

Self-Perceived Employability in the Digital Era: Analysis of Online Social Support, Social Media User Type, and Career Adaptability

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Abstract. Self-perceived employability (SPE) is important for students entering the workforce in the digital era. This study aimed to explore the correlation between online social support (OSS), social media user types (SMUT), and SPE with career adaptability (CAD) serving as a mediator. It also examined the relationship of several covariates such as work experience, international exposure, and organizational experience. A total of 360 students comprising males (19.4%) and females (80.6%) participated voluntarily in this study. The data was further collected using a Likert scale measuring OSS ($\alpha = .88$), SPE ($\alpha = .85$), and CAD ($\alpha = .86$) with eight items for all variables. Furthermore, a five item statement was used to assess SMUT where respondents selected the item most appropriate to the condition. The results of Structural Equation Model (SEM) testing carried out using RStudio with the Lavaan package version 0.6-18 showed that OSS played an important role in improving SPE both directly and through CAD. Although SMUT did not significantly affect SPE through CAD, it suggested a broader impact when considering the total effect. This study further emphasized the importance of fostering OSS to increase career adaptability and eventually improve SPE. Additionally, the results contributed to the literature by providing empirical evidence regarding the factors influencing students' SPE. Practically, this study could support career development programs focused on student character.

Keywords: career adaptability, online social support, self-perceived employability, social media user type

Self-Perceived Employability di Era Digital: Analisis Peran Dukungan Sosial Online, Tipe Pengguna Media Sosial, dan Adaptasi Karier

Abstrak. *Self-perceived employability* (SPE) penting bagi mahasiswa dalam menghadapi dunia kerja di era digital. Studi ini mengeksplorasi korelasi antara dukungan sosial *online* (OSS), tipe pengguna media sosial (SMUT) dan SPE, dengan adaptasi karier (CAD) sebagai mediator. Studi ini juga menguji hubungan dari beberapa *covariates* seperti *work experience*, *international exposure* dan *organizational experience*. Terdapat 360 mahasiswa (laki-laki 19.4%, perempuan 80.6%) yang berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Data penelitian dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan skala Likert yang mengukur OSS (8 aitem, $\alpha = .88$), SPE (8 aitem, $\alpha = .85$), dan CAD (8 aitem, $\alpha = .86$). Peneliti mengukur SMUT dengan 5 aitem pernyataan yang dipilih partisipan sesuai dengan kondisinya. Hasil uji *Structural Equation Model* (SEM) dengan RStudio (*Lavaan package version 0.6-18*) menunjukkan bahwa OSS memiliki peran penting dalam meningkatkan SPE baik secara langsung maupun melalui CAD. Adapun SMUT tidak secara signifikan mempengaruhi SPE melalui CAD, namun memiliki pengaruh yang lebih luas ketika mempertimbangkan efek total. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya dukungan sosial *online* untuk meningkatkan adaptabilitas karier dan, pada akhirnya meningkatkan SPE. Penelitian ini berkontribusi terhadap literatur dengan memberikan bukti empiris mengenai faktor yang berpengaruh terhadap SPE mahasiswa dan secara praktis mendukung program pengembangan karier yang memperhatikan karakter mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: adaptasi karier, dukungan sosial *online*, *self-perceived employability*, tipe pengguna media sosial

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In the digital era, career opportunities are increasingly broader and global with job paths becoming more flexible and unrestricted (Biemann et al., 2012; Bridgstock et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020; Ramnund-Mansingh & Reddy, 2021). Currently, the workforce is being modernized with advancements in technology, innovation, globalization, and structural changes in the business world. According to a 2023 statistical survey by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), about 9.9 million young individuals (15-24 years) were in a state of inactivity or not in education, employment, and training (NEET) (Muhamad, 2024). This implies that 22.25% of the young population in Indonesia is not absorbed into the job market.

On the other hand, there are three main challenges in adapting to the transition in the digital work era with the first being that massive digitalization puts many jobs at risk. The World Economic Forum reported in 2021 that approximately 85 million jobs would be transferred from humans to machines and around 97 million jobs would include collaboration between human-machine algorithms by 2025 (Hai, 2023; Lee, 2020). Second, environmental challenges such as climate change, increasing population, and world consumption pose significant issues. Lastly, the current economic recession significantly impacts job security, unemployment, and feelings of social exclusion (Guerra & Eboime, 2021). Therefore, work readiness, adaptability to new job demands,

group diversity, and different environments become increasingly important to overcome this transition (Savickas et al., 2009).

Based on these challenges, the career phenomenon in the digital era reflects a significant transformation in work paradigms, job search methods, and individual career development. Society faces new technologies and online platforms as well as changes in work such as remote work, time flexibility, and the growth of new technology-related industries (Vasilescu et al., 2020). Furthermore, the Internet revolutionizes job searches, providing wider access to career opportunities in various locations. Recruitment websites, online professional networks such as LinkedIn, and the use of technology in the job selection process are part of this change (El-Menawy & Saleh, 2023; Nikolaou, 2021). Career development also evolves with online training, digital courses, online learning resources, and virtual tutoring to become an essential part of developing skills and knowledge for building a career in the digital era (Shahriar et al., 2023). This change presents challenges for recent graduates, who should excel academically and possess skills relevant to the job market (Cheng et al., 2022).

Reflecting on the evidence, identifying factors that support individual employability becomes crucial as these can increase graduates' absorption into the job market. Furthermore, self-perceived employability which is examined from the perspective of an individual comprises the perception of an

ability to obtain sustainable employment according to the qualifications, such as social capital, personal characteristics, and work skills (Clarke, 2018; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Employability further refers to the ability to realize potential through sustainable employment with individuals proactively overcoming labor market challenges (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). The ability to find work also helps individuals navigate job transitions in volatile labor markets (Fugate et al., 2004).

Self-perceived employability (SPE) can be understood through two dimensions namely personal attribute and job. Each dimension also consists of two components (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007), where the personal attribute includes self-assessment within and outside the current organization. Furthermore, the job dimensions comprise the perceived value of work within and outside the current organization. Based on these conditions, individuals will assess the work suitability through personal attributes and expected work.

Individuals with high SPE are further perceived as capable of obtaining and retaining employment, thereby adopting a more positive attitude toward achieving career targets. According to Rothwell et al. (2008), individuals with a high level of SPE feel more satisfied with careers, possess higher motivation for professional development, and adapt better to changes in the work environment. These individuals also tend to perform better and gain more career recognition (Berntson et al., 2006).

Conversely, individuals with low SPE often face negative impacts including higher anxiety regarding the career future, lower self-confidence in professional abilities, and increased vulnerability to work stress (Vanhercke et al., 2014). Lack of SPE can also reduce the chances of successful career transitions and increase the risk of long-term unemployment (Fugate et al., 2004).

Several factors are considered interesting to explore further including social capital and personal resources. These personal resources can be interpreted as personal factors that shape SPE (Chou & Shen, 2012; De Guzman & Choi, 2013). Individuals with well-developed social capital and personal resources often use formal (parents) and informal (friends of friends) as support systems to enhance job search behavior (Fugate et al., 2004). According to the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2001), individuals strive to maintain and use resources contributing to work success with increasing social psychological sources such as support from parents, friends, and stakeholders that can improve the chances of success in the job. As an important social network and source of capital, online social support (OSS) is influential in determining the success of student performance (Salimi et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2022).

OSS is defined as tangible and intangible help received through the Internet from friends, family, and social circles comprising emotional support, friendship, information, and

instrumental support (Zhou & Cheng, 2022). It also provides flexibility and easier access than face-to-face support. This allows individuals to obtain support without geographic limitations, facilitating the help to be an effective tool for overcoming various personal and social challenges (Wright, 2016; Xin et al., 2024).

Investigations have also reported various similarities between online social interactions with face-to-face interactions (Gonçalves et al., 2014; Gruzd et al., 2011). Furthermore, various empirical results showed that social support positively impacted the employability of the students (Michailidis et al., 2015), career self-efficacy (Wang & Fu, 2015), maturity (Cho & Choi, 2007), and work readiness (Hirschi et al., 2011). Additionally, several publications results showed that social media contributed positively to social support (Ahn, 2012; Donath & Boyd, 2004; Ellison et al., 2007; Lin, 1999; Steinfield et al., 2008).

Social support and employability are crucial personal resources and according to career construction theory, adaptability is also a social psychological resource essential for overcoming tasks at work (Savickas, 1997). Individuals with greater OSS are more inclined to increase the career adaptability (Creed et al., 2009). Greater career adaptability enhances coping skills and adaptability to work and life challenges, leading to better life satisfaction, well-being, and happiness orientation (Johnston et al., 2013; Tien et al., 2012). Several publications also showed that career

adaptability (CAD) can mediate in various contexts including career participation (Nilforooshan & Salimi, 2016; Sou et al., 2022) planning (Zhang et al., 2019), construction (Jia et al., 2022), and school-work transition (Koen et al., 2012). This also shows that CAD plays a role in various aspects of career development.

Career adaptability has further been defined as a psychosocial construct that reflects an individual's resources for managing current and future work as well as career challenges affecting social environment integration (Savickas, 1997). Savickas (2005) explained that the most influential career construction theory identified four main dimensions namely attention, control, curiosity, and self-confidence. Based on this theory, the results are produced by adaptive readiness, adaptation resources, and responses (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Individuals who are willing (adaptive) and able (adaptability) to adjust the behavior according to changing conditions (adapting) are expected to have a higher level of adaptability (outcome). Furthermore, previous publications showed that as a core component in career development, career adaptability was a significant predictor of employability (Dumulescu et al., 2015; McArdle et al., 2007; Veld et al., 2016), enabling CAD to be a bridge between OSS and SPE.

The influence of social media user types (SMUT) on responses to OSS is elucidated by the unified media user typology method developed by Brandtzæg (2010). The SMUT are

divided based on the frequency of use, type of activity, and social capital including (1) Sporadic (low-level users), (2) Lurkers (users who do not contribute or interact), (3) Socializer (use social media for social interaction), and (4) Debater (use social media for debating and discussing). These types are very different from each other in terms of user activity and social roles in social media.

Publications further showed that there were significant differences in media use patterns between sporadic and advanced user groups (Al-Menayes, 2014). Wang et al. (2015) found that the use of social networking sites of the socializer-type was positively related to the well-being of the users. Consequently, the SMUT grouped individuals into the least social (sporadic and lurker), moderate social (socializer and debater), as well as the most social (advanced). This condition allows individuals of different types to show different adaptive attitudes, affecting work suitability. The results correlate with previous publications showing that job information search methods relate to employability (Yu et al., 2014). Individuals with the type supporting positive social relationships can also improve CAD. Career adaptability which is considered a resource in self-management will further affect the individual's work ability (Rossier et al., 2017).

Previous analyses have focused on the effect of offline social support and traditional factors on impacting SPE and CAD (De Cuyper

et al., 2011; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; Jolly et al., 2021). However, a focus on OSS and social media user types provides a new perspective fitting the increasingly digitalized job market dynamics. Based on this discussion, this study aimed to comprehensively investigate how OSS, SMUT, and CAD affect students' SPE. The assumption of this study is that when OSS is high, CAD also increases and further enhances SPE. Conversely, CAD also decreases when OSS is low and SPE will further reduce. The SMUT will also affect CAD and SPE.

Method

This study used a correlational quantitative method where the independent variables included OSS and SMUT. The dependent variable comprised SPE with CAD as a moderating factor. The minimum sample size required in an SEM study was $N = 200$ but it was recommended to sample more than this number for complex models (Kyriazos, 2018). The respondents in this study were 360 students including 19.4% males and 80.6% females participating voluntarily. These students were second to fourth-year grade who were registered academically active at the university.

The instrument used in this study included a psychological scale consisting of an OSS scale, SMUT, self-perceived employability, and CAD. Furthermore, a Likert scale with several alternative answers on each scale was used in this study. Respondents were further asked to fill in several statements that were used

to express the problem to be examined by selecting an alternative answer appropriate to the actual situation.

The OSS scale consisted of eight items ($\alpha = .88$) adopted from Zhou and Cheng (2022) which referred to four aspects including emotional, friendship, information, and instrument support. Alternative answer choices were (1) Always (score 7), (2) Very Frequent (score 6), implying it occurred at least 5-6 times a week, (3) Frequent (score 5), suggesting it happened a minimum of 3-4 times a week, (4) Sometimes (score 4), a minimum of 1-2 times a week, (5) Rare (score 3), it happened 3-4 times a month; (6) Very rare (score 2), it occurred 1-2 times a month, and (7) Never (score 1).

In measuring the SMUT, the study identified various types based on Brandtzæg (2010) standards. Respondents had to select one of five statements that best described the nature of social media use (Al-Menayes, 2014). This statement was based on the Typology of Media Users described by Brandtzæg (2010) including sporadic, lurker, socializer, debater, and

advanced. On this scale, respondents selected an item that was considered most appropriate to the conditions describing the SMUT.

The SPE scale consisted of eight items ($\alpha = .85$) adopted from Rothwell et al. (2008) comprising four aspects namely (1) self-assessment within, (2) assessment of the value of work, (3) self-assessment outside, and (4) perceived value of work outside the current organization. Alternative answer choices on this scale were Very Unsuitable (STS) given a score of 1, Not Suitable (TS) with a score of 2, Quite Suitable (CS) showing a score of 3, Suitable (S) denoting a score of 4, and Very Suitable (SS) representing a value of 5. Finally, the CAD scale consisted of eight items ($\alpha = .86$) adopted from Song et al. (2023) comprising four aspects namely career attention, control, curiosity, and self-confidence. Alternative answer choices on this scale were Very Inconsistent with a score of 1, Somewhat Inconsistent given a score of 2, Not Sure showing a score of 3, Quite Consistent representing a score of 4, and Very Consistent denoting a score of 5.

Table 1*Summary of Study Instrument Items*

Variables and Aspects	Items
<i>Online Social Support</i>	
Emotional support	People say or do things online that make me feel good about myself. (Orang mengatakan atau melakukan hal-hal secara online yang membuat saya merasa nyaman dengan diri sendiri.) People cheer me on when I'm online. (Orang-orang menyemangati saya saat saya online.)
Friendship	When I'm online, I talk or do things with other people online. (Saat saya online, saya berbicara atau melakukan sesuatu dengan orang lain secara online.) I belong to groups of people with similar interests online. (Saya tergabung dalam kelompok orang dengan minat yang sama secara online.)
Information support	Online, people will tell me where to find help when I need it. (Secara online, orang akan memberi tahu saya di mana mencari bantuan jika saya membutuhkannya.) People help me learn new things when I'm online. (Orang-orang membantu saya mempelajari hal-hal baru saat saya online.)
Instrument support	When I need help doing something, I go online to find people who can help. (Jika saya memerlukan bantuan untuk melakukan sesuatu, saya online untuk mencari orang yang dapat membantu.) When I need help with college matters or career information, I get help from others online. (Ketika saya membutuhkan bantuan untuk urusan kuliah atau informasi karir, saya mendapatkan bantuan dari orang lain secara online.)
<i>Social Media User Types</i>	
Sporadic	Using social media incidentally and sporadically. (Saya menggunakan media sosial secara kebetulan dan sporadis.)
Lurker	Using social media constantly but only to observe what's going on without contributing. (Saya menggunakan media sosial terus-menerus, tetapi hanya untuk mengamati apa yang terjadi tanpa berkontribusi.)
Socializer	Using social media constantly to socialize with other people. (Saya menggunakan media sosial terus-menerus untuk bersosialisasi dengan orang lain.)
Debater	Using social media constantly for serious discussions about public issues. (Saya menggunakan media sosial terus-menerus untuk diskusi serius tentang masalah publik.)
Advanced	Using social media constantly to socialize and discuss public issues. (Saya menggunakan media sosial terus-menerus baik untuk bersosialisasi maupun mendiskusikan masalah publik.)
<i>Self-Perceived Employability</i>	
Self-assessment in today's organizations	The company wants to hire graduates from my university. (Perusahaan ingin mempekerjakan lulusan dari universitas saya.) The status of the university where I study is an important asset for me when looking for work. (Status universitas tempat saya kuliah merupakan aset penting bagi saya dalam mencari pekerjaan.)
The perceived value of work in today's organization	The company targeted the university I studied at, specifically to recruit graduates from my field of study. (Perusahaan menargetkan universitas tempat saya kuliah, khususnya untuk merekrut lulusan dari bidang studi saya.) The university where I study has an excellent reputation, especially in my field of study. (Universitas tempat saya kuliah memiliki reputasi yang luar biasa terutama di bidang studi saya.)

Variables and Aspects	Items
<i>Online Social Support</i>	
Self-assessment outside the current organization	People in my intended career are in high demand in the external labor market. <i>(Orang-orang dalam karir yang saya tuju sangat diminati di pasar tenaga kerja eksternal.)</i> The degree I will get is seen as leading to a particular career that is generally very desirable. <i>(Gelar yang akan saya dapatkan nanti dipandang mengarah ke karir tertentu yang umumnya sangat diinginkan.)</i>
The perceived value of work outside the current organization	There are many job openings in the geographic area where I am looking for work. <i>(Ada banyak lowongan pekerjaan di wilayah geografis tempat saya mencari pekerjaan.)</i> Can easily find out about career opportunities in my chosen field. <i>(Saya dapat dengan mudah mencari tahu tentang peluang karir di bidang yang saya pilih.)</i>
<i>Career adaptability</i>	
Attention to career	Thought about what the future would be. <i>(Saya memikirkan seperti apa masa depan saya nantinya.)</i> Aware of the educational and vocational choices I must make. <i>(Saya sadar akan pilihan pendidikan dan kejuruan yang harus saya ambil.)</i>
Career control	Making personal decisions. <i>(Saya membuat keputusan sendiri.)</i> Responsible for the actions. <i>(Saya bertanggung jawab atas tindakan saya.)</i>
Career curiosity	Investigate options before making a choice. <i>(Saya menyelidiki pilihan sebelum membuat pilihan.)</i> Observe different ways of doing things from the people around me. <i>(Saya mengamati cara-cara yang berbeda dalam melakukan sesuatu dari orang-orang di sekitar.)</i>
Confidence in career	Can take care to do everything well. <i>(Saya dapat berhati-hati untuk melakukan segala sesuatunya dengan baik.)</i> Able to develop abilities step by step. <i>(Saya mampu mengembangkan kemampuan saya selangkah demi selangkah.)</i>

In this study, data collection was carried out through the use of the Google Form link. At the beginning of the survey, an information page regarding the study objectives was provided and respondents expressed written consent. The experts guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of the responses. On the Google Form link, the experts also asked for main demographic data including gender category, current semester, work experience (WE), international exposure (IAE), and

organizational experience (OE). At the end of the survey, respondents received brief information about the purpose of the study and further reading on the topic.

The study used structural equation model with the Lavaan package in the R language programming to test the mediating role of CAD on the relationship between OSS, SMUT, and SPE by controlling three covariates such as OE, WE, and IAE (Rosseel, 2012). Furthermore, the model for this test was observed in Figure 1.

Figure 1*Model Formula*

```

# Direct effects
SPE ~ c1 * OSS + c2 * SMUT + b * CAD + WE + IAE + OE

# Mediator
CAD ~ a1 * OSS + a2 * SMUT + WE + IAE + OE

# Indirect effects
indirect1 := a1 * b
indirect2 := a2 * b

# Total effects
total1 := c1 + (a1 * b)
total2 := c2 + (a2 * b)

# Covariate effects
WE ~ OSS + SMUT
IAE ~ OSS + SMUT
OE ~ OSS + SMUT

```

The model was further tested using the 'sem' function and Bootstrap with 1000 repetitions to increase the accuracy of standard error estimation and statistical testing of model parameters as observed in Figure 2. The path diagram from the SEM model was also visualized using 'semPlot' to provide a clear graphical representation of the relationship between variables (Epskamp, 2019). The results

were then interpreted in terms of direct, indirect, and total effects. Additionally, the lines and values in the graph represented the standardized path coefficient used to assess the strength of the correlation between variables. Mediation effects were also evaluated to determine the proportion of the total effect of OSS and SMUT on SPE that was mediated by CAD.

Figure 2*Model Fit*

```

fit <- sem(sem_model, data = valid_data, se = "bootstrap", bootstrap = 1000)
summary(fit, standardized = TRUE)

```

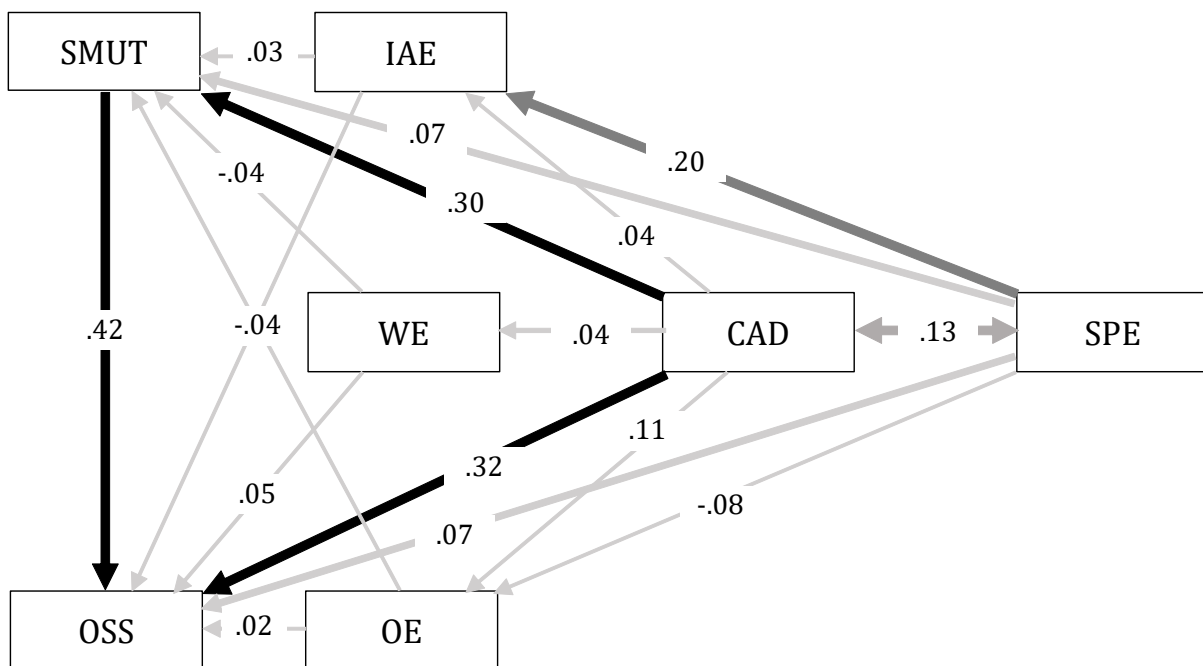
Previously, publications tested the assumptions using the 'check_model' function in the "performance package" in RStudio (Lüdecke et al., 2021). The relationship between the model covariates and outcome variables was linear, residuals were normally distributed, no heteroscedasticity was present, and low collinearity between variables was observed. Therefore, all linear regression assumptions were met and the analysis was carried out as planned.

In this study, no missing values were identified in the data set. Data were collected and recorded for all variables that were complete, minimizing potential bias in subsequent analysis. The inclusion of all data points increased the reliability and robustness of the results. Furthermore, this study aimed to examine the role of OSS and the SMUT on self-perceived employability with CAD as the mediator. The results of simple data analysis were further shown in Figure 1, depicting a diagram of the model estimation outcomes.

Results

Figure 3

Model Estimation Results Diagram



The analysis test results showed that online social support (OSS) had a significant direct effect on self-perceived employability (SPE) ($\beta = .232; p < .001$), suggesting higher

levels of OSS would directly increase SPE. However, the direct effect of social media user types (SMUT) on SPE was proven to be insignificant ($\beta = .312; p = .129$). This suggested

that only SMUT did not have a direct and substantial impact on SPE.

The mediator of career adaptability (CAD) was an important variable in this study, demonstrated by the direct effect of CAD on SPE which was proven to be significant ($b = .469; p < .001$). This implied that CAD played an important role in increasing SPE. OSS also had a significant positive effect on CAD ($b = .191; p < .001$), signifying that OSS promoted better career adaptability. However, the effect of SMUT on CAD was not significant ($b = .278; p = .181$), implying that the SMUT did not significantly increase career adaptability in this study context.

Mediation analysis showed that the indirect effect of OSS on SPE via CAD was significant ($\beta = .089; p < .001$). This supported the hypothesis that OSS increased SPE through enhancing career adaptability. Conversely, the indirect effect of SMUT on SPE via CAD was not significant ($\beta = .131; p = .198$), showing that the path of SMUT on SPE via CAD did not have a strong association in this sample. Additionally, the total effect analysis showed that both OSS and SMUT significantly impacted SPE. The total effect of OSS on SPE was significant ($\beta = .321; p < .001$), strengthening the direct and indirect contributions of OSS to SPE. Similarly, the total effect of SMUT on SPE was significant ($\beta = .442; p = .046$), though the mediation path was not significant. This suggested that other factors or paths might explain the effect of SMUT on SPE.

Covariate analysis further showed that WE, IAE, and OE did not have significant direct effects on CAD or SPE. This suggested that these factors did not directly affect the mediators or outcomes in this model despite the importance. However, SMUT had a significant positive effect on OE ($b = .071; p < .001$) suggesting that higher social media use was associated with increased organizational experience, potentially influencing SPE indirectly.

Adding CAD as a mediator in this model substantially impacted explaining variance in SPE. The study also measured the effect size using Cohen's f^2 . Cohen in Lorah (2018) and Selya et al. (2012) suggested that $f^2 = .02$ was considered a "small", $f^2 = .15$ represented a "medium", and $f^2 = .35$ denoted a "large" effect size. This signified that when the mean difference between the two groups was less than 0.2 standard deviations, then the difference could be ignored despite the difference being statistically significant. The results of Cohen's f^2 showed a medium to large effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = .248$) suggesting that CAD had a significant role in the relationship between OSS, SMUT, and SPE. In conclusion, OSS played an important role in increasing SPE both directly and through CAD. SMUT had a broader effect considering the total effect while the SMUT did not significantly affect SPE through career adaptability. These results emphasized the importance of motivating OSS to improve career adaptability and eventually SPE outcomes.

Discussion

The increasing absorption of university graduates into the job market is a common concern among universities and society in general. This study extends previous publications by building a mediation model that systematically tests the synergistic impact of individual (i.e. career adaptability) and contextual (i.e. online social support) factors on the SPE of students.

Following the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 2001) and previous empirical results (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2015), the study confirms the positive function of OSS in increasing the chances of individual work success such as SPE. The results proved that a stronger social support network would lead to greater employability (Michailidis et al., 2015).

The study identifies that career adaptability mediates the relationship between OSS and SPE. This suggests that building a good social support system will be conducive to cultivating students' career adaptability (Creed et al, 2009) and increasing employability (Kang et al, 2016; Koen et al, 2012). Therefore, career adaptability can function as a "bridge" connecting OSS and SPE. This is further reinforced by the results of Kou et al. (2024) showing that social support is positively related to an individual's CAD. In this context, CAD should be considered a valuable psychosocial asset that can be developed by providing various aspects of social support including

informational, advisory, emotional, and instrumental or financial.

SMUT were found not to directly affect SPE, and career adaptability showed no mediation in the relationship between the variables. However, the total effect of the SMUT on SPE is significant showing that the way individuals use social media is positively related to how employability is perceived. Although the mediation path is not significant, it suggests that other factors or pathways may explain the relationship between social media use and perceived employability.

Publications conducted by De-Mesa et al (2020), Fryczyńska and Ciecierski (2020), Mogaji (2019), Nikolaou (2014), and Ramón et al. (1970) showed that individuals who were more active in building professional networks through platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook tended to perceive higher levels of employability. These individuals use social media to search for career information, develop professional relationships, and demonstrate skills, further increasing SPE. Furthermore, Nikolaou (2014) found that social media could serve as a tool for professional identity development and increased visibility in the job market. For example, individuals who use social media to share professional accomplishments and participate in industry discussions show higher levels of employability due to competence and connection. Therefore, the SMUT can have a direct effect.

In contrast, the insignificant mediation effect of CAD shows that other factors play a role in how SMUT affect SPE. These factors can include social media skills (Sutherland & Ho, 2017), quality of online interactions, type of content shared, and level of engagement with relevant professional communities. Furthermore, Sözbilir (2018) emphasized how social media was used practically to support career adaptability and prospects. O'Connor et al. (2022) also stated that social media behavior was limited to positively predicting career competence in identifying career-relevant networks and contacts as well as career satisfaction.

The results of covariate analysis further showed that work experience, international exposure, and organizational experience did not significantly and directly affect CAD or SPE. Although these factors are important for career development in general, the variables did not directly affect the career adaptability process or SPE in the model. Work experience is often considered an important factor in career development as it provides practical skills and industry insight. In the context of this study, work experience may not directly increase career adaptability or SPE. However, it can be affected by other factors such as social support, active participation in continuous learning, and interpersonal skills acquired through professional networks which have a more direct impact on SPE.

International exposure is often thought to increase employability through cross-cultural understanding and adaptive skills. However, the results of this study showed that international experience was not enough to directly affect SPE or CAD. This is due to how international experience is integrated and applied in daily professional contexts (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The experience an individual gains in an organization can also provide insight into work dynamics and managerial skills but this study shows that these experiences do not directly affect CAD or SPE. Organizational experience should further be accompanied by self-reflection and personal development to truly affect perceptions of employability (Cuddy et al., 2013).

Overall, the covariate analyses emphasize that factors such as work experience, international exposure, and organizational experience are important but not strong enough to directly affect career adaptability or SPE. In contrast, the dynamic interaction between social support, networking skills, and social media use may play a more significant role in shaping career adaptability and self-perceived employability. This correlates with data analysis results showing that higher social media use is associated with increased organizational experience, an indirect pathway affecting self-perceived workability.

The theoretical implication of this study supports CAD theory which emphasizes the importance of adapting to changes in the work

environment. Furthermore, the results showed that OSS strengthened career adaptability and had implications for expanding understanding of how individuals could increase the readiness and resources to face vocational development tasks and job transitions. It also expands existing literature regarding the role of social support in career development. Previous publications emphasized social support from the physical environment such as family and coworkers (Hui et al., 2018; Kou et al., 2024; Rençber & Paşaoğlu Baş, 2023; Takawira, 2020) but in this study, it was found that OSS also played a significant role in the career adaptability and SPE of individuals.

The results of this study further provided several practical implications for higher education institutions, organizations, and students. Higher education institutions can develop and promote OSS programs to help students develop CAD and SPE such as online career service applications for students as well as career counseling both offline and online. Furthermore, institutions can create policies motivating students to participate in social media communities on career development platforms to further increase SPE and career potential.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study aimed to examine the role of CAD as a mediator between OSS and SPE, as well as the SMUT and SPE. The analysis found that OSS had an important role in increasing SPE both directly and through

CAD. The SMUT had a broader effect when considering the total effect while the SMUT did not significantly affect SPE through CAD. These results further emphasized the importance of fostering OSS to increase career adaptability and eventually enhance SPE, especially for those who actively participated, interacted, and had expertise in using social media.

Suggestion

The study recommended that further publications should explore OSS specifically in the context of career social support to obtain an overview of domain-specific support related to career-relevant tasks or problems. More specifically, it should also include information and advice on career planning, financial support for job search behavior, comfort and motivation after a failed interview, and other resources that individuals could obtain from social networks such as parents, siblings, teachers, friends, and relatives. Furthermore, institutions could develop training and coaching programs focused on improving online interaction skills. The institutions could also develop applications or online tools specifically designed to help individuals use OSS for CAD. Subsequently, career education and career counseling to help students could be organized to create more support-oriented interpersonal relationships, guide individuals to avoid the abuse of social comparison, and provide special activities to facilitate career-related tasks in improving graduates' career adaptability.

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