly contributes to work readiness, while willingness to compromise provides additional support in preparing students for career transitions. **Implication :** The findings imply that higher education institutions should strengthen career development programs by integrating career counseling, adaptability training, professional preparation, and experiential learning opportunities. These efforts support SDG 4 (Quality Education) by ensuring that education systems provide students with relevant competencies required for sustainable employment and lifelong career development. **Limitation :** This study is limited by the use of incidental sampling and participants drawn only from universities in West Sumatra, Indonesia. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent students from different regions, educational backgrounds, or cultural contexts. **Future Research :** Future studies should examine additional factors influencing work readiness, such as digital competence, social support, internship experience, and psychological well-being. Longitudinal research is also recommended to explore how career adaptability develops throughout students' transition from higher education into employment.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Mega Iswaria contributed to the conceptual framework, research conceptualization, methodology development, data collection, validation process, and manuscript preparation. **Afdal** contributed to the research design, theoretical framework development, literature review, data analysis, and critical revision of the manuscript. **Nurfarhanah** contributed to the interpretation of research findings, academic supervision, and manuscript review. **Nurhastuti** contributed to research methodology refinement, data management, and validation of research instruments. **Humaira Mustika** contributed to literature sourcing, data processing, manuscript editing, and improvement of the discussion section. **Ringgi Rahmat Fitra** contributed to data analysis, research documentation, manuscript revision, and final preparation of the

article. All listed authors have reviewed and approved the final version of this submission.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors confirm that there are no conflicts of interest, either financial or personal, that may have influenced the content or outcome of this study.

ETHICAL COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

This manuscript complies with research and publication ethics. The authors affirm that the work is original, conducted with academic integrity, and free from any unethical practices, including plagiarism.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF AI OR DIGITAL TOOLS IN WRITING

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools were not used to generate the research findings, analyze the data, or replace the intellectual contributions of the authors. AI tools, when used, were limited to language improvement and manuscript preparation assistance under the supervision of the authors

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