Beyond #KaburAjaDulu : Unveiling career adaptability in the real stories of Indonesian migrant workers

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the meaning of the career adaptability experience of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) abroad and to identify the experiences and strategies that can serve as lessons for the younger generation considering overseas employment amid the #KaburAjaDulu phenomenon. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used, involving five PMI working in South Korea, Japan, Germany, Australia, and the United States, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, documentation, and literature review, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings show that career adaptability is influenced by the ability to adjust to job demands, environmental support, prior experiences, and coping strategies. This study concludes that working abroad for a better economic life requires psychosocial readiness, language proficiency, cultural understanding, and careful planning.

Keywords: *Career Adaptability; Indonesian Migrant Workers; #KaburAjaDulu*

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INTRODUCTION

Employment challenges in Indonesia continue to grow more complex alongside the dynamics of social and economic development. The gap between the labor force and the availability of employment opportunities remains one of the main drivers of the rising unemployment rate (Wardina et al., 2025). Limited access to ideal domestic employment has encouraged the younger generation to consider workig abroad.

In migration literature, this phenomenon is commonly explained through the push-pull concept, in which limited job availability, high competition, low wages, and economic instability act as push factors, while more structured work systems, better career development opportunities, established social networks, and higher wage offers act as pull factors (Peralta et al., 2024). This condition indicates that decision to work abroad is driven not only by economic considerations, but also by the hope of a better working environment, opportunities for self-development, social network support, and future career aspirations.

This study aims to describe the meaning of Indonesian migrant workers's career adaptability experience while working abroad and to explore how their experiences and adaptation strategies can serve as lessons for ounger generations considering overseas employment. Theoretically, tis study is expected to enrich the sill-limited body of Indonesian literature on migrant workers's career adaptabiliy, particularly within the contextof cross-border, contemporary social phenomena such as #KaburAjaDulu. Practically, the findings are expected to help the informants reflect on their own experiences, offer coping and adaptation strategies that may inspire fellow or prospecive migrant workers, and serve as a reference for future research examining career adaptability across different placement countries or generations.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Indonesian Migrant Workers

An Indonesian Migrant Worker (PMI) is an Indonesian citizen who works abroad for a certain period to earn an income. In the context of international migration, migrant workers are understood not merely as labor but as part of global social and economic dynamics involving individuals' cross-border movement to meet their livelihood and employment needs (ILO, 2016). Migrant workers function not only as labor but also as economic actors who help improve family welfare and national foreign exchange; the government therefore provides protection covering the stages before, during, and after employment abroad (Akay et al., 2024).

International migration is one avenue that helps reduce poverty and supports the achievement of global development goals, since migration enables individuals to earn higher income than in their home country (Rozhkov et al., 2021), while the placement of Indonesian workers abroad is one strategy to reduce unemployment and raise living standards through employment opportunities in other countries (Budi, 2023).

In practice, however, Indonesian migrant workers often face constraints such as hazardous working conditions, limited access to basic rights, and risks of discrimination in the destination country (Noviadana et al., 2025).

Career Construction Theory

Career Construction Theory (CCT) views career not as something that forms by itself, but as the outcome of how individuals construct meaning from their life experience through social interaction. Within this framework, the individual is understood as a social actor, motivated agent, and autobiographical author who gradually manages experience,

determines career direction, and gives meaning to their career journey (Savickas, 2022). Career development in this perspective is driven more by an individual's capacity to adapt to the environment than by internal development alone, so that career is not merely lived but formed as individuals make meaning of their life experience and interact with their social environment (Savickas, 2022).

Recent studies confirm that CCT remains widely used in the context of modern work, emphasizing that individuals build careers through meaning construction and person-environment adaptation, so that each individual forms a distinct career narrative according to their life experience (Wang & Li, 2024). Within this theory, career adaptability is regarded as a psychosocial resource that helps individuals face developmental career tasks, work transitions, and workplace challenges (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023), providing the main conceptual foundation for this study.

Career Adaptability

Career adaptability is the central concept within CCT. It explains individuals' readiness to face developmental career tasks, job transitions, and changing work conditions throughout their career journey; individuals are viewed as actively constructing and directing their career path based on life experience and the social environment they encounter (Savickas, 2022). Career adaptability is understood as individuals' capacity to respond to change and uncertainty in the world of work flexibly and continuously, related to the psychosocial resources that help individuals face challenges, change, and career-development demands (Savickas, 2022).

Individuals with strong adaptability tend to be better able to adjust to changing work environments and sustain their careers under dynamic conditions (Rudolph & Lavigne, 2016), and recent research links career adaptability to individuals' capacity to build career strategies and maintain psychological well-being amid changes in the modern world of work (Wang & Li, 2024).

For Indonesian migrant workers specifically, adaptation is an important challenge, since they must face new work environments and differences in culture, language, and work systems in the destination country, requiring them to adjust to changes in both the social and occupational settings in order to survive in a cross-cultural work situation (Yulianti et al., 2024).

Dimensions of Career Adaptability

Savickas & Porfeli (2012) divide career adaptability into four main dimensions concern, control, curiosity, and confidence understood as psychosocial resources that help individuals face change, transition, and career challenges. Hirschi et al., (2015), in contrast, view career adaptability as a dynamic process involving individual readiness, adaptive behavior, and career-adaptation outcomes that develop throughout an individual's career journey. This study adopts Savickas's four-dimension model because it is considered more relevant for understanding the adaptation experience of Indonesian migrant workers facing changes in work environment and culture abroad, and it remains the most widely used approach in career-adaptability research among workers and migrants (Kumar et al., 2024).

Concern relates to individuals' capacity to prepare for and think about their career future ; individuals with strong career readiness tend to be better able to adjust to changes in the work environment and the demands of modern employment (Wikantiyoso & Handayani, 2025). Control relates to individuals' capacity to make decisions and direct their career development ; it helps individuals shape themselves in facing career change

through self-discipline, effort, and persistence in determining their career choices (Putri & Ronauli, 2024). Curiosity relates to individuals' interest in various career possibilities and their search for information about future work opportunities, reflecting how far individuals are willing to explore situations and seek career-related information (Andini et al., 2025). Confidence relates to individuals' belief in their own capacity to face challenges and resolve career problems, helping individuals remain assured and ready to face change and career challenges in a dynamic work environment (Pahlawatiningrum & Wardhani, 2025).

Coping Theory

During career adaptation in a new environment, individuals must not only adjust to changing situations but also face various demands and pressures that arise during the process. To understand how individuals respond to and manage such pressure, this study draws on Coping Theory developed by Lazarus & Folkman (1984), who define coping as a continually changing cognitive and behavioral effort to manage internal or external demands perceived as burdensome or exceeding the individual's resources, broadly distinguished into problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping.

Folkman & Lazarus (1985) further developed the Ways of Coping Questionnaire, which classifies coping strategies into eight forms, one of which is confrontive coping, an active and assertive effort in facing the source of pressure. This study focuses specifically on confrontive coping, as it corresponds most closely with a distinctive finding among the informants ; accordingly, Coping Theory is used not as the main analytical framework, but as a supporting theory to interpret this specific finding, discussed further in the Results and Discussion section.

Previous Research

Previous studies show that career adaptability plays an important role in helping individuals face changes in the world of work, career transitions, and cross-cultural adaptation challenges. A systematic review across Southeast Asia links career adaptability to employability, life satisfaction, and migrant workers' adjustment capacity (Kumar et al., 2024), while a case study of Indonesian workers in Taiwan shows that overseas work experience helps develop cultural-adaptation skills, work competence, and mindset change in facing global work demands (Nasir, 2025).

Other studies show that migrant-worker inclusion affects psychological well-being and adjustment capacity (Mulyadi et al., 2025), while quantitative studies confirm that the concern, control, curiosity, and confidence dimensions correlate positively with individuals' capacity to adapt to the work environment (Pahlawatiningrum & Wardhani, 2025; Putri & Ronauli, 2024). Even so, most previous studies rely on quantitative approaches to statistically test relationships between variables, or on literature synthesis without deeply exploring informants' subjective experience.

Research that specifically examines the career-adaptation process of PMI across different countries and placement pathways through a qualitative phenomenological approach, and links it to the #KaburAjaDulu social phenomenon, remains relatively limited. This study is intended to fill that gap by exploring in depth the experience and meaning of career adaptation among five PMI informants in five different countries through the lens of career adaptability (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Research Framework

This study begins with the #KaburAjaDulu phenomenon that went viral on social media since 2023 and resurged in early 2025, reflecting the growing labor-migration aspirations of Indonesia's younger generation (Koswara & Herlina, 2025), understood not merely as a passing trend but as a digital manifestation of the younger generation's structural unease over prevailing economic and social conditions (Ardianti et al., 2025).

This phenomenon serves as an entry point for examining a more fundamental issue: how Indonesian migrant workers actually undergo the process of career adaptability in a new work environment and culture, an aspect rarely revealed behind the narrative of optimism widely displayed on social media.

To examine this concretely, the study selected five placement countries with officially facilitated or government-supervised labor-migration pathways South Korea, Japan, Germany, Australia, and the United States, representing a diversity of official migration schemes ranging from Government to Government (G to G) placement, the Tokutei Ginou (Specified Skilled Worker) visa, the Ausbildung vocational program, the Work and Holiday Visa (WHV), to the Au Pair program and placement through licensed labor agencies. This diversity underlies the selection of five PMI informants working in five different occupational fields, enabling the study to examine the extent to which career-adaptation patterns remain consistent despite differing national contexts and work systems.

The study uses Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2022), which gives rise to the concept of career adaptability, elaborated by Savickas & Porfeli (2012) into four dimensions concern, control, curiosity, and confidence used as the main analytical framework for understanding the five informants' career-adaptation experience, particularly in facing differences in work culture and social systems in their respective placement countries (Farashah, 2025). As this study is qualitative and phenomenological in nature, aimed at understanding subjective meaning rather than testing relationships between variables, no hypotheses are formulated.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, aimed at understanding social phenomena in depth through description in the form of words and language within a specific context (Moleong in Fiantika & Dkk, 2022). This approach was chosen because the study focuses on understanding, in depth, the meaning of PMI's career-adaptability experience abroad, particularly in relation to the #KaburAjaDulu trend among the younger generation.

The phenomenological approach allows the researcher to examine the adaptation process undergone, the meaning constructed by migrant workers from their cross-cultural experience, and the psychosocial dynamics that emerge, aspects that cannot be adequately represented through quantitative data alone. As a scientific method, phenomenology describes phenomena as they are without manipulating the data, in which prior theories or views are set aside in order to uncover genuinely objective knowledge, with analysis and interpretation required to follow participants' own accounts and expressions (Fiantika & Dkk, 2022).

Data were collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews with five purposively selected PMI informants; documentation, used to complement the data through interview transcripts and other relevant supporting documents; and literature review, drawing on journals, books, and official institutional reports such as those of BP2MI and the Directorate General of Immigration relevant to the research topic. The

interview guide used a semi-structured technique, containing a list of questions while remaining flexible according to each informant's answers and context (Asngari, 2026), developed based on the four dimensions of career adaptability concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) comprising 25 questions covering informants' experience before, during, and after the career-adaptation process in their placement country.

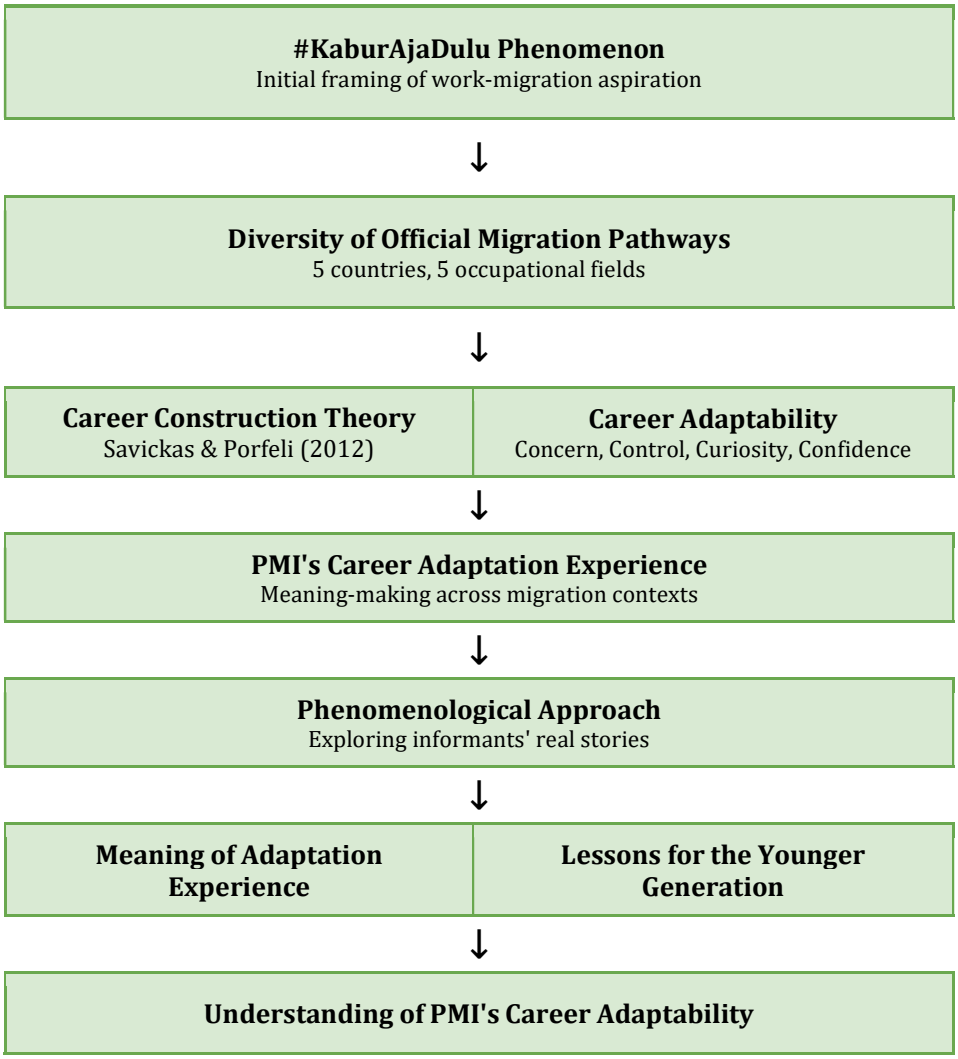
Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a deliberate technique of selecting informants based on specific criteria (Himam & Nasrullah, 2026), namely being an Indonesian migrant worker employed abroad through an official pathway, and having direct experience and in-depth understanding of the career-adaptation process in the respective placement country. Five informants were involved, working in different countries, occupational fields, and migration pathways, each with a minimum working duration of eleven months to one year, consistent with the phenomenological approach's emphasis on depth of understanding across varied contexts rather than statistical representation (Arianto & Handayani, 2022; Nasir et al., 2023).

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al., (2014), consisting of three main stages: data reduction, selecting relevant data and simplifying information regarding informants experience across the four career-adaptability dimensions; data display, arranging the reduced data into narrative form for ease of understanding; and conclusion drawing, interpreting patterns and meaning from the displayed data to address the research focus on PMI's career adaptability.

Data validity was examined through source triangulation, comparing career-adaptation experiences among the five informants from different placement countries and occupational fields; technique triangulation, comparing interview results with field notes and other supporting documentation; and member checking, reconfirming interview results with informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation matched their actual experience.

The study was conducted online, adjusting to informants' domicile abroad, with data collected through in-depth interviews via voice and video calls according to informants' availability and convenience, over the period from July 2026 onward.

The overall alignment of these concepts is illustrated in the research framework presented in Figure 1.



Source : Author's elaboration, 2026

Figure 1
Research Model

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

Social media functions as a catalyst that accelerates the spread of information and shapes a collective perception of a better life abroad. The #KaburAjaDulu hashtag first went viral in 2023 and resurged in early 2025, reflecting growing optimism among the younger generation toward opportunities abroad amid dissatisfaction with low wages, difficulty obtaining decent jobs, and political uncertainty at home (Koswara et al., 2025). The phenomenon is understood not as a passing trend but as a digital manifestation of the younger generation's structural unease over Indonesia's economic, social, and political conditions (Ardianti et al., 2025).

Recent social-media studies show that digital spaces such as TikTok, Instagram, and X function as virtual communities where young people exchange job-vacancy information, migration procedures, and life experience in destination countries (Mulyana

& Djamzuri, 2025), reinforcing what has been described as an "alternative map" for young people in designing their careers outside the formal labor-institution pathway (Rahim & Bayu, 2025). Against this backdrop, this study focuses specifically on PMI's career-adaptation experience as a real representation behind the optimistic narrative widely displayed through the #KaburAjaDulu trend.

Informant Characteristics

The five informants were selected because they represent different placement countries, occupational fields, and migration pathways, allowing the study to observe variation in the concern, control, curiosity, and confidence dimensions across differing work-culture contexts and migration challenges, consistent with the phenomenological emphasis on depth of understanding across varied perspectives (Nasir et al., 2023). Their characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Informant Characteristics

No	Name	Gender	Age	Education	Country (Duration)	Occupation
1	Anwar Fauzi	Male	26	Bachelor's Degree	Australia (4 years)	Environment Services Operator
2	Nida Salmayanti Purnama	Female	26	Vocational High School + Ausbildung	Germany (8 years)	Registered Nurse (ICU)
3	Moch Axel Fatra Priadi	Male	25	Diploma (D3)	United States (1 year)	Front Desk Agent
4	Asep	Male	24	Senior High School	South Korea (3 years 6 months)	Environment Services Operator
5	Rahma	Female	25	Senior High School	Japan (1 year 2 months)	Sashimi Production Staff

Source: Interview Data, 2026

Personal Disposition and Confidence

A theme that emerged consistently is that personal disposition, whether introverted or extroverted, is not a barrier to adapting to a new work environment; openness in fact accelerates the process. Moch Axel Fatra Priadi described himself as naturally reserved, yet the demands of hospitality work requiring interaction with guests from diverse cultural backgrounds gradually drew out a different side of him:

> *"…back then I was personally an introvert, I rarely liked talking to people, but because the job demanded it, I had no choice but to go along with it, and thankfully I changed."*

This transformation was not immediate; it began as a conscious effort to display behavior contrary to his natural tendency, before eventually becoming a stable part of how he interacts with others.

Anwar Fauzi, by contrast, already possessed an extroverted disposition from the outset, which he considered a factor that accelerated his adjustment despite limited English proficiency:

> *"I'm kind of an extrovert and not shy at all. So it was quick, things just clicked right away."*

To interpret this behavioral shift, the study draws on Free Trait Theory (Little, 2014), which explains that individuals can display behavior contrary to their basic personality disposition when a situation demands the achievement of a particular goal. Within this framework, Moch Axel Fatra Priadi can be understood as displaying extroverted behavior to meet the demands of his overseas employment, a behavior that, over time, became a consistent part of his daily interaction. Both experiences show that successful career adaptation is determined not solely by personality type, but by individuals' capacity to adjust their behavior to the demands of the work environment, whether through consciously constructed behavior or characteristics already present from the outset. This finding aligns with the confidence dimension of career adaptability, which emphasizes individuals' belief in their own capacity to face career challenges (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Environmental and Family Support

Beyond personal disposition, career adaptation is also shaped by how responsive and open the local environment is toward newcomers. Anwar Fauzi described his experience in Australia as a process of mutual understanding despite initial language limitations:

> *"And I think they kind of romanticize the fact that we come speaking different languages, but we try to understand each other… Because the environment is supportive, they're welcoming, there's no racism."*

For Nida Salmayanti Purnama, the most influential support instead came from family and her closest circle:

> *"It does matter, like their support… when they support me, I'm happy. Because I support them back too. We just support each other.."*

This finding aligns with Acculturation Theory (Berry, 1997), which explains that successful cultural adaptation is shaped by a mutual adjustment process between the incoming individual and the host society. Adaptation, therefore, depends not only on individual capacity, but also on the acceptance and support extended by the surrounding environment, be it a responsive host culture, as Anwar Fauzi experienced, or a personal support network carried from home, as in Nida Salmayanti Purnama's case. Both forms of support reinforced the informants sense of security and confidence in facing the challenges of working abroad, consistent with the confidence dimension of career adaptability (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Prior Knowledge, Values, and Control

Knowledge, experience, habits, and values already formed prior to working abroad emerged as an important asset in facing challenges in the new work environment. Asep explained that the fundamentals he brought from Indonesia eased his adjustment, reflected in how he handles perceived unfair treatment at work by considering the matter independently before involving others:

"When it comes to making a decision, I think it through myself first, and then if there are people close to me, like friends or family, I discuss it with them to figure out what's best."

The same foundation shaped how he responds to workplace conditions beyond his control as a subordinate:

"ecause here we're working, and work means they're the boss and we're the subordinate, so we have to comply. We can't just do whatever we want."

A similar pattern appears in Moch Axel Fatra Priadi's experience. Facing treatment from a supervisor that he found unpleasant, Moch Axel Fatra Priadi initially felt emotional strain but chose over time to accept the situation, recognizing that his supervisor's character was beyond his ability to change:

"Honestly, the way I dealt with it at first was painful, but over time I just learned to accept it and let it go."

Yet this acceptance was not passive; when assigned tasks outside his contractual responsibility, Moch Axel Fatra Priadi chose to clarify first and asserted his refusal when appropriate:

"*Here, you can push back. So if I'm told to do something, before I do it I'll ask about it first."*

This shows Moch Axel Fatra Priadi's capacity to distinguish situations that call for acceptance from those that call for assertiveness. Values formed in Indonesia were also maintained through religious identity amid new work-culture demands. Asep remained firm about his religious practice even while complying with work instructions:

"When it comes to religion, I'll definitely speak up,"

while his workplace provided room for negotiation:

"I can still pray… it doesn't even take half an hour."

Axel showed a similar pattern, continuing to perform Friday prayers in an environment far removed from Indonesia's religious atmosphere:

"I do Friday prayers not at a mosque but at a small prayer room… but the local gangs here actually care about us… they're the ones who look after that prayer room."

These findings show that the knowledge, experience, and values informants carried from Indonesia became an important asset in decision-making, in regulating responses to situations beyond their control, and in determining when to accept and when to assert themselves consistent with the control dimension of career adaptability (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Curiosity and Openness to New Experience

Openness to trying new things, curiosity about an unfamiliar environment, and a willingness to embrace new experience emerged as drivers of informants' adjustment to life and work in the destination country, most strongly reflected in Nida Salmayanti Purnama's experience in Germany. Nida Salmayanti Purnama explained that her self-confidence in the new environment did not appear instantly but formed gradually through habituation and daily repetition:

"And when something is repeated over and over, like every day until it becomes a habit… confidence just comes out on its own because it's already become a habit,"

and she held to the principle that
"If you don't try, you'll never know."

Her curiosity also extended to questioning norms she had previously taken for granted in Indonesia:
"In Indonesia, people mostly just say 'hey, this isn't allowed, it's forbidden'… but over there you actually start thinking, 'why is it forbidden?'… we never really question it back home."

A similar disposition, though expressed differently, appeared in Asep and Anwar Fauzi. Asep's interest in joining a photography community reflected his willingness to explore beyond the workplace and expand his social relationships:
"Once you're interested in something, you'll definitely look for information about it, and you get a new kind of enthusiasm."

Anwar Fauzi described his experience in Australia as a continuous learning process:
"There's always something new every day, like 'oh, so this is how it is'… I've become more open, but still within limits."

These experiences show that openness to new experience encourages informants to keep learning, explore their environment, and build self-confidence, aligning with the curiosity dimension of career adaptability (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Concern and future orientation

How informants envision and prepare for their future careers varies in clarity and flexibility, though all five showed concern for their career direction. Anwar Fauzi and Nida Salmayanti Purnama displayed the most structured orientation, each pursuing a clear intermediate goal toward a longer-term target. Anwar Fauzi stated:
" I have a mission, you know, I want the green card… right now I'm building skills that will still be relevant at least 10-20 years from now,"

while Nida Salmayanti Purnama is deliberately accumulating ICU experience toward becoming a registered nurse on a cruise ship.

Rahma and Asep show plans that continue to evolve while remaining consistent with their initial interests Rahma linking her plan to a future culinary business, and Asep progressing from extending his work contract toward learning German for a possible future placement. Moch Axel Fatra Priadi's case differs: his career plan must adjust to structural constraints beyond his control, namely strict immigration policy in his country of placement, even though his employer offered an alternative pathway through further study. This variation shows that concern for career direction does not always take the form of a rigid plan, but is a dynamic process, continually renegotiated in response to lived experience.

A distinctive Coping Strategy

While four informants tend to face workplace pressure through socially conventional means such as patience, communication, and measured assertiveness, Rahma's experience stands out as a distinctive finding, analyzed through the concept of confrontive coping within Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

When faced with a harsh communication style from supervisors or colleagues, Rahma chose to match that communication style rather than continually suppress the emotional pressure:

> *"If they're being loud with us, like slamming things around, we have to match that energy too. So it doesn't hurt, like we don't take it personally and let it become our whole mindset. We just have to match each other.."*

She also demonstrated a survival strategy through rapidly mastering new skills:

> *"Proving your skills… like, for example, once something's explained just once… we have to catch on right away, we have to be able to do it the next day."*

For Rahma, enduring the work environment involved not only managing her emotional response to pressure, but also proving her competence in order to meet job demands consistent with the confrontive-coping concept (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and reflecting the confidence dimension of career adaptability (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Learning for the Younger Generation

Analysis of social-media conversation using Drone Emprit by Fahmi (2025) traces the #KaburAjaDulu hashtag to a casual exchange on the platform X on 2 September 2023 among Indonesian workers abroad discussing their working life and experience in the destination country. After a period of dormancy, the hashtag resurfaced in January 2025 and subsequently gained wide public attention.

Ardianti et al., (2025) found that the surge in usage did not occur randomly but responded to socio-political events in Indonesia, with spikes in conversation in September 2023, early 2024, and again in March 2025, indicating that the hashtag develops in tandem with prevailing social conditions rather than as a mere social-media trend.

The narrative that develops on social media is generally built on two contrasting images. Abelia et al. (2025) found that the hashtag resurged in early 2025 alongside a number of government policies that drew public criticism, portraying Indonesia as a country whose governance is perceived as unresponsive to public needs and lacking in decent employment opportunities, while overseas life is depicted through the active role of the Indonesian diaspora sharing study, scholarship, and international-career experience (Tolokende & Idris, 2025). This has provoked varied public and government responses (Syifa et al., 2026).

However, this picture does not fully correspond with the informants' lived experience. Anwar Fauzi offered the most critical view of the term "kabur" (fleeing), arguing that working abroad should not be understood as an escape from conditions in Indonesia, but as a planned effort toward self-development:

> *"Working abroad should be seen as a process of self-development, not just 'running away'… if it's just about running away, you might as well just run from Kadungora to Leles. But if you think of it as wanting to improve the quality of yourself, that's a much more elegant way to see it."*

Moch Axel Fatra Priadi and Nida Salmayanti Purnama both acknowledged that economic opportunity abroad is real, yet emphasized that the life displayed on social media often shows only its best side. Moch Axel Fatra Priadi recognized his own role in shaping that image:

> *" That's what I post on social media. It doesn't mean, 'oh I'm working today, I worked six days this week'... but that part doesn't get posted. So for friends who are planning to do #KaburAjaDulu, please prepare yourself mentally. Because it's not as pretty as it looks."*

Nida Salmayanti Purnama, who experienced burnout during her adaptation process, echoed this:

> *" Everything isn't as pretty as what gets posted on Instagram… a lot of people come here and suddenly feel lost, get burned out… because I also went through burnout myself before."*

Asep viewed working abroad as a rational economic choice, particularly for those without family privilege, but stressed that the decision must be followed by thorough preparation in language, work culture, and mental readiness to minimize culture shock. Rahma likewise acknowledged the challenges of working abroad, while emphasizing that her workplace rewarded effort, and stressed the importance of upholding Indonesia's good name, since every migrant worker indirectly represents their nation's identity.

Taken together, the five informants' experiences show that working abroad genuinely opens economic opportunity, experience, and self-development, yet this is not as effortless as the picture commonly circulated on social media. The adaptation process continues to demand mental readiness, language capacity, understanding of work culture, and clear purpose prior to the decision to work abroad, offering the younger generation a lesson that the decision to work abroad should be grounded in preparation and genuine readiness rather than in following a social-media trend.

Synthesis of Findings

The findings show that the meaning of Indonesian migrant workers' career-adaptability experience is not shaped by a single factor, but by the interaction between individual psychological capacity, socio-cultural environment, and personal strategies for facing work pressure. All four dimensions of career adaptability (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) emerged across the five informants' experience: confidence reflected through personality and environmental or family support; control reflected through the knowledge and personal principles carried from Indonesia; curiosity reflected through an open mindset and willingness to explore; and concern, reflected through career-future orientation that is continually evaluated and adjusted alongside lived experience.

The process of adaptation was also inseparable from informants' efforts to sustain the values carried from Indonesia while adjusting to the destination country's work culture, evident in the religious principles maintained by Asep and Moch Axel Fatra Priadi and in Nida Salmayanti Purnama's shifting perspective toward norms she once regarded as fixed, consistent with Acculturation Theory (Berry, 1997). Regarding strategies for facing pressure, four informants Asep, Nida Salmayanti Purnama, Anwar Fauzi, and Moch Axel Fatra Priadi tended to respond through socially acceptable means such as patience, communication, and measured assertiveness, while Rahma displayed a distinctive confrontive-coping pattern by mirroring an assertive stance toward an overbearing

supervisor or colleague. This variation indicates that coping strategy (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) is highly individual and shaped by the character of each informant's work environment, and therefore cannot be generalized into a single pattern applicable to all Indonesian migrant workers.

Regarding lessons for the younger generation, the #KaburAjaDulu narrative circulating on social media tends to foreground various domestic difficulties in Indonesia while portraying life abroad in an idealized light. Four of the five informants Asep, Rahma, Nida, Salmayanti Purnama and Moch Axel Fatra Priadi viewed overseas economic opportunity positively, yet all agreed that mental readiness, language capacity, and understanding of work culture are essential requirements often overlooked in social-media narratives. Anwar Fauzi, the only informant to critique the "kabur" framing directly, offered an alternative perspective that the decision to work abroad should be understood as a planned process of self-development. The study therefore concludes that PMI career adaptation is a dynamic process, shaped not only by individual character but also by environmental support, prior experience and values, openness to new experience, and each individual's capacity to withstand pressure while working reinforcing that working abroad is not merely a matter of accessing better economic opportunity, but also demands psychological readiness, adaptive capacity, and understanding of the destination country's work culture.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The meaning of Indonesian migrant workers' career adaptability experience abroad is formed through a complex interaction between individual psychological capacity, the negotiation of cultural identity, and personal strategies for handling work pressure. All four dimensions of career adaptability, concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), emerged from the five informants' experience. Introverted and extroverted personalities alike were found not to hinder adaptation; rather, either disposition can support the adaptation process when enacted as a free trait (Little, 2014) according to situational demand.

Environmental and family support reinforced informants' self-confidence, while the knowledge, experience, and values carried from Indonesia, including religious identity, became an important asset in maintaining control over the adaptation process, sustained through a strategy of cultural integration (Berry, 1997). Curiosity and openness to new experience encouraged informants to keep learning and exploring their new environment, while their orientation toward career future was found to vary, ranging from structured plans, to plans that evolved consistently from initial interest, to plans adjusted because of structural constraints. The study further found variation in coping strategy for facing work pressure (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), with Rahma displaying a distinctive confrontive-coping pattern relative to the other four informants.

The experience and career-adaptation strategies of Indonesian migrant workers offer lessons for the younger generation considering overseas employment, particularly amid the prevailing #KaburAjaDulu trend on social media. The narrative circulating on social media tends to present a lopsided picture, foregrounding difficult conditions in Indonesia on one hand and an idealized life abroad on the other, whereas the reality experienced by the five informants proved considerably more complex. Four of the five informants viewed overseas economic opportunity positively, yet their experience also showed that working abroad is inseparable from various adaptation challenges, and all agreed that mental readiness, language capacity, and understanding of work culture are essential requirements frequently overlooked within social-media narratives. These

findings affirm that the decision to work abroad should be grounded in thorough planning and genuine self-readiness, rather than in following a popular social-media trend.

Based on these conclusions, the younger generation and prospective Indonesian migrant workers are encouraged to prepare thoroughly before deciding to work abroad, not only in terms of economic opportunity, but also mental readiness, language capacity, and understanding of the destination country's work culture, while building readiness to adapt to its work environment and cultural norms; information obtained from social media should not be treated as the sole reference, given the tendency of such platforms to display a selectively curated slice of life.

Future researchers are encouraged to explore Indonesian migrant workers' career-adaptation experience across different career stages, such as pre-departure, early placement, and post-return, so that the developmental trajectory of each career-adaptability dimension can be understood more fully across a migrant worker's career journey, and to broaden the range of informant characteristics in order to capture a more varied picture.

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