

Preparing For the Future: Understanding Career Readiness Among Aviation Polytechnic Cadets

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Abstract. The transition from higher education to employment requires graduates to possess not only technical competencies but also psychological resources and the ability to adapt to changing career demands. This study examines the effects of Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, and Social Support on Employment Readiness, with Career Adaptability as a mediating variable among cadets at Politeknik Penerbangan Jayapura, Indonesia. A quantitative explanatory approach with a cross-sectional design was employed. The study involved 108 cadets selected through saturated sampling, comprising 69 males (63.9%) and 39 females (36.1%), with ages ranging from 19 to 25 years. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising 30 measurement items covering five constructs: career anxiety, self-efficacy, social support, career adaptability, and employment readiness. The data were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The results show that career anxiety negatively affects career adaptability and employment readiness, whereas self-efficacy positively affects career adaptability and employment readiness. Social support positively affects career adaptability and employment readiness. Career adaptability also positively affects employment readiness and significantly mediates the relationships of career anxiety, self-efficacy, and social support with employment readiness. Among the predictors, social support demonstrates the largest positive total effect on employment readiness, followed by self-efficacy, while career anxiety has a negative total effect. These findings indicate that career adaptability is a significant but differentially influential mediating pathway. The findings underscore the importance of strengthening social support, self-efficacy, and career adaptability, alongside targeted career guidance, to enhance cadets' readiness for workforce entry.

Keywords: *career anxiety, self-efficacy, social support, career adaptability, employment readiness*

Introduction

The emergence of Society 5.0 has brought increasingly complex changes to the global labour market, driven by advances in digital technology, automation, artificial intelligence, and industrial transformation. These developments have reshaped job characteristics, competency requirements, and the transition from education to employment. The World Economic Forum

(2025) highlights substantial shifts in skill demand across industries, emphasizing the importance of adaptability, flexibility, and readiness to respond to evolving labour market conditions. Similarly, the International Labour Organization (2025) underscores the growing need for workers who possess not only technical competencies but also the capacity to adapt to dynamic work environments. Consequently, higher education institutions are expected to prepare graduates with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and psychological resources required to enter and navigate the workforce. Employment readiness, therefore, represents an important indicator of graduates' preparedness to transition successfully from education to professional life.

Despite these expectations, the transition from education to employment remains challenging, particularly in vocational education. Data from Badan Pusat Statistik indicate that graduates of vocational secondary and diploma education continue to face challenges in labour market absorption. This situation suggests that technical competence alone may not guarantee successful employment outcomes. Graduate employability increasingly depends on the interaction between professional competencies, psychological resources, adaptability, and environmental support (Jung et al., 2024). Employment readiness is closely related to work readiness, which encompasses the attributes necessary for individuals to contribute effectively in the workplace. Caballero et al. (2011) conceptualize work readiness through four dimensions: personal characteristics, organizational acumen, work competence, and social intelligence. Similarly, Pool and Sewell (2007) emphasize that successful graduate employment requires more than academic qualifications, incorporating personal attributes and broader capabilities that facilitate the transition into professional roles. These perspectives indicate that employment readiness should be understood as a multidimensional construct involving both individual capabilities and the resources needed to respond to workplace demands.

In Indonesia, vocational aviation education provides an important context for examining these challenges. Politeknik Penerbangan Jayapura, an institution under the Ministry of Transportation, plays a strategic role in preparing aviation personnel with the technical and professional competencies required by the transportation sector. In accordance with Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, vocational education is directed toward developing applied skills

relevant to occupational requirements. Nevertheless, graduating from a specialized institution or having access to a relatively structured career pathway does not necessarily ensure that graduates are fully prepared for employment or placed in positions aligned with their educational backgrounds. Cadets enrolled in the bonded scholarship program (Pola Pembibitan) may have clearer employment pathways than students in general higher education programs; however, they may still face concerns about job competition, English proficiency, limited work experience, placement uncertainty, and the need for further professional development. A preliminary study among final-year cadets at Politeknik Penerbangan Jayapura identified these concerns as perceived challenges in preparing for future employment (Primary Data, 2026).

Furthermore, a preliminary survey of 30 alumni found that 23 graduates (76.7%) worked in fields not fully aligned with their academic backgrounds, whereas seven (23.3%) held positions relevant to their fields of study (Preliminary Data, 2026). Although these preliminary findings do not establish the causes of employment mismatch, they indicate that access to employment opportunities and alignment between education and occupational roles are distinct issues. This situation highlights the importance of examining the psychological and social resources that may shape cadets' employment readiness.

Career Construction Theory (CCT), developed by Savickas (2013), provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how individuals prepare for career transitions and respond to changing occupational environments. CCT conceptualizes career development as a dynamic process through which individuals construct their careers by adapting to changing life circumstances and work-related demands. The theory distinguishes individual adaptivity, contextual influences, career adaptability, and career adaptation outcomes. Individual adaptivity concerns personal characteristics and dispositions that influence an individual's readiness to adapt, while contextual influences encompass resources and constraints arising from the social and environmental context. Career adaptability represents a psychosocial resource that enables individuals to manage career development tasks, transitions, and uncertainty (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Its four dimensions are concern, or orientation toward the future; control, or responsibility for career decisions; curiosity, or exploration of possible career options; and confidence, or belief

in one's capacity to overcome career-related challenges. These resources can facilitate career preparation and adaptation, making career adaptability a theoretically relevant mechanism through which personal and contextual factors may be associated with employment readiness (Johnston, 2018; Rudolph et al., 2017; Santilli et al., 2014).

Among the individual factors relevant to this process, career anxiety may represent a psychological barrier to career preparation. Career anxiety refers to worries and uncertainty concerning future career prospects, perceived abilities, employment opportunities, and the demands of professional life. Tsai et al. (2017) identify concerns related to personal ability, irrational beliefs about employment, the employment environment, and professional education and training as dimensions of career anxiety. Such concerns may become particularly salient among students approaching graduation, when they must evaluate their competencies and prepare for the transition into employment (Kim et al., 2022). High career anxiety may direct attention toward perceived threats and limitations, making it more difficult to explore opportunities, exercise control over career decisions, and develop confidence in managing career challenges. Previous research has reported associations between career anxiety and career adaptability (Boo et al., 2021; Demirtaş & Kara, 2022; Duan et al., 2026; Ning et al., 2024; Silaen & Simarmata, 2026). Career anxiety may also undermine employment readiness by increasing concerns about competence and future employment prospects (Capone et al., 2021; Castro, 2024; Hiaruman et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2025). Accordingly, career anxiety is expected to negatively relate to both career adaptability and employment readiness. Career adaptability may also mediate this relationship because the capacity to manage career uncertainty could help explain how anxiety translates into employment-related preparedness.

In contrast, self-efficacy may serve as an important personal resource supporting career development. Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute actions required to achieve particular goals (Bandura, 1997). Within the career context, these beliefs influence how individuals approach career decisions, explore opportunities, persist when facing obstacles, and respond to uncertain circumstances (Lent et al., 1994). Individuals with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to

approach career challenges with confidence and sustained effort, thereby facilitating the development of career adaptability. Empirical studies have identified positive relationships between self-efficacy and career adaptability (Hamzah et al., 2021; Holderman & Wijono, 2024; X. Liu et al., 2023; Z. Liu & Liang, 2025; Xu et al., 2024). Self-efficacy may also contribute directly to employment readiness by strengthening individuals' confidence in their competencies and their perceived ability to meet workplace demands (Hariyati et al., 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2024; Suyitno et al., 2025; G. Wang & Wang, 2026; Xu et al., 2024). From this perspective, career adaptability may function as an additional pathway through which self-efficacy is associated with employment readiness, as confidence in personal capabilities can support the development of adaptive resources needed for the transition into employment.

In addition to personal resources, social support constitutes an important contextual factor in career development. Social support encompasses emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal assistance provided by family members, peers, lecturers, and other significant individuals (Sarafino & Smith, 2014). Such support can provide encouragement, access to career-related information, practical assistance, and feedback that helps individuals evaluate their abilities and make career decisions. The stress-buffering perspective of Cohen and Wills (1985) further explains how social support may help individuals cope with stressful circumstances and reduce the adverse effects of stress. In educational settings, supportive relationships may therefore help cadets manage career-related uncertainty, strengthen their capacity to explore opportunities, and develop the resources required for occupational transitions. Previous studies have reported positive associations between social support and career adaptability (Fang & Xu, 2025; T. Li et al., 2023; T. Wang et al., 2024; Xia et al., 2020), as well as between social support and employability or work readiness (Hiaruman et al., 2025; Karimi et al., 2024; J. Wang et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2023). These findings suggest that social support may contribute to employment readiness both directly, through access to resources and encouragement, and indirectly, by facilitating the development of career adaptability.

Career adaptability is consequently positioned as a central mechanism connecting personal and contextual resources with employment readiness. Individuals who demonstrate

concern, control, curiosity, and confidence may be better equipped to plan their futures, take responsibility for career decisions, explore employment possibilities, and address perceived gaps in their competencies. These capacities are particularly relevant to vocational aviation cadets, whose transition into professional roles may involve specific technical standards, organizational expectations, and placement considerations. Previous studies have associated career adaptability with career planning, career exploration, employability, and adjustment to changing work conditions (Johnston, 2018; Rudolph et al., 2017). Research has also identified career adaptability as a predictor of employability and work readiness (Lakshmi & Elmartha, 2022; Lee et al., 2025; Moghaddas et al., 2025; Xia et al., 2020). Within the CCT framework, these relationships suggest that employment readiness may be shaped not only by the presence of personal and contextual resources but also by individuals' capacity to mobilize those resources when preparing for employment.

Despite these theoretical explanations and empirical findings, further investigation is warranted. First, although previous studies have examined career anxiety, self-efficacy, social support, career adaptability, and employment-related outcomes, these factors have not been consistently integrated into a single model examining both direct relationships and the mediating role of career adaptability in the context of vocational aviation education in Indonesia. Second, the existing evidence provides a basis for expecting positive effects of self-efficacy and social support and negative effects of career anxiety, but the extent to which these relationships operate directly or through career adaptability requires further empirical examination. Third, cadets enrolled in bonded scholarship programs represent a distinctive educational context because a relatively structured career pathway does not necessarily eliminate concerns about competency development, job placement, or alignment between education and occupational roles. The preliminary findings at Politeknik Penerbangan Jayapura reinforce the relevance of examining these issues, although they should be interpreted as contextual evidence rather than proof of the proposed relationships. Addressing these gaps may extend understanding of employment readiness beyond technical preparation and provide insights into the psychological and social resources relevant to the transition from vocational education to employment.

Accordingly, this study draws primarily on Career Construction Theory, complemented by relevant insights from Social Cognitive Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory, to examine the relationships among career anxiety, self-efficacy, social support, career adaptability, and employment readiness among cadets at Politeknik Penerbangan Jayapura. Specifically, the study investigates the effects of career anxiety on career adaptability and employment readiness; the effects of self-efficacy on career adaptability and employment readiness; the effects of social support on career adaptability and employment readiness; and the effect of career adaptability on employment readiness. It also examines whether career adaptability mediates the relationships between career anxiety and employment readiness, self-efficacy and employment readiness, and social support and employment readiness. By integrating these relationships into a single analytical framework, this study seeks to clarify how personal and contextual resources are associated with employment readiness in a specialized vocational aviation setting and to provide evidence that may inform efforts to strengthen cadets' preparation for professional careers.

Method

Research Design and Sample

This study employed a quantitative explanatory approach with a causal-predictive design to examine the relationships among Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, Social Support, Career Adaptability, and Employment Readiness. The quantitative approach enabled the proposed relationships to be examined empirically using statistical analysis (Creswell, 2014). The study was conducted among cadets at Politeknik Penerbangan Jayapura, Indonesia. The target population consisted of 108 cadets. A census sampling technique was employed, whereby all members of the population were included as potential respondents (Sugiyono, 2019). All 108 cadets provided valid responses, and the complete dataset was included in the analysis, resulting in a final sample of 108 respondents. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising five constructs: Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, Social Support, Career Adaptability, and Employment Readiness. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly

disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (De Vaus, 2002). The questionnaire was administered to assess cadets' perceptions of these five constructs.

Measurement Instruments

The study employed a structured questionnaire comprising 30 items distributed equally across five constructs: Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, Social Support, Career Adaptability, and Employment Readiness, with six items measuring each construct. The items were informed by established theoretical frameworks and measurement instruments, with their wording contextualized to reflect the career preparation and anticipated employment experiences of aviation cadets. Accordingly, the measures are described as adapted and researcher-contextualized instruments rather than unchanged original scales. Career Anxiety was informed by the Career Anxiety Scale developed by Tsai et al. (2017), which addresses concerns related to personal ability, irrational beliefs about employment, the employment environment, and professional education and training. The six items assessed cadets' concerns about inadequate professional skills, limited foreign-language proficiency, job interviews, adjustment to new work environments, future job responsibilities, and employment competition. These items were intended to capture career-related worries experienced by cadets as they prepare to enter the workforce. For example, one item assessed concerns about whether their professional skills would be sufficient to meet future employment requirements. Because the questionnaire used a six-item contextualized version, its item coverage should be distinguished from the four-dimensional structure of the original scale.

Self-Efficacy was grounded in Bandura's (1997) conceptualization of perceived capability to organize and execute actions required to achieve desired outcomes. The six items assessed confidence in handling difficult tasks, selecting appropriate actions, persisting through obstacles, remaining calm under pressure, pursuing goals, and solving problems across different situations. These items reflected the theoretical aspects of magnitude or level, strength, and generality. For example, one item assessed confidence in handling difficult tasks, while another addressed confidence in solving problems across different situations. Collectively, the items were intended

to capture cadets' perceived capabilities when facing academic, professional, and career-related challenges. Social Support was informed by the conceptualizations of Sarafino and Smith (2014) and the multidimensional approach discussed by Li et al. (2024). The six items assessed emotional comfort, opportunities to share personal concerns, practical assistance from family and friends, and advice regarding personal or career-related challenges. For example, one item assessed emotional comfort received from family and significant others, while another addressed practical assistance from friends. These items were intended to reflect emotional, instrumental, and informational support, alongside the broader appraisal-support concept.

The allocation of individual items to these dimensions should be specified in the operationalization table, particularly where an item may represent more than one aspect of support. Career Adaptability was informed by the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012). The six items assessed awareness of the importance of future career preparation, career planning, control over career-related decisions, exploration of career opportunities, curiosity about future career possibilities, and confidence in overcoming career-related obstacles. Conceptually, these items reflected the four dimensions of career adaptability: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. For example, awareness of the importance of future career preparation reflected concern, whereas confidence in overcoming career-related obstacles reflected confidence. The six-item measure was contextualized for the aviation cadet setting and should therefore be distinguished from the original Career Adapt-Abilities Scale. Employment Readiness was informed by the work-readiness framework of Caballero et al. (2011), which encompasses personal characteristics, organizational acumen, work competence, and social intelligence. The six items assessed the timely completion of tasks, compliance with organizational rules and procedures, knowledge relevant to respondents' fields of study, application of acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace, clear communication, and teamwork. For example, one item assessed the ability to complete tasks and responsibilities within specified time limits, while another assessed the ability to apply acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace. Together, the items were intended to capture cadets' perceived preparedness to meet workplace expectations and perform work-related responsibilities. The

psychometric properties of the five measures were evaluated using data from the 108 respondents.

Indicator reliability was examined through outer loadings, while internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and rho_A. Convergent validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). The resulting coefficients and assessment outcomes are presented in the measurement model results. These findings provide sample-specific evidence of the reliability and validity of the measures as operationalized in this study and are distinct from the psychometric evidence reported for the original instruments in previous research.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated to assess indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability was examined through outer loadings, while Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and rho A were used to assess internal consistency reliability. Convergent validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). Following established PLS-SEM guidelines, outer loadings and reliability coefficients of approximately 0.70 or higher and AVE values above 0.50 were considered indicative of acceptable measurement quality (Hair et al., 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2021). Second, the structural model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2 , predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and variance inflation factor (VIF). These criteria were used to evaluate the model's explanatory power, predictive relevance, individual predictor effect sizes, and potential multicollinearity, respectively.

Hypothesis testing was conducted using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples and 95% bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence intervals. The significance of the hypothesized relationships was evaluated using path coefficients (β), t-statistics, p-values, and confidence intervals. Both direct effects and specific indirect effects were examined to assess the proposed relationships among Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, Social Support, Career Adaptability, and Employment Readiness, including the mediating role of Career Adaptability (Hair et al., 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2021). An indirect effect was considered statistically significant when its 95% confidence interval did not include zero.

Table 1.
Operational Definition and Measurement of Variables

Variable	DIMENSION	REFERENCES
Employment Readiness	Personal Characteristics	(Caballero et al., 2011)
	Organizational Acumen	
	Work Competence	
	Social Intelligence	
Career Adaptability	Career Concern	(Savickas & Porfeli, 2012)
	Career Control	
	Career Curiosity	
	Career Confidence	
Career Anxiety	Personal Ability	(Tsai et al., 2017)
	Irrational Beliefs about Employment	
	Employment Environment	
	Professional Education Training	
Self-Efficacy	Magnitude	(Bandura, 1997)
	Strength	
	Generality	
Social Support	Emotional Support	(S. Li et al., 2024; Sarafino & Smith, 2014)
	Instrumental Support	
	Informational Support	

Appraisal Support

Source: Data Processed (2026)

Results

General Overview and Respondent Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented based on gender, admission pathway, study program, and class. A total of 108 cadets participated in the study. The respondents represented different admission pathways and aviation-related study programs, providing a diverse profile of cadets within the Aviation Polytechnic. The distribution of respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 108)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	69	63.9
	Female	39	36.1
Admission Pathway	Government Scholarship Program (Pola Pembibitan)	38	35.1
	Regional Government Scholarship (Kab. Fak-Fak)	41	38
	Independent/ Regular Admission	29	26.9
Study Program	Airport Management (MBU)	78	72.2
	Airport Electrical Engineering (TLB)	30	27.8
Class	Airport Electrical Engineering 4	21	19.4
	Air Transport Management 5B	20	18.5
	Air Transport Management 5A	18	16.7
	Air Transport Management 6	14	13.0
	Airport Electrical Engineering 5	5	4.6
	Air Transport Management 7A	8	7.4
	Air Transport Management 7B	18	16.7
	Airport Electrical Engineering 6	4	3.7

Source: Data processed (2026)

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents were male (63.9%). This composition may reflect the characteristics of aviation education, particularly programs involving technical and operational fields, which have traditionally attracted more male cadets. In terms of admission pathway, respondents were predominantly from the Regional Government Scholarship of Kabupaten Fak-Fak (38.0%) and the Government Scholarship Program (Pola Pembibitan) (35.1%).

This relatively high proportion reflects the institutional admission arrangements and scholarship cooperation with the regional government and the national Pola Pembibitan program, which provide structured pathways for cadet recruitment. Regarding the study program, Airport Management (MBU) accounted for the largest proportion of respondents (72.2%). This may be attributed to the broader scope of airport management, which covers administrative, managerial, and operational aspects of airport services and therefore accommodates a larger number of cadets compared with the more specialized Airport Electrical Engineering program. Overall, the respondent composition reflects the characteristics of the Aviation Polytechnic's admission system and study program structure, providing an appropriate basis for the subsequent analysis.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed to evaluate indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability was examined through outer loadings, while Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and rho_A were used to assess internal consistency. Convergent validity was evaluated using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Following PLS-SEM guidelines, indicator loadings above .70, reliability values above .70, and AVE values above .50 indicate acceptable measurement quality (Hair et al., 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2021). The results presented in Table 3 show that all indicators achieved outer loadings above .70, ranging from .722 to .787. The Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from .846 to .852, while rho_A values ranged from .848 to .855. Composite Reliability values ranged from .886 to .890, exceeding the recommended threshold. Furthermore, AVE values ranged from .564 to .574, indicating that all constructs achieved adequate convergent validity. Therefore, Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, Social Support, Career Adaptability, and Employment Readiness demonstrated satisfactory reliability and convergent validity and were suitable for further structural model assessment.

Table 3.
Measurement Items, Factor Loadings, CA, AVE, CR, and Rho_A Results

Construct	Item	Indicator	Loading	CA	AVE	CR	Rho-A
Career Anxiety	CA1	Concerns about inadequate professional skills	.759	.850	.571	.889	.853
	CA2	Anxiety regarding limited foreign language ability	.743				
	CA3	Low confidence in job interviews	.738				
	CA4	Concerns about adapting to a new work environment	.754				
	CA5	Worry about future job responsibilities	.752				
	CA6	Anxiety regarding job competition and future employment prospects	.787				
Self Efficacy	SE1	Confidence in handling difficult tasks	.743	.852	.574	.890	.855
	SE2	Ability to choose appropriate actions when facing challenging tasks	.772				
	SE3	Persistence in overcoming obstacles	.755				
	SE4	Ability to remain calm under pressure	.778				
	SE5	Consistency in pursuing and achieving goals	.739				
	SE6	Confidence in solving problems across different situations	.758				
Social Support	SS1	Emotional comfort from family and significant others	.776	.846	.565	.886	.850
	SS2	Availability of someone to share personal concerns with	.750				
	SS3	Practical assistance from family when facing difficulties	.755				
	SS4	Practical support and assistance from friends	.737				
	SS5	Advice and guidance regarding personal or career concerns	.766				
	SS6	Availability of friends who listen and provide suggestions	.722				
Career Adaptability	CAd1	Awareness of the importance of future career preparation	.752	.846	.564	.886	.848
	CAd2	Planning and preparing for future career development	.744				
	CAd3	Personal control over career-related decisions	.747				

Construct	Item	Indicator	Loading	CA	AVE	CR	Rho-A
Employment Readiness	CAd4	Exploration of career opportunities	.753	.849	.569	.888	.850
	CAd5	Curiosity about future career possibilities	.739				
	CAd6	Confidence in overcoming career-related obstacles	.772				
	ER1	I am able to complete tasks and responsibilities within the specified time.	.751				
	ER2	I understand the importance of complying with the rules and procedures of an organization.	.763				
	ER3	I have the knowledge necessary to perform work related to my field of study.	.754				
	ER4	I am able to apply the knowledge and skills I have learned to the workplace.	.763	.849	.569	.888	.850
	ER5	I am able to communicate ideas and information clearly to others.	.750				
	ER6	I am able to work effectively with others to achieve common goals in a team.	.746				

Source: Processed SmartPLS 4 output, 2026.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The results show that all HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of .90, ranging from .071 to .732. The highest HTMT value was observed between Employment Readiness and Career Adaptability (.732), while the lowest value was found between Self-Efficacy and Career Anxiety (.071). These results indicate that the constructs in the model are empirically distinct and demonstrate adequate discriminant validity. Overall, the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Thus, all constructs can be retained for the subsequent structural model assessment.

Table 4.
HTMT Criterion Across Construct Pairs

Construct Pair	HTMT	Interpretation (<0.90)
Career Anxiety ↔ Career Adaptability	.563	Valid
Employment Readiness ↔ Career Adaptability	.732	Valid
Employment Readiness ↔ Career Anxiety	.410	Valid

Construct Pair	HTMT	Interpretation (<0.90)
Self-Efficacy ↔ Career Adaptability	.563	Valid
Self-Efficacy ↔ Career Anxiety	.071	Valid
Self-Efficacy ↔ Employment Readiness	.495	Valid
Social Support ↔ Career Adaptability	.457	Valid
Social Support ↔ Career Anxiety	.095	Valid
Social Support ↔ Employment Readiness	.722	Valid
Social Support ↔ Self-Efficacy	.235	Valid

Source: Processed SmartPLS 4 output, 2026.

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was assessed using R-square (R^2), adjusted R-square, Q-square (Q^2), f-square (f^2), and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). R^2 indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by their predictors, while Q^2 assesses the predictive relevance of the model. The f^2 value was used to determine the effect size of each predictor on the endogenous constructs, while VIF was examined to assess potential collinearity among predictor constructs.

Table 5.
R-square and Q-square

Construct/Model	R-square	R-square Adjusted	Q-square	Interpretation
Employment Readiness (Y)	.608	.592	.546	Strong explanatory power and predictive relevance established
Career Adaptability (Z)	.534	.521	.486	Strong explanatory power and predictive relevance established

Source: Processed SmartPLS 4 output, 2026.

The structural model demonstrates substantial explanatory power for both endogenous constructs. Employment Readiness obtained an R-square value of .608, indicating that 60.8% of its variance is explained by Career Adaptability, Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, and Social Support. Career Adaptability obtained an R-square value of .534, indicating that 53.4% of its variance is explained by Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, and Social Support. The adjusted R-square values of .592 and .521 indicate that the explanatory power remains stable after accounting for the number of predictors. The Q-square values of .546 for Employment Readiness and .486 for

Career Adaptability are both greater than zero, indicating adequate predictive relevance of the model.

Table 6.
F-Square and VIF Results

Path Relationship	f-square	Interpretation	VIF	Interpretation
Career Adaptability → Employment Readiness	.063	Small effect	2.147	No collinearity issue
Career Anxiety → Career Adaptability	.458	Large effect	1.002	No collinearity issue
Career Anxiety → Employment Readiness	.085	Small effect	1.461	No collinearity issue
Self-Efficacy → Career Adaptability	.358	Large effect	1.045	No collinearity issue
Self-Efficacy → Employment Readiness	.082	Small effect	1.419	No collinearity issue
Social Support → Career Adaptability	.167	Medium effect	1.046	No collinearity issue
Social Support → Employment Readiness	.470	Large effect	1.221	No collinearity issue

Source: Processed SmartPLS 4 output, 2026.

The f-square results show varying effect sizes across the structural paths. Career Anxiety and Self-Efficacy demonstrated large effects on Career Adaptability, with f^2 values of 0.458 and 0.358, respectively, while Social Support showed a medium effect ($f^2 = .167$). For Employment Readiness, Social Support demonstrated the largest effect ($f^2 = .470$), whereas Career Adaptability, Career Anxiety, and Self-Efficacy showed small effects, with f^2 values of .063, .085, and .082, respectively. The VIF values ranged from 1.002 to 2.147, remaining below the commonly accepted threshold of 5.00. This indicates that the predictor constructs did not exhibit problematic multicollinearity. Overall, the structural model demonstrated adequate explanatory power, predictive relevance, and acceptable effect sizes without serious collinearity issues, supporting its use for subsequent hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing

The structural model proposed in this study examines the direct and indirect relationships among Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, Social Support, Career Adaptability, and Employment Readiness. Figure 1 illustrates the structural model and the hypothesized relationships among

the constructs. The statistical evidence for the proposed hypotheses is presented in Table 6 through path coefficients (β), t-statistics, p-values, and hypothesis decisions.

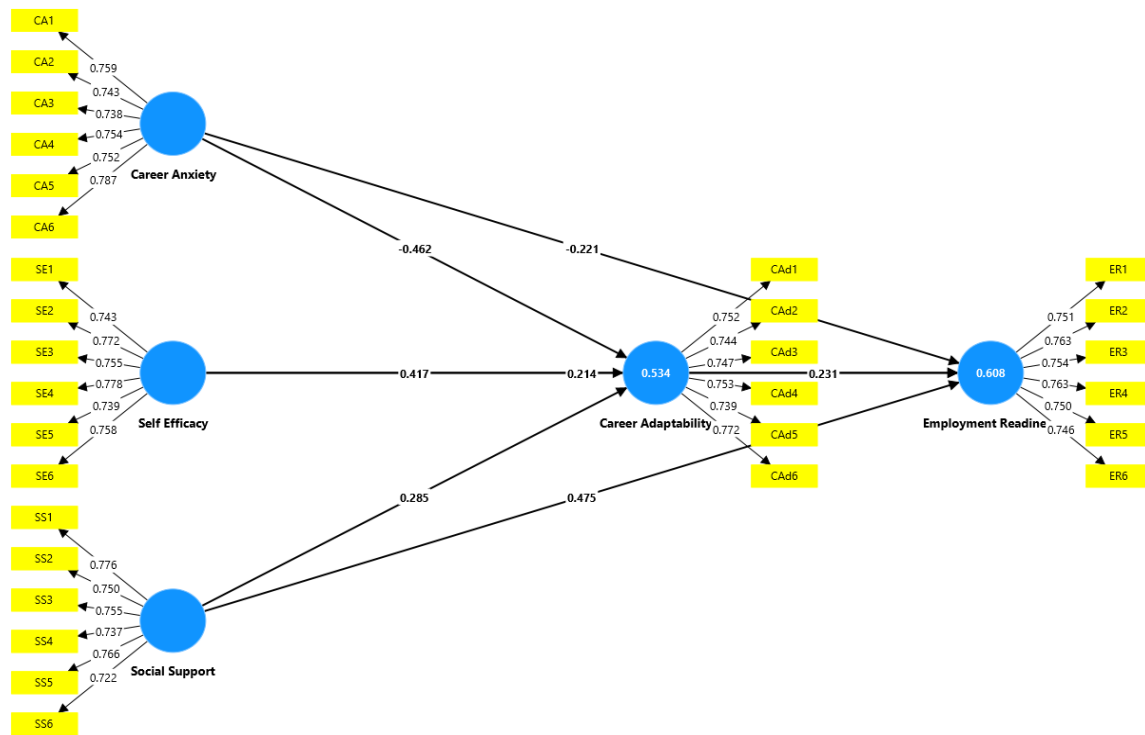


Figure 1. Structural Model and Hypothesized Relationships

Table 7.
Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hyp.	Path Relationship	β	T-Stats	P-Values	Result
Direct Effects					
H1	Career Anxiety → Career Adaptability	-.462	7.243	.000	Supported
H2	Career Anxiety → Employment Readiness	-.221	3.232	.001	Supported
H3	Self-Efficacy → Career Adaptability	.417	6.114	.000	Supported
H4	Self-Efficacy → Employment Readiness	.214	2.949	.003	Supported
H5	Social Support → Career Adaptability	.285	4.196	.000	Supported
H6	Social Support → Employment Readiness	.475	7.146	.000	Supported
H7	Career Adaptability → Employment Readiness	.231	2.757	.006	Supported
Indirect Effects					
H8	Career Anxiety → Career Adaptability → Employment Readiness	-.107	2.509	.012	Supported
H9	Self-Efficacy → Career Adaptability → Employment Readiness	.097	2.647	.008	Supported
H10	Social Support → Career Adaptability → Employment Readiness	.066	2.164	.030	Supported

Source: Processed SmartPLS 4 output, 2026.

The hypothesis testing results indicate that all seven hypothesized direct relationships were statistically significant. Career Anxiety had significant negative effects on Career Adaptability ($\beta = -.462, p < 0.001$) and Employment Readiness ($\beta = -.221, p = .001$). Self-Efficacy had significant positive effects on Career Adaptability ($\beta = .417, p < .001$) and Employment Readiness ($\beta = .214, p = .003$). Social Support also had significant positive effects on Career Adaptability ($\beta = .285, p < .001$) and Employment Readiness ($\beta = .475, p < .001$), while Career Adaptability positively affected Employment Readiness ($\beta = .231, p = .006$). The specific indirect effects further revealed that Career Adaptability significantly mediated the relationships between Career Anxiety and Employment Readiness ($\beta = -.107, p = .012$), Self-Efficacy and Employment Readiness ($\beta = .097, p = .008$), and Social Support and Employment Readiness ($\beta = .066, p = .030$). Because the direct and indirect effects were significant and consistent in direction for all three relationships, the results indicate complementary partial mediation in each case. However, the relative magnitudes of the indirect effects differed. For Career Anxiety, the indirect effect ($\beta = -.107$) was smaller in absolute magnitude than the direct effect ($\beta = -.221$). Similarly, for Self-Efficacy, the indirect effect ($\beta = .097$) was smaller than the direct effect ($\beta = .214$). The difference was more pronounced for Social Support, where the indirect effect through Career Adaptability ($\beta = .066$) was substantially smaller than the direct effect on Employment Readiness ($\beta = .475$). These results indicate that although Career Adaptability significantly mediates all three relationships, the relative contribution of the indirect pathway is considerably smaller for Social Support than for Career Anxiety and Self-Efficacy.

Discussion

The Effects of Career Anxiety on Career Adaptability and Employment Readiness

The results support Hypotheses 1 and 2, showing that Career Anxiety has significant negative effects on Career Adaptability and Employment Readiness. The stronger association with Career Adaptability suggests that career-related anxiety is particularly relevant to cadets' capacity to prepare for and manage career transitions. Concerns about professional competence,

job competition, interviews, and future employment may make it more difficult for cadets to plan their careers, explore opportunities, and maintain confidence when facing uncertainty.

These findings are consistent with Career Construction Theory, which positions career adaptability as a psychosocial resource for managing career transitions and occupational changes (Savickas, 2005, 2013). They also align with previous studies linking career anxiety to lower career adaptability and less favorable career-related outcomes (Demirtaş & Kara, 2022; Ning et al., 2024; Duan et al., 2026; Capone et al., 2021; Castro, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Importantly, the mediation analysis shows that Career Anxiety is associated with Employment Readiness both directly and indirectly through Career Adaptability. The indirect effect represents approximately 32.6% of the absolute total effect, based on the reported coefficients. This pattern indicates that Career Adaptability is a relevant pathway linking career anxiety to employment readiness, although it does not fully account for the negative relationship. Thus, anxiety-related difficulties may be associated with employment readiness through both adaptive career resources and other pathways not captured by the mediator in this model.

The Effects of Self-Efficacy on Career Adaptability and Employment Readiness

The results support Hypotheses 3 and 4, indicating that Self-Efficacy positively affects Career Adaptability and Employment Readiness. Among the positive predictors examined, Self-Efficacy has the largest path coefficient for Career Adaptability. Cadets who believe they can complete difficult tasks, overcome obstacles, and solve problems may be more willing to engage in career planning, explore opportunities, and approach future employment challenges with confidence. This finding is consistent with Social Cognitive Career Theory, which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy in shaping career-related choices, actions, and persistence (Lent et al., 1994). It also aligns with previous studies linking self-efficacy to career adaptability and career-related outcomes (Ayvaz et al., 2024; Hamzah et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2024).

The indirect effect of Self-Efficacy on Employment Readiness through Career Adaptability is positive and significant, alongside its significant direct effect. This indicates complementary

partial mediation, with the indirect pathway accounting for approximately 31.2% of the total effect based on the reported coefficients. Nevertheless, the direct effect is larger than the indirect effect, suggesting that Career Adaptability is one pathway through which Self-Efficacy is associated with Employment Readiness rather than the dominant pathway. These findings highlight the relevance of both confidence in personal capabilities and adaptive career resources in understanding cadets' preparedness for workforce entry.

The Effects of Social Support on Career Adaptability and Employment Readiness

The results support Hypotheses 5 and 6, demonstrating that Social Support positively affects Career Adaptability and Employment Readiness. Social Support has the largest positive direct effect on Employment Readiness among the three predictors. Emotional encouragement, practical assistance, career information, and feedback from family, peers, lecturers, and professional networks may help cadets understand workplace expectations and prepare for employment. These findings are consistent with previous research associating social support with career adaptability, employability, and work readiness (Fang & Xu, 2025; Rençber & Paşaoğlu Baş, 2023; Wang et al., 2023, 2024; Xia et al., 2020; Karimi et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2024).

However, the indirect effect of Social Support on Employment Readiness through Career Adaptability is comparatively small relative to its direct effect. The indirect pathway accounts for approximately 12.2% of the total effect based on the reported coefficients. Although the mediation is statistically significant, the results suggest that the relationship between Social Support and Employment Readiness operates predominantly through the direct pathway rather than through Career Adaptability. This distinction is important because it indicates that social resources may be associated with employment preparation in ways that extend beyond the adaptive career resources captured in this model. Accordingly, the contribution of Social Support should not be interpreted primarily as an indirect effect mediated by Career Adaptability.

The Effect of Career Adaptability on Employment Readiness

The results support Hypothesis 7, showing that Career Adaptability positively affects Employment Readiness. Cadets who prepare for their future, take responsibility for career decisions, explore occupational opportunities, and remain confident when facing challenges tend to report greater readiness for employment. This finding supports Career Construction Theory and is consistent with previous research linking career adaptability to employability and work readiness (Lee et al., 2025; Moghaddas et al., 2022; Sulistiyo, 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Xia et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the direct effect of Career Adaptability on Employment Readiness is smaller than the direct effects of Social Support and Self-Efficacy in the present model. Its importance therefore lies not in being the strongest direct predictor, but in its significant association with Employment Readiness and its role in the specific indirect pathways examined. The relative contribution of these pathways, however, differs across predictors, as demonstrated by the mediation results.

Mediation Analysis and Comparative Effects

The mediation results support Hypotheses 8, 9, and 10, confirming significant indirect relationships between each predictor and Employment Readiness through Career Adaptability. However, the magnitude of these indirect effects differs. Because the corresponding direct and indirect effects are statistically significant and consistent in direction, the results are consistent with complementary partial mediation in all three relationships.

A comparison of the total effects provides a broader picture of the predictors' relationships with Employment Readiness. Social Support has the largest positive total effect, followed by Self-Efficacy, while Career Anxiety has a negative total effect. These values are calculated by adding the corresponding direct and specific indirect effects. Social Support therefore demonstrates the largest positive total association with Employment Readiness, whereas Career Anxiety is negatively associated with readiness.

The relative contribution of Career Adaptability also differs across the three relationships. Based on the reported coefficients, the indirect pathway represents approximately 32.6% of the absolute total effect for Career Anxiety, 31.2% for Self-Efficacy, and 12.2% for Social Support. Career Adaptability is therefore relatively more prominent in the relationships involving Career Anxiety and Self-Efficacy than in the relationship involving Social Support. In particular, the small indirect effect of Social Support, compared with its large direct effect, indicates that its relationship with Employment Readiness is predominantly direct within the proposed model. These findings qualify the assumption that Career Adaptability functions as an equally influential mechanism across all predictors. Instead, it represents a significant but differentially influential pathway linking psychological and environmental resources to Employment Readiness.

Practical Implications and Theoretical Contributions

The findings suggest that institutional initiatives should reflect the different pathways through which the predictors are associated with Employment Readiness. First, strengthening the support environment is a practical priority because Social Support demonstrates the largest positive direct and total effects. Structured mentoring, peer and instructor support, career guidance, alumni engagement, and interaction with aviation industry practitioners may help cadets access relevant information, constructive feedback, and professional networks. Second, interventions to strengthen Self-Efficacy should provide mastery experiences through practical training, simulations, challenging tasks, and opportunities to learn from experienced aviation professionals. These activities may support both the direct relationship between Self-Efficacy and Employment Readiness and the indirect relationship through Career Adaptability. Third, interventions addressing Career Anxiety should emphasize realistic information about employment pathways, career exploration, planning, and decision-making under uncertainty. Such initiatives may help cadets develop adaptive resources while recognizing that Career Anxiety also has a significant direct negative relationship with Employment Readiness.

Theoretically, the findings contribute a more differentiated understanding of Career Construction Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory in the context of aviation education. Career Adaptability is positively associated with Employment Readiness and significantly

mediates the relationships involving Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, and Social Support. However, its relative contribution is greater for Career Anxiety and Self-Efficacy than for Social Support when assessed in relation to the respective total effects. This pattern suggests that Career Adaptability is not a uniformly dominant mechanism through which all psychological and environmental factors relate to employment readiness. Rather, its relevance depends on the predictor under consideration, while direct relationships remain particularly important for Social Support and Self-Efficacy.

These findings should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations. The cross-sectional design does not establish causal relationships, and the sample of 108 cadets from a single aviation polytechnic limits generalizability to other institutions and populations. In addition, the ordering of total effects is descriptive and does not establish that the differences between predictors are statistically significant. Future research could use longitudinal designs and samples from multiple aviation education institutions to examine the stability of these relationships and assess whether the pathways vary across admission pathways and study programs.

Conclusion

This study examined the effects of Career Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, and Social Support on Employment Readiness, with Career Adaptability as a mediating variable among cadets at Politeknik Penerbangan Jayapura. The results support all ten hypothesized direct and indirect relationships. Career Anxiety negatively affects both Career Adaptability and Employment Readiness. In contrast, Self-Efficacy positively affects Career Adaptability and Employment Readiness, while Social Support has positive effects on Career Adaptability and Employment Readiness. Career Adaptability also positively affects Employment Readiness. A comparison of the direct and indirect effects reveals that the predictors contribute differently to Employment Readiness. Social Support has the largest positive total effect, followed by Self-Efficacy, whereas Career Anxiety has a negative total effect. Social Support operates predominantly through its direct relationship with Employment Readiness, as its indirect effect through Career Adaptability is comparatively small. Self-Efficacy contributes through both direct and indirect pathways, although its direct effect is larger. Career Anxiety also affects Employment Readiness through

both pathways. Although the direct effect remains larger in absolute magnitude, Career Adaptability represents a comparatively more prominent component of the total relationship for Career Anxiety than for the other predictors. These findings indicate that the mediating role of Career Adaptability is significant but differs in relative importance across the proposed relationships.

Suggestion

The practical implications of this study follow the different pathways through which the predictors are associated with Employment Readiness. First, institutions should prioritize strengthening the support environment through structured mentoring, peer and instructor support, career counselling, alumni engagement, and interaction with aviation industry practitioners. This priority reflects the comparatively large direct and total effects of Social Support on Employment Readiness. Second, interventions to strengthen Self-Efficacy should provide opportunities for mastery experiences through practical training, simulations, challenging tasks, and learning from experienced aviation professionals and employed alumni. Such activities may strengthen cadets' confidence in their capabilities and their capacity to manage career transitions. Third, interventions addressing Career Anxiety should combine realistic information about employment pathways and workplace expectations with career exploration, planning, and decision-making activities. Career development initiatives should therefore integrate environmental support, confidence-building experiences, and adaptive career preparation rather than relying on a single intervention strategy.

These recommendations are further informed by cadets' responses to the open-ended questions concerning their employment preparation challenges and expectations for institutional support. Cadets identified employment competition, English-language proficiency, limited work experience, uncertainty about job opportunities, technical competence, and confidence in their abilities as challenges in preparing for employment. They also expressed the need for competency certification, internship opportunities, English-language training, interview preparation, career guidance, career seminars, and recruitment simulations. These responses suggest that Politeknik Penerbangan Jayapura could complement its existing educational activities with more structured,

practical, and industry-oriented career preparation programmes. In particular, strengthening English-language proficiency, expanding workplace exposure, facilitating competency certification, and providing career guidance may help address the concerns expressed by cadets. These open-ended responses provide descriptive insights into cadets' perceived needs and should be interpreted as complementary evidence rather than proof of the effectiveness of any particular intervention

Theoretically, this study contributes a more differentiated understanding of Career Construction Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory in the context of aviation education. The findings support the relevance of Career Adaptability as a psychosocial resource associated with Employment Readiness, but they do not establish it as an equally influential mediating mechanism for all predictors. Its relative contribution is more prominent in the relationship between Career Anxiety and Employment Readiness, while the relationships involving Self-Efficacy and, particularly, Social Support retain larger direct components. This pattern qualifies the general assumption that psychological and environmental resources influence employment readiness primarily through career adaptability and highlights the importance of considering predictor-specific pathways.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design does not establish causal relationships, and the sample of 108 cadets from a single aviation polytechnic limits the generalizability of the findings to other institutions and student populations. The results should therefore be interpreted within the context of the study rather than as definitive evidence of intervention effectiveness. Future research could employ longitudinal designs, include cadets from multiple aviation education institutions, and examine whether the observed relationships remain consistent across different admission pathways and aviation study programs. Such research would help establish the temporal relationships among career-related anxiety, self-efficacy, social support, career adaptability, and employment readiness. In conclusion, Employment Readiness among aviation cadets is associated with both individual and environmental resources, but these factors operate through pathways of different magnitudes. Social Support demonstrates the largest positive total effect, Self-Efficacy contributes through both direct and indirect pathways, and Career Anxiety is negatively associated with readiness,

partly through its relationship with Career Adaptability. By distinguishing these pathways, the study offers a more context-sensitive understanding of employment preparation and provides a basis for developing career development initiatives tailored to the different needs of aviation cadets.

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