



## **The Mediating Role of Adversity Quotient in The Relationship Between Parental Support and Career Adaptability among Generation Z Vocational High School Students**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the mediating role of adversity quotient in the relationship between parental support and career adaptability among Generation Z vocational high school students. This quantitative, non-experimental study involved 627 twelfth-grade students from five schools in Jakarta and Banten, aged 16-18 (M=17.2), with a majority of female students (65.6%). Data was collected using the Career Adaptability Scale-5 (CAS-5), Career Related-Parent Support Scale (CRPSS), and Adversity Response Profile-Quick Take (ARP). Data was analyzed using R studio. The results showed that the adversity quotient partially mediated the relationship between parental support and career adaptability. The adversity quotient possessed by Generation Z vocational high school students can help them overcome difficulties in achieving career goals and adapting to the ever-changing career context due to the development of Industry 4.0 and the use of technology in the workplace. Parental support perceived by Generation Z vocational high school students significantly contributes to increasing students' career adaptability. This implies that the role of parents is crucial because the higher the parental support, the more students will have the ability to adapt to changing career contexts, especially Generation Z vocational high school students who will experience career transitions into the workforce.

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## **Introduction**

The advent of Industry 4.0 has significantly transformed various aspects of human life. This transformation has also disrupted the world of work, leading to unforeseen changes and intense competition due to the emergence of technology (Maysitoh et al., 2018). By 2030, an estimated 23 million jobs in Indonesia are projected to be replaced by technology (Das et al., 2019), resulting in job losses while simultaneously creating new job types through digital transformation in the workplace. Generation Z, which is now entering the workforce, faces numerous uncertainties and complexities as a result of these changes. Generation Z, or Gen Z, comprises individuals born between 1995 and 2012 (Barhate & Dirani, 2021). This generation has grown up deeply embedded in technology, earning them the moniker "digital natives" (Lanier, 2017). In Indonesia, Gen Z constitutes the largest demographic, accounting for 27.94% of the total population of 74.93 million (IDN, 2024). Some members of this generation are already in the workforce, while others are students preparing to enter the job market (Firamadhina & Krisnani, 2020; Nadya & Farozin, 2021).

Based on labor force statistics, the majority of Gen Z (87%) aged 15-19 are still in education (Prasetyo, 2024), including Vocational High School students who are part of Gen Z. They are currently facing a significant challenge in their career development, the transition



to the workforce. Essentially, Vocational High School students are trained to possess intellectual, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, decision-making, leadership, independence, flexibility, and work ethic skills to prepare them for the job market. They are expected to contribute to the workforce as skilled professionals in their respective fields (Kvaskova et al., 2023; Shyamalee, 2013; Suarta, 2017; Wibowo, 2016). However, in reality, industries perceive that the competencies of Gen Z Vocational High School graduates fall short of the skills demanded by the industry. This is evident from research findings indicating that only 45.61% of students possess competencies aligned with industry needs (Rahmadhani et al., 2022). They are seen as "ready to train" rather than "ready to work" as they lack essential skills required by the industry, such as communication, problem-solving, creativity, work ethics, teamwork, and critical thinking. They tend to focus more on technical skills without adapting to the ever-changing demands of the industry (Wibowo, 2016).

A survey conducted by the educational and career advisory platform Intelligence states that 60% of companies have terminated Gen Z employees due to perceived difficulties in adjusting to professional environments. Nearly 50% attributed this to Gen Z employees lacking motivation, initiative, professionalism, organizational skills, communication abilities, receptiveness to criticism, work experience, and teamwork (Crumley, 2024; Flook, 2024). While highly proficient in technology, these individuals often exhibit deficiencies in soft skills. Meanwhile, the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) has recorded nearly 10 million Gen Z individuals aged 15-24 in Indonesia who are classified as NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training), representing 22.25% of the total population within this age group, with Vocational High School graduates contributing significantly to unemployment rates (Idris, 2024; Putri, 2024). Beyond unemployment and skill gaps, Gen Z Vocational High School students also grapple with decision-making challenges and career uncertainty as they prepare for their future. They often lack self-awareness regarding their talents and interests, as well as comprehensive career information, leading to indecision about their career paths (Haryati et al., 2021). The mismatch between competencies and industry demands, deficiencies in soft skills, inability to adapt to workplace environments, and uncertainty about career choices contribute to a lack of independence in career decision-making. Additionally, limited information about interests and the job market hinders long-term career planning, and unpreparedness for the challenges and changes brought about by Industry 4.0 exacerbates these issues. Collectively, these factors indicate underlying problems with career adaptability.

Savickas (1997) defines *career adaptability* as an individual's resource for coping with predictable and unpredictable career development tasks resulting from changes in the work environment, including current and future transitions, job changes, and career-related trauma. *Career adaptability* comprises five dimensions: 1) *concern* (future career planning), 2) *control* (taking responsibility for one's career), 3) *curiosity* (exploring interests and career information), 4) *confidence* (self-belief in achieving career goals), and 5) *cooperation* (collaborating with others) (Nye et al., 2017; Savickas, 1997). *Career adaptability* is crucial for Gen Z vocational high school students in achieving their career development goals. Kvaskova et al. (2023) assert that *career adaptability* enhances students' ability to navigate career transitions, clarify their career identities, and increase life satisfaction. It aids students in making career decisions and acquiring additional skills (Duffy, 2010; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). For Gen Z vocational high school students, *career adaptability* is essential to respond to the challenges and changes brought about by Industry 4.0 by preparing for and adapting to dynamic career contexts. Through *career adaptability*, these students can transform the challenges posed by Industry 4.0 into valuable opportunities



and be better prepared to enter the workforce as young professionals. *Career adaptability* is influenced by various factors, such as self-efficacy, environmental exploration, career involvement, and social support (Cristy & Kurniawati, 2023; Sulistiani & Handoyo, 2018). Among these, social support is the most significant factor in enhancing *career adaptability*, as it empowers individuals to cope with career-related challenges (Hirschi, 2009; Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005). Parental support is the most critical form of social support. Established from a young age, parental support fosters self-confidence in pursuing career goals, encourages exploration of future aspirations, assists in planning appropriate career paths, enhances aspirations, improves career decision-making, and develops work skills (Zhang et al., 2015). Parental support can manifest as instrumental assistance, career modeling, verbal encouragement, and emotional support (Turner et al., 2003).

However, research on parental support and career adaptability has yielded inconsistent findings (Alfianto et al., 2019; Dluha et al., 2020). Dluha et al. (2020) found that only peer support significantly influenced career adaptability among students, while Hartanto and Salim (2021) demonstrated that parental support did not directly impact career adaptability. These varied results align with Savickas' (1997) perspective that the development of career adaptability is also influenced by individual internal factors. Within the framework of social cognitive career theory, social contexts such as parental support can exert a significant influence on individual internal factors, which subsequently impact career development (Gushue & Whitson, 2006). Additionally, based on career construction theory, individuals differ in their adaptive readiness to accommodate career changes, serving as an antecedent of career adaptability. Adaptive readiness encompasses an individual's willingness to respond to challenges and job roles most suitably to achieve career goals (Savickas, 2000) through the ability to transform obstacles into opportunities for success, also known as adversity quotient (Stoltz, 2000). In this context, adversity quotient, as an internal factor, can serve as an antecedent influencing an individual's career adaptability. Adversity quotient plays a significant role in the workplace, serving as a predictor of career success, enhancing workplace productivity, and assisting individuals in attaining higher positions (Zhao & Sang, 2023). In dynamic and challenging work environments, individuals with high adversity quotients are better equipped to handle job stress (Kumari & Arora, 2023). In the context of this research, adversity quotient can bridge the relationship between parental support and career adaptability. According to Muarifah et al. (2022), parental support has a significant positive impact on students' adversity quotient. Parental support, such as material, emotional, and recognition-based support, can enhance students' motivation and drive to achieve success, even in difficult and limited circumstances. Furthermore, parental support empowers students to confront challenges and teaches them to persevere, making them more adept at handling adversity (Hidayati & Taufik, 2020). This aligns with Zainuddin's (2011) assertion that parental upbringing significantly influences an individual's adversity quotient, as parents guide and train their children to cope with life's difficulties, preparing them for future challenges and ultimately enhancing their career adaptability.

Adversity quotient consists of four dimensions: a) control (the ability to manage difficult situations), b) ownership (taking responsibility for improving circumstances), c) reach (an individual's perception of the extent of difficulties they will face), and d) endurance (an individual's perception of the duration of challenges experienced) (Stoltz, 2000). Previous research has demonstrated a significant positive relationship between adversity quotient and career adaptability (Hardianto & Suci Hayati, 2018; Tian & Fan, 2014). Therefore, Gen Z vocational high school students possessing a high adversity quotient and parental support are better equipped to navigate the changes in the workforce during the era of Industry 4.0 and



overcome challenges in achieving their career goals. This study aims to analyze the mediating role of adversity quotient in the relationship between parental support and career adaptability among Gen Z vocational high school students, specifically those in grade 12 aged 14-18, as they are on the verge of transitioning into the workforce. The hypothesis is that adversity quotient mediates the relationship between parental support and career adaptability among Grade 12 Gen Z vocational high school students.

## **Research Method**

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental cross-sectional design, wherein the researcher did not manipulate or intervene with the participants. Three self-report questionnaires were utilized for data collection. First, the Career Adaptability Scale-5 (CAS-5), developed by the researcher based on the five intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, confidence, and cooperation, was used to measure career adaptability. This instrument comprised 29 items and exhibited a Cronbach's alpha reliability of .943. Second, the Career-Related Parent Support Scale, adapted into Indonesian by Putri and Salim (2020) from the original version by Turner et al. (2003), was used to assess parental support. This instrument consisted of 25 items measuring instrumental support, career modeling, verbal encouragement, and emotional support, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of .925. Third, the Adversity Response Profile-Quick Take (ARP), developed by Stoltz (2000) and adapted into Indonesian by Wulandari (2021), was used to measure adversity quotient. This instrument included 17 items assessing the dimensions of control, ownership, reach, and endurance, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of .812. An attention check item was included by the researcher to identify participant attentiveness and seriousness in completing the questionnaires.

Participants in this study were selected using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling. The participants were all Grade 12 vocational high school students. A total of 793 students from five schools in Jakarta and Banten were initially involved. However, after data cleaning, 151 participants failed the attention check, seven did not meet the inclusion criteria, and eight were identified as outliers, resulting in a final sample size of 627 students for analysis. Of the 627 participants, the majority were 411 female students (65.6%), while males comprised 216 (34.4%), with an age range of 16-18 years ( $M=17.2$ ). Data analysis was conducted using R Studio. Descriptive analysis was employed to determine the frequencies, means, and percentages of participant demographics. Correlational analysis was utilized to examine the relationships between variables before mediation analysis. Additionally, assumption tests, including normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity, were conducted to ensure the validity of the results.

## **Results and Discussion**

Normality testing using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated a normal distribution of data ( $p > .05$ ). The rainbow test for linearity also revealed a p-value greater than .05, suggesting that the linear regression model was appropriate and there were no deviations from linearity. The Goldfeld-Quandt test for heteroscedasticity demonstrated the absence of heteroscedasticity, with a constant residual variance ( $p > .05$ ). The final assumption test, multicollinearity, was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 1.034 (below the threshold of 10) and a tolerance value of .967 (above the threshold of .1), indicating no multicollinearity issues among predictor variables. Given that all assumption tests were met, the results of the analysis and the subsequent conclusions can be considered valid. Subsequently, correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between all



variables. Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations among all variables. Table 1 shows that parental support was positively and significantly correlated with career adaptability ( $r = .502$ ;  $p < .001$ ), indicating that higher levels of parental support were associated with higher levels of career adaptability. Similarly, a positive and significant correlation was found between parental support and adversity quotient ( $r = .183$ ;  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that increased parental support was linked to a higher adversity quotient. The correlation analysis also demonstrated a positive and significant relationship between adversity quotient and career adaptability ( $r = .333$ ;  $p < .001$ ), implying that a higher adversity quotient was associated with higher levels of career adaptability.

**Table 1. Correlation between variables**

Variable	CA	PS	AQ
CA	-	-	-
PS	.502***	-	-
AQ	.333***	.183***	-

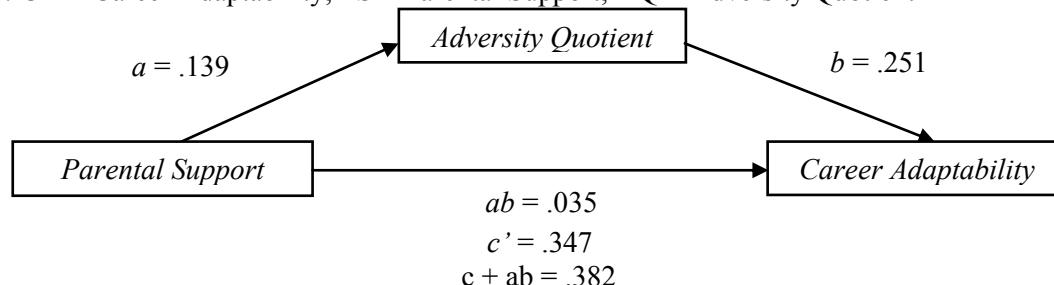
Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . CA = Career Adaptability; PS = Parental Support; AQ = Adversity Quotient

Table 2 and Figure 1 present the results of the mediation analysis on the effect of adversity quotient on the relationship between parental support and career adaptability. Based on the mediation analysis, the total effect of parental support on career adaptability, both direct and indirect, was significant ( $\beta = .382$ ,  $SE = .026$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The indirect effect of parental support on career adaptability through the mediator of adversity quotient was also statistically significant ( $\beta = .035$ ,  $SE = .008$ ,  $p < .001$ ), accounting for 9.11% of the total effect. Meanwhile, the direct effect of parental support on career adaptability was also statistically significant ( $\beta = .347$ ,  $SE = .026$ ,  $p < .001$ ), contributing 90.89% of the total effect. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is a partial mediation effect of adversity quotient on the relationship between parental support and career adaptability among Gen Z vocational high school students.

**Table 2. Mediation Analysis Results**

Path Analysis	Label	Estimate	SE	p	% Mediation
PS $\rightarrow$ AQ	a	.139	.030	< .001	-
AQ $\rightarrow$ CA	b	.251	.034	< .001	-
PS $\rightarrow$ CA	c	.347	.026	< .001	-
Indirect	a x b	.035	.008	< .001	9.11
Direct	c	.347	.026	< .001	90.89
Total	c + a x b	.382	.026	< .001	100

Note. CA = Career Adaptability; PS = Parental Support; AQ = Adversity Quotient



**Figure 1. The Mediating Role of Adversity Quotient on the Relationship Between Parental Support and Career Adaptability**

This study aimed to extend previous findings on the relationship between parental support, adversity quotient, and career adaptability by examining the mediating role of adversity quotient. First, the findings revealed that career adaptability was positively and significantly correlated with both parental support and adversity quotient, with both variables



serving as predictors of increased career adaptability among Gen Z vocational high school students. This finding is supported by previous research demonstrating a significant positive relationship between adversity quotient and career adaptability. This implies that the higher the adversity quotient, the higher the career adaptability. This is similar to the findings of Soresi et al. (2012), which showed that career adaptability is negatively related to perceived obstacles, indicating that the fewer obstacles perceived, the higher the adversity quotient. Gen Z vocational high school students experience fewer obstacles because they can overcome and respond to challenges by turning them into opportunities for success, thus motivating them to adapt to changes that occur during the pursuit of their career goals. Additionally, they are also able to express their interests. It can be argued that adversity quotient serves as an internal factor that can predict performance, perseverance, resilience, and response to changes in uncertain situations (Phoolka & Kaur, 2012) in the lives and career development of Gen Z vocational high school students. In addition to adversity quotient, parental support is also a factor that can enhance career adaptability among Gen Z vocational high school students. This finding is supported by the results of Sulistiani et al. (2020), which showed that students with above-average adversity quotient and perceived parental support have high career adaptability.

Secondly, this study found that adversity quotient partially mediated the relationship between parental support and career adaptability, thus supporting the research hypothesis. However, although adversity quotient acted as a partial mediator in the relationship between parental support and career adaptability, the role of parental support remained significant and there was a larger direct effect from this relationship. This indicates that the influence of parental support makes a significant contribution to strengthening the career adaptability of Gen Z vocational high school students. This is because parental support is crucial in the development of student's education and career and serves as a primary partner in helping students prepare for their career choices. This finding is supported by the research of Sawitri and Creed (2016) which found that career congruence with parents has a significant impact on students' career development, especially in collectivist cultures like Indonesia. Individuals with a strong relationship orientation tend to have a higher perception of career congruence with their parents because they view parents as partners in the career development process.

Furthermore, parental emotional support can influence students' perceptions of future educational obstacles and their expectations of achieving career success (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005). Students who perceive more parental support regarding their careers make clearer decisions about their desired career goals and devote more time and effort to pursuing these goals. Additionally, perceived parental support prevents students from being confused about their future career paths and encourages them to engage in deeper career exploration, ultimately facilitating career adaptability (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Zhang et al., 2021). A longitudinal study conducted by Dietrich (2008) also reinforces this finding, showing that higher parental support can lead individuals to engage in more frequent and intensive career exploration. This indicates that parental support is essential for Gen Z vocational high school students in overcoming challenges and difficulties related to career adaptation, such as the inability to identify personal interests and talents through self-exploration and future career exploration. Moreover, students seek emotional and instrumental involvement from parents to support their personal growth and career adjustment (Turner et al., 2003).

According to career construction theory, individual development is characterized by a process of adapting to the social environment through self-construction and the integration of the individual with their environment. This means that career adaptation is influenced by how



individuals make sense of their experiences with their environment (Savickas, 2005; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). During the early stages of career growth and exploration, parental support plays a significant role in supporting the development of career adaptability. Parental support, as a contextual factor, is crucial in shaping an individual's vocational self-concept, that is, how they evaluate attributes relevant to the world of work. Additionally, this support contributes to the development of personal agency and self-belief, which are critical for individuals to complete developmental tasks, both in early adulthood and at later stages (Savickas, 2002). Parental support provides important resources that help individuals complete career development tasks, which in turn fosters the development of attention, control, self-concept, and self-belief. Furthermore, parental support can mitigate the negative impacts of stressful phases of career development (Restubog et al., 2010) and facilitate career learning and self-belief (Turner & Lapan, 2002). The aforementioned research findings explain that although Gen Z vocational high school students possess an adversity quotient to face challenges and difficulties in their career journey, parental support still has a significant influence with or without the adversity quotient. Parental support acts as a buffer, helping students remain resilient and adaptable despite facing various obstacles or adversities in achieving their career goals.

Conceptually, these findings indicate the role of adversity quotient in Gen Z vocational high school students in facing career-related challenges amidst a rapidly changing context and the significant role of parental support in enhancing students' ability to adapt to career developments driven by the 4.0 industrial revolution and technological advancements, especially as students transition into the workforce. Practically, this research highlights the need for interventions to prepare students for career challenges and better equip them to enter the workforce. Such interventions may include the development of soft skills training programs, career guidance programs in schools, seminars or workshops for parents to raise awareness of the importance of providing relevant support to their children, and increased school-industry partnerships to provide students with opportunities to face real-world workplace challenges.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research findings, adversity quotient partially mediates the relationship between parental support and career adaptability. The adversity quotient possessed by Gen Z vocational high school students can help them overcome difficulties in achieving career goals and navigating the ever-changing career context brought about by the 4.0 industrial revolution and technological advancements in the workplace. However, the perceived parental support of Gen Z vocational high school students significantly contributes to their increased career adaptability. This implies that the role of parents is crucial because the higher the parental support, the greater a student's ability to adapt to changing career contexts, especially for Gen Z vocational high school students who are about to transition into the workforce.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations can be made: 1) Future studies should employ larger and more diverse samples to allow for greater generalizability; 2) Gen Z vocational high school students need to engage in early career planning and preparation to address the ever-changing career context; 3) Parents should support students in achieving their career goals by providing emotional, verbal, and instrumental support, as well as serving as role models for Gen Z vocational high school students; 4) School counselors



and educational psychologists can provide guidance to Gen Z vocational high school students through counseling sessions to help students identify their interests, talents, competencies, and career goals, or by conducting career skills development training, such as communication, time management, and work attitudes.

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