

CAREER ADAPTABILITY OF GENERATION Z MUSLIM

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Abstract. VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) career challenges; adaptation of workers and robots in the era of society 5.0; increasing educated unemployment and mass layoffs are major challenges for Generation Z in planning their careers. Career adaptability is the ability to predict and prepare for various changes that may occur. This study aims to describe the career adaptability of Muslim graduates of Generation Z of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati. This descriptive survey quantitative study was conducted by distributing the Career Adaptability Scale–Short Form (CAAS-SF) Career Adaptability instrument (Maggiori et al., 2017) to 446 graduates. The career adaptability of Muslim graduates of Generation Z is in the moderate category. Graduates with a moderate level of career adaptability show sufficient interest in future career development, although preparation and awareness of educational choices are not always consistent; tend to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their actions, have a moderate curiosity to explore opportunities, and are quite confident in overcoming obstacles, although sometimes they still depend on the help of others and require more effort in developing new skills. There is no significant difference between male and female prospective graduates. From an Islamic perspective, after possessing the desire for change and enthusiasm (hamasah), Generation Z graduates also need to apply the principle of tawakkal (religious commitment) in their career development process.

Key words: Career Adaptability, Generation Z, Muslims

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, career development has faced growing instability and increasing difficulty in predicting future developments. This uncertainty is encapsulated in the acronym VUCA—volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity—which describes a rapidly changing and unpredictable work environment (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). VUCA conditions have made it difficult for prospective graduates to align their educational backgrounds with job opportunities, as the assumptions made during their academic journey often no longer apply upon graduation.

Following VUCA, another challenge is the emergence of Society 5.0, an era driven by technological advancements and the integration of artificial intelligence in the workforce. In this context, data from the physical world is processed by AI systems and reintroduced into society, aiming to balance economic progress with the resolution of social issues through the provision of goods and services (Deguchi & Kamimura, 2020). Graduates and workers are expected to adapt to this transformation, leveraging technology to perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively. They must also engage in continuous self-directed learning to align their academic knowledge with the demands of the modern workplace. Without adequate preparation, graduates risk falling into the category of educated unemployed.

Educated unemployment has become an increasingly pressing issue in Indonesia. As of August 2022, there were 673,000 unemployed university graduates, with West Java ranking as the second-highest province in this regard (BPS, 2022). Many recent graduates struggle to transition into the workforce and risk joining this demographic. Providing more practical experiences before graduation is essential (Nurmasari, 2024). This preparation requires synergy among the government, universities, and the students themselves, and must be tailored to the individual's unique characteristics and potential.

University graduates predominantly belong to Generation Z, a cohort distinct from previous generations in its behavior and values. Gen Z is characterized by its adaptability and its upbringing amidst rapid technological advancement, the internet, and social media (Arum et al., 2023). It is projected that Gen Z will comprise over 20% of the workforce (Sakitri, 2016). While they represent the future of Indonesia, Gen Z faces significant challenges in securing employment. They tend to be more pragmatic, seeking security and stability, and are less inclined toward short-term or unstable jobs

(Juniartika et al., 2023). Moreover, Gen Z demonstrates a higher tendency to change jobs quickly compared to millennials (Redafanza et al., 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated career development by introducing mass layoffs, shifting work systems, and altering workplace culture. These changes demand greater adaptability among graduates to navigate career uncertainty (Darmawani & Suryahadikusumah, 2021). For Gen Z, finding meaning in work is critical to fostering loyalty and reducing job-hopping tendencies. However, even before achieving a meaningful career, many are already facing waves of mass layoffs.

Mass layoffs have become increasingly frequent in Indonesia. From January to March 2024 alone, 12,395 workers were affected by layoffs (Ministry of Manpower, 2024). This phenomenon is largely driven by challenges in labor-intensive industries resulting from weakened global economic growth, reduced consumer purchasing power due to currency devaluation, and political transitions in Indonesia. Consequently, new graduates are now competing not only among themselves but also with experienced workers who have lost their jobs. Graduates must therefore be equipped with the necessary skills to face these evolving challenges.

Career adaptability is a critical competency for prospective university graduates. It refers to the readiness to cope with recurring changes and unpredictable developments in one's career and work conditions (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). This skill enables individuals to stay informed about emerging issues, prepare relevant skills in anticipation of change, and effectively respond to post-graduation challenges. Assessing career adaptability before graduation is vital, as earlier detection allows more time for targeted preparation. Career adaptability comprises four key dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Song et al., 2023). These dimensions help individuals make informed career decisions (Park et al., 2022). Career concern involves an individual's interest in their future development; career control reflects a sense of self-regulation and determination; career curiosity refers to the exploration of opportunities and career-related information; and career confidence indicates the belief in one's ability to solve career problems and succeed (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Song et al., 2023). Collectively, these dimensions guide individuals in developing adaptive career strategies (Maggiori et al., 2017).

In light of these dynamic and complex challenges, it is crucial to examine the career adaptability of final-year students at the State Islamic University (UIN) Sunan Gunung Djati. This institution is uniquely positioned, as its graduates receive structured religious education from the beginning of their academic journey, distinguishing them from graduates of other universities. Furthermore, as representatives of Muslim students in West Java—a province with one of the highest rates of educated unemployment—UIN graduates are ideal for this study. It is expected that the integration of Islamic values in their education may strengthen their resilience and adaptability in the job market (Triantiani et al., 2022). The current gap in knowledge regarding the career adaptability of Muslim youth, especially within Generation Z, forms the foundation of this research. Thus, the objective of this study is to describe the career adaptability of Generation Z Muslim graduates at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative descriptive research design. Quantitative research is a form of pure research that aims to generate findings beneficial to the advancement of scientific knowledge (Furqon, 2014). The research subjects are prospective graduates of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. The sampling technique used is random sampling, targeting students who participated in the *Munaqosah* examination, totaling 446 participants.

The instrument utilized is an adapted version of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale–Short Form (CAAS-SF) developed by Maggiori et al. (2017), which is based on Savickas' career adaptability theory (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011). The adaptation process involved expert translation by a linguist and psychologist, followed by a readability test, as well as validity and reliability testing. The Indonesian version of the instrument was deemed appropriate for use and distribution. Data analysis was conducted

using descriptive statistics with SPSS version 21 to explore the overall career adaptability profile of final-year students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the overall level of career adaptability among prospective graduates of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung falls into the moderate category. This finding is based on descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS version 21, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Career Adaptability

N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
446	12	60	22,867	51.27	6.487

Based on Table 1, the mean score of career adaptability is 51.27 with a standard deviation of 6.487. Referring to the categorization criteria in Table 2, career adaptability is classified into three levels: high, moderate, and low.

Table 2. Categorization of Career Adaptability

Category	Score Range
High	55–61
Moderate	48–55
Low	42–48

Based on this categorization, most prospective graduates from all nine faculties fall within the moderate category. Table 3 presents the distribution of adaptability levels by faculty.

Table 3. Distribution of Career Adaptability Levels by Faculty

Faculty	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Adab and Humanities	3	19	5	27
Da'wah and Communication	12	146	87	245
Islamic Economics and Business	4	29	15	48
Social and Political Sciences	5	34	21	60
Psychology	0	1	0	1
Science and Technology	1	14	10	25
Sharia and Law	1	16	6	23
Usuluddin	1	10	6	17
Total	27	269	150	446

Furthermore, Table 4 shows the classification for each career adaptability dimension. All four dimensions—concern, control, curiosity, and confidence—fall into the moderate category, with concern being the highest and confidence the lowest.

Table 4. Categorization of Career Adaptability Dimensions

Dimension	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Categorization
Concern	446	13.00	1.933	Moderate
Control	446	12.87	1.892	Moderate
Curiosity	446	12.98	1.835	Moderate
Confidence	446	12.42	1.978	Moderate

Gender-based analysis is presented in Table 5. The median score of male students is one point higher than that of female students. Since the data did not meet normality assumptions, median was used as the basis for comparison. The Mann–Whitney test yielded a p-value of 0.188, which is greater than

0.05, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students in terms of career adaptability.

Table 5. Career Adaptability by Gender

Gender	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Female	51.14	52.00	6.279
Male	51.68	53.00	7.101

Discussion

The findings show that the career adaptability level of prospective graduates of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung is moderate. This suggests that they have a moderate interest in their future career development, although they may not consistently take proactive steps toward career preparation or fully recognize the educational paths they must pursue. Their decision-making may still rely on external support, and while they are somewhat curious about career options, they may not actively observe how others navigate their career paths. Their confidence in overcoming obstacles is present but not strong, indicating a need for further skill development.

Career adaptability is vital in helping graduates secure employment that aligns with their values and to remain resilient within a heterogeneous work environment (Triantiani et al., 2022). As Muslim Generation Z, these students value Islamic principles, which can provide internal strength and direction in the face of external challenges. Concepts such as resilience and endurance, deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, are viewed not only as coping mechanisms but also as spiritual virtues aligned with the Qur'an and Hadith.

Concern Dimension

The moderate level of concern shows that students are interested in their career futures but may lack consistency in planning. Frequent shifts in career goals result in inadequate preparation. According to Savickas & Porfeli (2012), concern involves having future-oriented goals and actively preparing for them. In Islam, life is seen as a test, and the purpose is to achieve divine success through worship and obedience to Allah (Sulaiman et al., 2014). Inconsistency in setting goals may hinder the ability to take concrete career-preparation actions.

Control Dimension

Control was also found to be moderate. Students sometimes take responsibility but still depend on others. This suggests a lack of self-discipline and persistence. The Islamic principle of personal accountability is highlighted in Qur'an Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 11: *"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."* Career control entails responsibility, self-regulation, and perseverance (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Engagement in educational activities also plays a role—students with higher academic involvement tend to show greater control over their career development (Fredricks et al., 2004; Datu & Buenconsejo, 2021).

Curiosity Dimension

Students scored moderately on curiosity, indicating an effort to explore but without deep investigation or reflection. They may experiment with different roles without narrowing their options. In Islam, curiosity is seen as a necessary trait for learners—*hamasah* (enthusiasm) and perseverance are central to seeking knowledge (Fadly, 2023). Career-related curiosity involves self-exploration, environmental scanning, career planning, and informed decision-making (Song et al., 2023).

Confidence Dimension

Confidence had the lowest mean among the dimensions, indicating doubt about graduating on

time or securing employment. These students may struggle to implement their life plans (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). In Islam, confidence is rooted in tawakkul—placing full trust in Allah’s decree while actively striving. As Lavasani (2019) notes, reliance on Allah strengthens an individual’s sense of purpose and endurance in the face of uncertainty.

Gender Differences

No statistically significant gender differences were found in career adaptability, aligning with Maggiori et al. (2017). While some studies have shown that female students with high emotional intelligence exhibit better adaptability (ÇiZel, 2018), others note that gender egalitarian beliefs can support adaptability equally in both men and women (Soylu et al., 2021).

The findings highlight the need for comprehensive training and development programs to enhance the career readiness of prospective graduates. Early identification of career adaptability is crucial for effective career counseling in universities and career coaching for entry-level employees. Suggested initiatives include career goal-setting workshops; involvement in formal/informal university programs; internships within and outside students' academic profiles and career design thinking training to integrate knowledge and experiences into practical career plans. These efforts can create long-term benefits for individuals, higher education institutions, and future employers (Song et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

The career adaptability of prospective graduates from UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung falls into the moderate category. Students with moderate career adaptability demonstrate a reasonable interest in their future career development, although their preparation and awareness of educational choices tend to be inconsistent. They show a tendency to make decisions independently and take responsibility for their actions. Their curiosity to explore career opportunities is moderate, and they exhibit adequate confidence in overcoming obstacles, although they may still rely on others and require greater effort in developing new skills. There must be a harmony between worldly efforts and spiritual vision, so graduates are not only work-ready but also bring mercy and positive impact through their careers. Opportunities for development are available at the individual, departmental, faculty, and university levels. Recommended programs to enhance career adaptability include career goal-setting training, encouraging students to engage in both formal and informal campus activities, broadening internship opportunities—both within and beyond the scope of graduate profiles—and offering career design thinking training that integrates students' knowledge and experiences in formulating and executing career plans. From an Islamic perspective, after developing a desire to grow (iradah) and motivation (hamasah), students are also encouraged to practice the principle of tawakkul—relying on and trusting in Allah—throughout their career development process. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in career adaptability between male and female prospective graduates. The variations are not determined by biological sex but are more closely related to gender-equitable perceptions and individual emotional intelligence.

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