

Unlocking Career Bliss How Communication Skills and Adaptability Fuel Satisfaction in Turbulent Job Markets

Robiansyah¹, Rohana Nur Aini^{2*}, Erwin Setiawan³

Faculty of Economics and Business, Mulawarman University, Samarinda, Indonesia^{1,2,3}

*Email Korespodensi: rohana@feb.unmul.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted 16-05-2026
Received 27-05-2026
Published 28-05-2026

Keywords:

Communication Skill;
Career Adaptability;
Career Satisfaction;
Mediation Effect;
University Graduates

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the relationship between career satisfaction, communication skills, and career adaptability. The dynamic global environment requires the workforce to have an adaptive attitude to meet the demands of change. Career patterns have become increasingly diverse, and successful career development largely depends on individual initiative, soft skills, and the ability to adapt in the world of work. This study analyzes the direct and indirect effects on career satisfaction among graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Mulawarman University, using purposive sampling with 272 respondents. The results indicate that communication skills have a positive and significant effect on career adaptability and career satisfaction. Furthermore, career adaptability positively and significantly affects career satisfaction and mediates the relationship between communication skills and career satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of communication skills comprising English proficiency, interpersonal/oral skills, and writing abilities and career adaptability as predictors of career satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, career satisfaction has emerged as a key indicator of individual career success, capturing the degree to which a person holds a positive attitude toward the overall trajectory of their professional life (Yang et al., 2022). Rooted in subjective career success theory, career satisfaction reflects not merely external achievements such as salary or promotions, but rather the internal sense of fulfillment that arises when one's career aligns with personal values, aspirations, and long-term goals. More specifically, career satisfaction is defined as an individual's feeling of contentment with their career achievements, developmental opportunities, and the overall work-life balance they experience in relation to their personal expectations (Nauman et al., 2021; Salleh et al., 2020; Tahiry & Ekmekcioglu, 2023). It is this subjective dimension that makes career satisfaction a particularly meaningful construct in understanding how individuals evaluate and respond to the evolving nature of modern employment. Therefore, it is important to continually explore the factors that predict career satisfaction, as its antecedents are far from universally agreed upon and may vary significantly across different occupational, cultural, and generational contexts. Given that the contemporary work environment is highly dynamic and characterized by uncertainties that are difficult to predict, university graduates and the broader workforce must be prepared to face and adapt to increasingly diverse career paths (Kim, 2022). For the young

workforce, in particular, career satisfaction plays a crucial role in determining the success of the transition from education to professional life. It helps individuals feel that the career path they have chosen genuinely aligns with their interests, competencies, and long-term aspirations. Those who are satisfied with their careers tend to demonstrate greater enthusiasm for personal and professional growth, exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment, and report improved overall life satisfaction and well-being (Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020; Meilianti et al., 2022).

The dynamic global environment necessitates that the workforce possess an adaptive attitude to meet the ever-changing demands of modern careers. Career patterns have become increasingly diverse and non-linear, and successful career development now largely depends on individual initiative, the soft skills one possesses, and the ability to adapt flexibly to a continuously evolving work environment (Zacher, 2015). In this context, career adaptability has been identified as a crucial psychosocial resource that enables individuals to adjust effectively to new work demands, diverse professional groups, and varied organizational environments (Academy, 2017; Behavior & Behavior, 2020; Christensen & Rees, 2002; Kim, 2022; Yu et al., 2017). Grounded in Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005), career adaptability encompasses four core dimensions: concern (the capacity to plan for the future), control (the sense of personal agency in making career decisions), curiosity (the tendency to explore diverse career possibilities), and confidence (the belief in one's ability to successfully overcome professional obstacles). Collectively, these dimensions enable individuals to proactively manage vocational challenges, navigate career transitions, and sustain a sense of purpose and direction throughout their professional lives. For early-career graduates entering the workforce for the first time, the ability to adapt is especially critical, as they are simultaneously managing the psychological demands of identity formation, the practical challenges of entering competitive labor markets, and the uncertainties introduced by global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Kim, 2022; Nauman et al., 2021).

Based on the need to face the challenges of the future world of work, career satisfaction is closely related to communication skills, because effective communication plays a vital role in one's success in the workplace. The communication skills in question consist of three main components English skills, interpersonal/verbal skills, and writing skills (Christensen & Rees, 2002; de Sousa Mata et al., 2021) play a vital role in career satisfaction. These communication skills enable individuals to navigate and succeed effectively in diverse professional environments. In addition, career adaptability, which includes the ability to adjust to changes and uncertainties in the job market, further contributes to career satisfaction. Together, strong communication skills and career adaptability enhance an individual's capacity to meet workplace demands, build professional relationships, and pursue long-term career growth.

This study was conducted in the context of an increasingly dynamic and uncertain job market, particularly in the post-pandemic era, which highlights the growing importance of adaptability and effective communication in the workplace. The research focuses on graduates from the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) at Mulawarman University, a context that is particularly relevant to examining the interplay between communication skills, career adaptability, and career satisfaction. Mulawarman University is located in Samarinda, the provincial capital of East Kalimantan, a region whose economy has historically been dominated by the natural resource sector, particularly coal and palm oil. The ongoing national economic transformation, combined with East Kalimantan's selection as the site of Indonesia's new capital city (Nusantara), has further intensified the demand for graduates who are not only academically competent but also well-equipped with interpersonal, communicative, and adaptive

professional skills. Against this backdrop, the focus on graduates from East Kalimantan provides new and contextually grounded insights into the challenges faced by university graduates as they navigate a rapidly changing regional job market in Indonesia. Unlike studies conducted in metropolitan contexts such as Jakarta or Surabaya, findings from this peripheral yet strategically significant region contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how soft skills and adaptability operate as career resources in environments characterized by structural economic transitions, limited access to professional networks, and growing competition for skilled employment.

Communication skills, which include English skills, interpersonal/oral skills, and writing abilities (Awang & Daud, 2015; Baghcheghi et al., 2011; Bursleson & Denton, 1997; Iksan et al., 2012; Tripathy, 2020), play a crucial and multifaceted role in workplace success (Christensen & Rees, 2002; Jerome, 2017). Effective communication underpins virtually every dimension of professional performance, from establishing credibility and building trust with colleagues and supervisors, to articulating complex ideas, resolving interpersonal conflicts, and contributing constructively to team-based problem-solving processes. In today's increasingly globalized and interdisciplinary work settings, individuals who can communicate fluently and persuasively across cultural, linguistic, and functional boundaries are better positioned to build the professional networks necessary for career advancement. The study's results, showing a significant positive effect of communication skills on career satisfaction, support the theory that effective communication strengthens interpersonal relationships, facilitates collaboration, and enhances an individual's capacity to navigate diverse and demanding work environments. Beyond their direct contribution to career outcomes, communication skills are also theorized to strengthen career adaptability. Individuals with strong communication abilities can more readily interpret environmental feedback, seek out mentoring and developmental resources, adjust their professional self-presentation to new contexts, and engage in the exploratory behaviors that underpin proactive career management. Empirical support for this linkage has been provided by Kara et al. (2021), who confirm that communication skills constitute a meaningful antecedent of career adaptability by equipping individuals with the relational and informational tools needed to respond constructively to vocational transitions. Therefore, the first hypothesis in this study is as follows.

H1: Communication skills have a positive and significant effect on career adaptability.

Career adaptability, measured through the dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Robertson & Abkhezr, 2024; Technicaluniversity & Faculty, 2018; Tien & Wang, 2018; Wang & Yan, 2023), has been widely recognized as a key determinant of individual career success across diverse occupational settings (Maggiori et al., 2017). The theoretical basis for this linkage lies in Career Construction Theory, which posits that career adaptability functions as a set of psychosocial readiness resources that prepare individuals to respond effectively to the developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas they encounter throughout their working lives (Savickas, 2005). When individuals score higher on career adaptability, they are better equipped to set realistic career goals, persist through setbacks, and make autonomous decisions that align their career trajectories with their values and aspirations all of which are associated with heightened career satisfaction. The positive influence of career adaptability on career satisfaction reinforces the notion that adaptability is not merely a reactive coping mechanism, but rather a proactive and generative resource that directly enhances one's subjective career outcomes. This is consistent with the research conducted by Chan et al. (2016), Nauman et al. (2021), Yu et al. (2017), and Zacher (2015), which collectively and consistently conclude that career

adaptability exerts a positive and statistically significant impact on career satisfaction across samples from different industries, career stages, and national contexts. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this study is:

H2: Career adaptability has a positive and significant influence on career satisfaction.

Career satisfaction is often defined as an individual's positive evaluation of their career achievements and the extent to which the balance in their professional life aligns with their personal goals and expectations (Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020; Meilianti et al., 2022; Spurr et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2022). From a theoretical standpoint, the direct relationship between communication skills and career satisfaction can be understood through the lens of social cognitive career theory, which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy and positive performance outcomes in shaping career-related affect and satisfaction. Individuals who possess strong communication skills are more likely to perform effectively across a variety of professional tasks, receive favorable evaluations from supervisors and colleagues, and develop the professional self-confidence that is associated with higher career satisfaction (Jerome, 2017). Research conducted by de Sousa Mata et al. (2021) and Gurbuz et al. (2016) has empirically demonstrated that communication skills serve as a crucial factor in increasing career satisfaction across different professional populations, including healthcare workers and academic professionals. Furthermore, the mediating effect of career adaptability in the relationship between communication skills and career satisfaction supports the theoretical view that soft skills enhance career outcomes not only through direct pathways but also by equipping individuals with the adaptive capacities needed to thrive in changing environments (Kara et al., 2021; Tahiry & Ekmekcioglu, 2023; Zacher, 2015). This aligns with findings from studies by Analysis and Management (2022) and Tahiry and Ekmekcioglu (2023), which highlight adaptability as a critical mediating mechanism in the communication-satisfaction pathway. Therefore, the third and fourth hypotheses in this study are:

H3: Communication skills have a positive and significant effect on career satisfaction.

H4: Career adaptability mediates the relationship between communication skills and career satisfaction.

In accordance with the hypotheses above, the research model is presented in Figure 1 below.

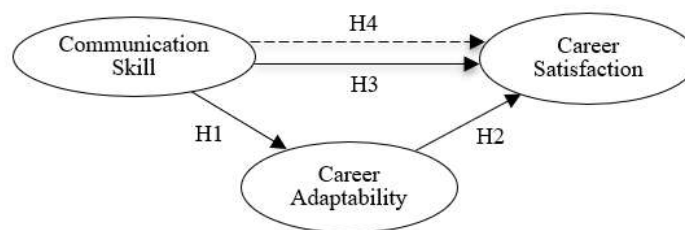


Figure 1 The Research Framework

The aforementioned body of literature broadly demonstrates that career satisfaction is positively influenced by both communication skills and career adaptability. However, a careful review of the empirical landscape reveals that not all studies have produced consistently supportive findings, thereby introducing important nuances that motivate the present inquiry. Research conducted by Othman et al. (2022) indicates that communication skills do not significantly predict career adaptability in certain employment contexts, suggesting that the relationship between these constructs may be moderated by

factors such as industry type, educational background, or cultural orientation. Additionally, an empirical study by Academy (2017) raises the possibility that career adaptability does not exert a direct or indirect impact on career satisfaction in specific occupational populations, potentially attributable to variations in how adaptability is measured or the broader organizational and economic conditions in which participants operate. These inconsistencies underscore the complexity of the relationships among communication skills, career adaptability, and career satisfaction, and highlight the need for studies that examine these linkages within carefully defined and contextually specific settings. The present study addresses this need by focusing on a cohort of early-career graduates from a regional Indonesian university, thereby contributing to the empirical literature with evidence that accounts for the unique socioeconomic and labor market conditions of non-metropolitan Southeast Asian contexts.

METHODS

The research design used in this study is a quantitative descriptive method, selected for its suitability in testing theoretically derived hypotheses and establishing empirical generalizations through systematic, structured data collection and rigorous statistical analysis. Quantitative research methods are grounded in the positivist paradigm and are particularly appropriate when the research objective involves measuring the magnitude and direction of relationships among variables, as well as testing the significance of those relationships within a defined population (Taherdoost, 2022). The context of this study involves the analysis of career satisfaction, with communication skills as the primary independent variable and career adaptability as both a dependent variable in relation to communication skills and a mediating variable in the path leading to career satisfaction. This dual role of career adaptability allows for the simultaneous examination of direct and indirect effects within a single analytical model, which is both theoretically meaningful and methodologically advantageous. This study was conducted on graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Mulawarman University (FEB Unmul), specifically those who graduated between 2020 and 2022 and are currently part of the active workforce. This sampling period was deliberately chosen to capture graduates who entered the job market during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that was particularly disruptive in terms of employment conditions, the structure of available jobs, and the adaptive demands placed on new graduates. By focusing on this cohort, the study is able to generate insights that are directly relevant to understanding how early-career professionals navigate post-pandemic labor market challenges in a regional Indonesian context.

This study examines the relationships among three central constructs: communication skills, career adaptability, and career satisfaction. Communication skills were operationalized based on three established dimensions: English language proficiency, oral and interpersonal communication skills, and written communication abilities (Christensen & Rees, 2002). English proficiency was included as a dimension given its growing importance in Indonesia's globalizing labor market, where the ability to engage with international clients, access professional literature, and participate in cross-cultural teams increasingly determines career prospects. Oral and interpersonal communication skills were included to capture the relational competencies required for effective collaboration, negotiation, and professional relationship-building. Written communication was included to reflect the demands of documentation, reporting, and formal correspondence in professional environments. Career adaptability was measured through its four theoretical dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, following the

framework established and validated by Maggiori et al. (2017) in the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale Short Form (CAAS-SF). This instrument has demonstrated strong psychometric properties across multiple cultural contexts, including in Asian populations, making it appropriate for use in the Indonesian setting (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Career satisfaction, as the dependent variable, was assessed using indicators of career achievement, alignment with personal career goals, satisfaction with income and salary levels, perceived opportunities for career advancement, and satisfaction with skills development, consistent with the framework proposed by Spurk et al. (2011). Data were collected online using Google Forms, and a 5-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to capture the degree of respondents' agreement with each item.

The study employs a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, to identify participants who meet a set of predefined eligibility criteria relevant to the research objectives. Purposive sampling is a judgment-based technique that emphasizes data availability, contextual appropriateness, and alignment with specific research requirements, making it particularly suitable for studies that target a well-defined subpopulation rather than seeking to generalize to an entire national or global workforce (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The inclusion criteria for this study required that respondents had graduated from one of the three departments within FEB Unmul Management, Accounting, or Economics between the years 2020 and 2022, were currently employed at the time of data collection, and fell within the age range of 19 to 40 years. These criteria were established to ensure that respondents were genuinely early-career professionals with recent, first-hand experience of entering the post-pandemic labor market, thereby enhancing the ecological validity of the data. A total of 272 valid responses were retained for analysis after data screening procedures were applied to remove incomplete responses and identify outliers. Before formal analysis, the data were systematically filtered based on the eligibility criteria to ensure the integrity and representativeness of the final sample.

This study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to simultaneously analyze the direct and indirect effects specified in the proposed research model. SEM is a powerful multivariate analytical technique that integrates elements of factor analysis, multiple regression, and path analysis, enabling researchers to examine complex relationships among latent variables while accounting for measurement error (Hair et al., 2019). Given the exploratory and predictive orientation of this study, as well as the non-normal distribution characteristics commonly observed in behavioral survey data, the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach was selected as the most appropriate analytical method. PLS-SEM is a variance-based alternative to Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM) that is particularly well-suited for studies with relatively complex models, moderate sample sizes, and an emphasis on prediction of endogenous constructs (Hair & Alamer, 2022). All analyses were performed using SmartPLS 4 software, which provides a comprehensive suite of tools for assessing both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model), as well as for conducting bootstrapping-based hypothesis testing.

The analytical process is conducted in several sequential stages to ensure methodological rigor. The first stage involves the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model), which assesses the quality of the indicators used to measure each latent construct. Indicator reliability is evaluated by examining outer loading values, with a minimum acceptable threshold of 0.7, below which indicators are considered to contribute insufficiently to the variance of their respective constructs and are candidates for removal (Hair et al., 2020). The second stage assesses convergent validity and construct reliability. Convergent validity

is confirmed when the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeds 0.5, indicating that the construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators. Internal consistency reliability is established through Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (Rho_C), and the more precise rho_A coefficient, all of which should exceed the threshold of 0.7 to indicate acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2019). In the third stage, discriminant validity is evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root of each construct's AVE exceeds the inter-construct correlations, confirming that each latent variable is empirically distinct from the others in the model (Hair & Alamer, 2022; Hair et al., 2019). Following satisfactory confirmation of the measurement model, the fourth stage involves the evaluation of the structural model (inner model). The R-square values for the endogenous constructs are examined to assess the model's explanatory power, with higher values indicating greater predictive accuracy. Hypothesis testing is then conducted using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples in SmartPLS 4, which generates t-statistics and p-values for each proposed path. A path is considered statistically significant, and its corresponding hypothesis is accepted, if the p-value is less than 0.05 and the t-statistic exceeds 1.96, consistent with a 95% confidence level (Hair et al., 2019). The indirect (mediation) effect of career adaptability in the path from communication skills to career satisfaction is tested through the specific indirect effect procedure within the bootstrapping framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Profile

The research results are analyzed systematically to address each of the four hypotheses proposed in this study. The initial step in the analysis involves identifying the respondents' demographic profiles as a basis for contextualizing subsequent findings. Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents are female, totaling 156 individuals (57%), while the remaining respondents are male, accounting for 116 individuals (43%). This gender distribution is broadly reflective of the enrollment patterns in social science and business programs in Indonesian universities, where female students often constitute the majority. The educational background of the respondents covers three departments within the Faculty of Economics and Business at Mulawarman University (FEB Unmul), with the largest proportion being graduates from the Accounting Department (100 individuals, 37%), followed by Management (87 individuals, 32%) and Economics (85 individuals, 31%). This distribution suggests a reasonably balanced representation across the three disciplines, though Accounting graduates are slightly overrepresented, which may reflect higher enrollment numbers or a greater willingness to participate in career-related surveys within that department. In terms of age distribution, the dominant age group falls within the 20 to 25 years range (159 individuals, 58%), while the 26 to 30 years age group represents 105 individuals (39%). Additionally, 6 respondents (2%) fall within the 31 to 35 years range, and 1 respondent each (0.4%) is either under 20 years old or above 35 years old. The predominance of younger respondents is consistent with the purposive sampling criteria and confirms that the sample is primarily composed of early-career graduates who are in the initial stages of establishing their professional identities and careers.

Regarding graduation year, the majority of respondents graduated in 2022 (125 individuals, 46%), followed by those who graduated in 2021 (96 individuals, 35%) and 2020 (51 individuals, 19%). The higher representation of 2022 graduates may reflect a combination of larger graduating cohort sizes and greater accessibility through alumni networks established more recently. In terms of current employment, most respondents work as private employees (137 individuals, 50%), followed by those categorized under

other occupations (69 individuals, 25%), freelancers (25 individuals, 9%), entrepreneurs (19 individuals, 7%), government employees (16 individuals, 6%), and accountants in professional practice (6 individuals, 2%). The predominance of private sector employment aligns with the broader employment landscape in East Kalimantan, where the resource extraction and service industries generate the largest share of formal employment opportunities for business and economics graduates. The diversity of employment types represented in the sample, ranging from formal employment to entrepreneurship and freelancing, also reflects the increasingly varied career pathways available to and pursued by contemporary graduates in Indonesia's evolving labor market.

Table 1 Respondents' Profile

Item	Component	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	116	43%
	Female	156	57%
Major	Economics	85	31%
	Management	87	32%
	Accountancy	100	37%
Age	<20 Years Old	1	0.4%
	20–25 Years Old	159	58%
	26–30 Years Old	105	39%
	31–35 Years Old	6	2%
	>35 Years Old	1	0.4%
Graduate Year	2020	51	19%
	2021	96	35%
	2022	125	46%
Job	Freelancer	25	9%
	Private Employee	137	50%
	Entrepreneur	19	7%
	Accountant	6	2%
	Government Employee	16	6%
	Etc.	69	25%

Source: Primary data, processed (2024)

Outer Loading Results

The first step involves analyzing the eligibility of indicators using outer loading values, as shown in

Table 2. Based on Figure 2 and Table 2, the validity of the indicators is assessed through their outer loading values, which represent the strength of the relationship between each observed indicator and its associated latent construct. Figure 2 displays the path model, illustrating the structural relationships between the three variables communication skill, career adaptability, and career satisfaction and providing a visual representation of the direct and indirect effects among these constructs as estimated by the PLS-SEM algorithm. Table 2 presents the outer loading results for all retained indicators across the three constructs. All indicators demonstrate outer loading values above the minimum threshold of 0.7, confirming that they meet the requirements for indicator reliability and convergent validity at the item level (Hair et al., 2020). For the communication skill construct, indicators COM4 through COM14 yielded outer loading values ranging from 0.730 (COM4) to 0.821 (COM9), with COM8 and COM9 demonstrating the strongest loadings, suggesting that these items most effectively capture the core variance of the communication skill construct. For career adaptability, indicators CA2 through CA8 ranged from 0.747 (CA2) to 0.837 (CA4), with CA4, CA7, and CA8 showing particularly strong loadings, consistent with the well-validated CAAS-SF framework on which these items are based (Maggiori et al., 2017). For career satisfaction, all five indicators (CS1 through CS5) showed strong loadings ranging from 0.797 (CS3) to 0.875 (CS4), confirming that the five dimensions of satisfaction achievement, goal alignment, income, advancement, and skill development are robustly captured by the scale items. Thus, all indicators used in this study are considered valid and eligible for inclusion in subsequent stages of model evaluation.

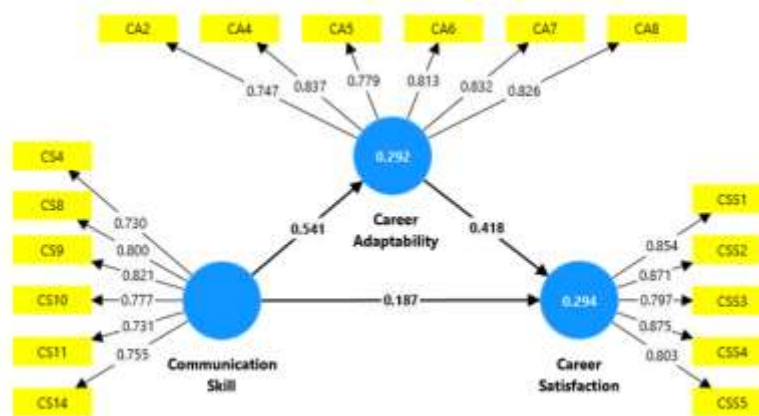


Figure 2 Model Path of Coefficient Output

Table 2 The Result of Outer Loading

Variable	Code	Outer Loading	Description
Communication Skill	COM4	0.730	Eligible
	COM8	0.800	Eligible
	COM9	0.821	Eligible
	COM10	0.777	Eligible

	COM11	0.731	Eligible
	COM14	0.755	Eligible
Career Adaptability	CA2	0.747	Eligible
	CA4	0.837	Eligible
	CA5	0.779	Eligible
	CA6	0.813	Eligible
	CA7	0.832	Eligible
	CA8	0.826	Eligible
Career Satisfaction	CS1	0.854	Eligible
	CS2	0.871	Eligible
	CS3	0.797	Eligible
	CS4	0.875	Eligible
	CS5	0.803	Eligible

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output (2024)

Validity and Reliability Results

Table 3 presents the comprehensive validity and reliability results for the three research constructs: Career Adaptability, Communication Skill, and Career Satisfaction. All constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency, as evidenced by Cronbach's Alpha values that comfortably exceed the threshold of 0.7. Specifically, Career Adaptability achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.892, Communication Skill obtained 0.863, and Career Satisfaction recorded 0.896. These values indicate that the items within each scale are highly correlated with one another and consistently measure their intended underlying construct. Composite Reliability, assessed through both Rho_A (a more precise estimate of construct reliability that avoids the known limitations of Cronbach's Alpha in the PLS context) and Rho_C (the traditional composite reliability coefficient), similarly confirmed strong internal consistency across all three constructs. The Rho_A values were 0.893, 0.867, and 0.901 for Career Adaptability, Communication Skill, and Career Satisfaction, respectively, while the Rho_C values were 0.918, 0.897, and 0.923. All values exceeded the recommended minimum of 0.7, affirming that the constructs are reliably measured (Hair et al., 2019). Convergent validity was further confirmed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which represent the proportion of construct variance that is captured by the indicators relative to measurement error. The AVE values for Career Adaptability (0.650), Communication Skill (0.593), and Career Satisfaction (0.707) all surpassed the threshold of 0.5, indicating that each construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators. Collectively, these results confirm that the measurement instruments used in this study possess good quality in terms of both reliability and validity, and are therefore suitable for use in the structural model evaluation that follows.

Table 3 The Result of Validity and Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (Rho_A)	Composite Reliability (Rho_C)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Description
Career Adaptability	0.892	0.893	0.918	0.650	Eligible
Communication Skill	0.863	0.867	0.897	0.593	Eligible
Career Satisfaction	0.896	0.901	0.923	0.707	Eligible

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output (2024)

Discriminant Validity Results

Table 4 presents the discriminant validity results evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. This criterion requires that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each latent variable, displayed along the diagonal of the correlation matrix, exceeds the inter-construct correlations in the corresponding row and column. The results confirm that each construct's AVE square root is greater than its correlations with the other constructs in the model. Specifically, the square root of AVE for Communication Skill (CS) is 0.770, which exceeds its correlations with Career Adaptability (0.541) and Career Satisfaction (0.413). Similarly, the square root of AVE for Career Adaptability (CA) is 0.806, exceeding its correlation with Career Satisfaction (0.519). Career Satisfaction (CSS) has a square root of AVE of 0.841, which is greater than all other inter-construct correlations in the matrix. These results collectively confirm that each latent variable shares more variance with its own indicators than with those of other constructs, thereby establishing strong discriminant validity for all three constructs (Hair & Alamer, 2022; Hair et al., 2019). The moderate inter-construct correlations observed in the matrix also suggest that, while the three constructs are theoretically and empirically related, they remain sufficiently distinct to justify their treatment as separate constructs in the structural model.

Table 4 The Result of Discriminant Validity

Code	X1 (CS)	X2 (CA)	Y (CSS)
X1 (CS)	0.770		
X2 (CA)	0.541	0.806	
Y (CSS)	0.413	0.519	0.841

Note: Career Adaptability (CA), Communication Skill (CS), Career Satisfaction (CSS)

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output (2024)

R-Square Results

Table 5 presents the R-square results for the two endogenous constructs in the model. Communication skills account for 29.2% of the variance in career adaptability ($R^2 = 0.292$), indicating that approximately one-third of the variability in graduates' career adaptability can be explained by

differences in their communication skill levels. While the remaining 70.8% of variance in career adaptability is attributable to other variables not included in this study such as personality traits, family background, organizational socialization experiences, or broader economic conditions the R^2 value of 0.292 is considered moderate and substantively meaningful in behavioral research (Hair et al., 2019). For the dependent variable career satisfaction, the combined influence of communication skills and career adaptability explains 29.4% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.294$), with the remaining 70.6% associated with other exogenous variables beyond the scope of this model. This level of explanatory power is consistent with findings from comparable studies in the career development literature and reflects the reality that career satisfaction, as a subjective and multidimensional construct, is shaped by a wide range of personal, interpersonal, organizational, and contextual factors. The comparable R^2 values for both endogenous constructs suggest a balanced model structure in which communication skills exert roughly equivalent predictive power over career adaptability as the two predictor variables (communication skills and career adaptability) combined exert over career satisfaction. These structural model results provide initial support for the proposed hypotheses prior to formal significance testing through bootstrapping.

Table 5 The Result of R-Square

Variable	R-Square
Career Adaptability	0.292
Career Satisfaction	0.294

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output (2024)

Hypothesis Testing Results

The final step involves testing the hypotheses using the t-test via bootstrapping (SmartPLS 4). Table 6 shows that all four hypotheses are accepted at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$; $t > 1.96$).

Table 6 The Result of the Hypothesis Test

Variable Relationship	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P-Values	Description
Direct Effect				
Communication Skill → Career Adaptability	0.541	9.666	0.000	Positive, Significant (Accepted)
Career Adaptability → Career Satisfaction	0.418	5.627	0.000	Positive, Significant (Accepted)
Communication Skill → Career Satisfaction	0.187	2.655	0.008	Positive, Significant (Accepted)
Indirect Effect				
Communication Skill → Career	0.226	5.079	0.000	Positive, Significant

Adaptability → Career Satisfaction				(Accepted)
------------------------------------	--	--	--	------------

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output (2024)

The first hypothesis (H1) posited that communication skills positively and significantly affect career adaptability. The results confirm this with a significant t-statistic of 9.666 and a p-value of 0.000, as well as a path coefficient of 0.541, indicating that communication skills are a strong positive predictor of career adaptability. This finding aligns with theoretical perspectives that emphasize the instrumental role of communication in facilitating the development of adaptive resources in the workplace. Effective communication enables individuals to decode environmental feedback, seek mentoring and developmental support, negotiate role transitions, and engage in the exploratory behaviors that are central to career adaptability particularly the dimensions of curiosity and concern (Savickas, 2005). The result is consistent with and extends the findings of Christensen and Rees (2002), who identified communication as foundational to professional effectiveness, and Kara et al. (2021), who specifically confirmed that communication skills predict career adaptability by equipping individuals with the interpersonal and informational tools needed to manage vocational transitions. In the context of East Kalimantan graduates, where professional networks and mentoring relationships may be less accessible than in major metropolitan centers, strong communication skills may serve as a particularly critical compensatory resource that enables individuals to independently build the adaptive capacities required for navigating a structurally evolving labor market.

The second hypothesis (H2) suggested that career adaptability has a positive and significant effect on career satisfaction. The results support this hypothesis with a t-statistic of 5.627 and a p-value of 0.000, and a path coefficient of 0.418, confirming a strong and meaningful positive relationship between the two constructs. This outcome is consistent with the foundational theoretical framework of Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005), which asserts that career adaptability serves as a psychosocial readiness resource that enables individuals to address vocational challenges proactively, manage uncertainty, and align their career trajectories with personal values processes that are fundamentally linked to subjective career satisfaction. Individuals who score highly on the four dimensions of adaptability concern, control, curiosity, and confidence are better positioned to set and pursue meaningful career goals, respond constructively to occupational setbacks, and derive a sense of agency and fulfillment from their professional experiences (Maggiori et al., 2017). The finding aligns with and replicates results reported by Yu et al. (2017) and Zacher (2015), who confirm that adaptability is a key determinant of career fulfillment in uncertain and rapidly changing work environments. It also resonates with the conclusions of Chan et al. (2016) and Nauman et al. (2021), who document the adaptability-satisfaction linkage in construction and international project management contexts, respectively, further attesting to the cross-industry generalizability of this relationship. The result is particularly meaningful in the context of post-pandemic career development among Indonesian graduates, where economic disruptions and labor market restructuring have heightened the premium placed on adaptive professional orientations.

The third hypothesis (H3) proposed that communication skills have a direct positive and significant effect on career satisfaction. With a t-statistic of 2.655 and a p-value of 0.008, and a path coefficient of 0.187, this hypothesis is also supported, indicating that individuals with stronger communication skills

tend to report higher levels of career satisfaction independent of their level of career adaptability. This finding is theoretically consistent with the view that communication skills contribute to career satisfaction through multiple pathways, including the facilitation of positive interpersonal relationships, the ability to effectively advocate for oneself in performance evaluations and promotion decisions, and the capacity to communicate one's professional achievements and value to relevant organizational stakeholders. Effective communicators are more likely to be recognized and rewarded for their contributions, to receive constructive developmental feedback, and to build the social capital and professional networks that create access to new career opportunities all of which are associated with greater career satisfaction (Jerome, 2017). This finding corresponds with and extends the evidence provided by de Sousa Mata et al. (2021), who found a significant direct effect of communication skills on career satisfaction among health professionals, and Gurbuz et al. (2016), who documented similar results among academic research assistants. The relatively modest path coefficient (0.187) compared to that of career adaptability (0.418) suggests that while communication skills do directly contribute to satisfaction, a substantial portion of their influence on this outcome is mediated through enhanced adaptive resources a relationship formally examined in H4.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) examined the mediating role of career adaptability in the relationship between communication skills and career satisfaction. The results confirm this mediation effect with a t-statistic of 5.079, a p-value of 0.000, and a specific indirect effect coefficient of 0.226. This finding indicates that communication skills influence career satisfaction not only directly but also indirectly through the mediating mechanism of career adaptability. The magnitude of the indirect effect (0.226) is notably larger than the direct effect (0.187), suggesting that career adaptability amplifies and transmits a substantial portion of the influence of communication skills on satisfaction. This partial mediation pattern is theoretically meaningful, as it indicates that while communication skills have an independent contribution to career satisfaction, their most powerful effect operates by strengthening the adaptive resources that graduates use to navigate vocational challenges and transitions. Individuals with strong communication abilities are better equipped to develop the concern, control, curiosity, and confidence that constitute career adaptability, and these heightened adaptive resources in turn generate greater career satisfaction by facilitating goal attainment, resilience, and a sense of agency in one's professional trajectory (Tahiry & Ekmekcioglu, 2023; Zacher, 2015). This mediated pathway enriches theoretical understanding by specifying a clear process through which soft skills translate into subjective career success, and has important practical implications for how educational and professional development interventions should be designed to maximize graduate career outcomes. The finding is consistent with Savickas and Porfeli (2012), who emphasize the role of preparatory resources including interpersonal and communicative competencies in activating the adaptive readiness that underlies career construction.

These results collectively align with and advance the existing theoretical literature on communication, career adaptability, and career satisfaction. The findings affirm that communication skills are a crucial antecedent of both career adaptability and career satisfaction, supporting the foundational arguments of Christensen and Rees (2002) regarding the occupational significance of communication competencies and the theoretical framework of Maggiori et al. (2017) regarding the role of adaptive resources in career success. The career construction perspective offered by Savickas (2005) provides a coherent theoretical basis for interpreting all four confirmed paths: individuals construct satisfying careers by developing adaptive readiness resources, and communication skills are a key antecedent that fuels this

construction process. Moreover, the partial mediation pattern identified in H4 meaningfully extends the understanding of how communication skills translate into subjective career success, delineating a specific mechanism through which soft skills generate career fulfillment by first building adaptive capacity. The study also contributes to resolving existing inconsistencies in the literature. While the findings of Othman et al. (2022) and Academy (2017) suggest that these relationships may be attenuated in certain contexts, the present results, drawn from a regional Indonesian cohort of early-career graduates, indicate that communication skills and career adaptability are particularly salient predictors of satisfaction in settings characterized by economic transition, regional labor market challenges, and post-pandemic uncertainties. This contextual specificity suggests that the strength of these relationships may be contingent on structural labor market factors, reinforcing the importance of conducting career studies in diverse geographic and institutional settings rather than relying exclusively on findings from Western or metropolitan samples.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that communication skills and career adaptability play an important and interconnected role in determining career satisfaction among early-career graduates. Based on data collected from 272 graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business at Mulawarman University, all four hypotheses were empirically supported, providing a coherent and theoretically grounded account of how soft skills and adaptive resources shape subjective career outcomes in a post-pandemic regional labor market. First, communication skills comprising English language proficiency, oral and interpersonal competencies, and written communication abilities were found to exert a positive and significant influence on career adaptability ($t = 9.666$, $p = 0.000$, $\beta = 0.541$). This finding confirms that effective communication serves as a foundational resource that equips individuals with the relational, informational, and cognitive tools needed to develop the adaptive orientations of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence that characterize career adaptability (Christensen & Rees, 2002; Kara et al., 2021; Savickas, 2005). Second, career adaptability was found to positively and significantly predict career satisfaction ($t = 5.627$, $p = 0.000$, $\beta = 0.418$), confirming its role as a critical psychosocial resource that enables graduates to navigate vocational transitions, pursue aligned career goals, and derive fulfillment from their professional achievements (Maggiori et al., 2017; Nauman et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2017; Zacher, 2015). Third, communication skills were found to have a direct positive and significant effect on career satisfaction ($t = 2.655$, $p = 0.008$, $\beta = 0.187$), demonstrating that effective communication independently enhances career outcomes by facilitating professional recognition, social capital, and alignment between professional experiences and personal aspirations (de Sousa Mata et al., 2021; Gurbuz et al., 2016). Fourth and most notably, career adaptability was confirmed as a partial mediating mechanism through which communication skills indirectly enhance career satisfaction ($t = 5.079$, $p = 0.000$, indirect effect = 0.226), with the indirect effect exceeding the direct effect in magnitude and suggesting that a substantial portion of the career satisfaction benefit of communication skills operates through the amplification of adaptive career resources (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Tahiry & Ekmekcioglu, 2023).

These findings carry significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study contributes to the career construction literature by demonstrating that communication skills function as an antecedent of career adaptability in a non-Western, regional context, thereby extending empirical support for Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005) beyond the predominantly Western samples in which it

was originally developed and tested. The partial mediation pattern identified adds nuance to the understanding of how soft skills generate subjective career success, delineating a specific pathway through which communicative competencies translate into career fulfillment via heightened adaptive resources. The study also contributes to resolving empirical inconsistencies documented in the literature (Academy, 2017; Othman et al., 2022) by demonstrating that these relationships are meaningful and statistically robust within the specific socioeconomic and cultural conditions of regional Indonesia. Practically, the findings underscore the importance of integrating structured communication skills training into the undergraduate curriculum of business and economics programs, particularly at regional universities where graduates face additional barriers related to geographic distance from metropolitan labor markets, limited access to professional networks, and the linguistic demands of increasingly globalized employment. Institutions in emerging and regional economies could benefit from designing pedagogical approaches that explicitly link communication training with adaptive career development activities, such as career exploration workshops, mentoring programs, and reflective professional development exercises aimed at cultivating concern, curiosity, control, and confidence. Employers and career service professionals in East Kalimantan and similar regional contexts can also draw practical guidance from these findings, recognizing communication skills and adaptability as key competencies to assess and develop in early-career employees to promote long-term career satisfaction and organizational retention. The findings also hold relevance for the ongoing national conversation in Indonesia about graduate employability, where the gap between educational outputs and labor market demands remains a persistent policy concern. Prioritizing soft skills alongside technical competencies in higher education programming may yield significant dividends in graduate career outcomes and workforce readiness.

REFERENCES

- Academy, N. Z. (2017). The effects of work social support and career adaptability on career satisfaction and turnover intentions. 3, 337–355. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2016.12>
- Analysis, T., & Management, S. (2022). Technology Analysis & Strategic Management: Adaptive expertise, career adaptability, and career success of R & D personnel. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09537325.2022.2053517>
- Awang, H., & Daud, Z. (2015). Improving a communication skill through the learning approach towards the environment of engineering classroom. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 195, 480–486. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.241>
- Baghcheghi, N., Koohestani, H. R., & Rezaei, K. (2011). A comparison of the cooperative learning and traditional learning methods in theory classes on nursing students' communication skill with patients at clinical settings. *Nurse Education Today*, 31(8), 877–882. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2011.01.006>
- Behavior, V., & Behavior, V. (2020). Career adaptability and career success.
- Burleson, B. R., & Denton, W. H. (1997). The relationship between communication skill and marital satisfaction: Some moderating effects. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59(4), 884. <https://doi.org/10.2307/353790>

- Chan, S. H. J., Mai, X., Kuok, O. M. K., & Kong, S. H. (2016). The influence of satisfaction and promotability on the relation between career adaptability and turnover intentions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 92, 167–175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2015.12.003>
- Christensen, D. S., & Rees, D. (2002). An analysis of the business communication skills. *Mountain Plains Journal of Business and Technology*, 3(1), 1–11.
- de Sousa Mata, Á. N., de Azevedo, K. P. M., Braga, L. P., de Medeiros, G. C. B. S., de Oliveira Segundo, V. H., Bezerra, I. N. M., Pimenta, I. D. S. F., Nicolás, I. M., & Piuvezam, G. (2021). Training in communication skills for self-efficacy of health professionals: A systematic review. *Human Resources for Health*, 19(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-021-00574-3>
- Gopalan, N., & Pattusamy, M. (2020). Role of work and family factors in predicting career satisfaction and life success. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(14), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17145096>
- Gurbuz, F. G., Ergun, H. S., & Teraman, S. B. S. (2016). Power of soft skills determining academic career satisfaction: Empirical study on research assistants. 2, 703–714. <https://doi.org/10.17261/Pressacademia.2016118692>
- Hair, J., & Alamer, A. (2022). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in second language and education research: Guidelines using an applied example. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rmal.2022.100027>
- Hair, J. F., Howard, M. C., & Nitzl, C. (2020). Assessing measurement model quality in PLS-SEM using confirmatory composite analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 109, 101–110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.11.069>
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>
- Iksan, Z. H., Zakaria, E., Meerah, T. S. M., Osman, K., Lian, D. K. C., Mahmud, S. N. D., & Krish, P. (2012). Communication skills among university students. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 59, 71–76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.09.247>
- Jerome, C. (2017). Employers' views on the importance of English proficiency and communication skill for employability in Malaysia. 7(2), 315–327.
- Kara, A., & Eryilmaz, A. (2021). A career adaptability model for psychological counselors. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 17(6), 32–53. <https://doi.org/10.29329/ijpe.2021.382.3>
- Kim, J. (2022). Development and effectiveness verification of an online career adaptability program for undergraduate students. 13(March). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.857111>
- Maggiori, C., Rossier, J., & Savickas, M. L. (2017). Career Adapt-Abilities Scale–Short Form (CAAS-SF): Construction and validation. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 25(2), 312–325. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072714565856>

- Meilianti, S., Matuluko, A., Ibrahim, N., Uzman, N., & Bates, I. (2022). A global study on job and career satisfaction of early-career pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists. *Exploratory Research in Clinical and Social Pharmacy*, 5, 100110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rcsop.2022.100110>
- Nauman, S., Zheng, C., & Ahmad, R. (2021). Employee career outlook and turnover: Unleashing the roles of career adaptability and career satisfaction in international construction projects. *Journal of Construction Engineering and Management*, 147(11). [https://doi.org/10.1061/\(asce\)co.1943-7862.0002150](https://doi.org/10.1061/(asce)co.1943-7862.0002150)
- Othman, R., Alias, N. E., Mohd Nazir, S. S. A., Koe, W.-L., & Rahim, A. (2022). The influence of employability skills toward career adaptability. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(7). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v12-i7/14445>
- Robertson, C., & Abkhezr, P. (2024). Reconstructing stories of career adaptability through the integrative structured interview for undergraduate university students. 32(3), 462–481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10690727231205302>
- Salleh, A. M. M., Omar, K., Aburumman, O. J., Mat, N. H. N., & Almhairat, M. A. (2020). The impact of career planning and career satisfaction on employees' turnover intention. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 8(1), 218–232. [https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2020.8.1\(14\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2020.8.1(14))
- Savickas, M. L. (2005). The theory and practice of career construction. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (pp. 42–70). John Wiley & Sons.
- Savickas, M. L., & Porfeli, E. J. (2012). Career Adapt-Abilities Scale: Construction, reliability, and measurement equivalence across 13 countries. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(3), 661–673. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2012.01.011>
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2010). *Research methods for business: A skill building approach* (5th ed.). Wiley.
- Spurk, D., Abele, A. E., & Volmer, J. (2011). The career satisfaction scale: Longitudinal measurement invariance and latent growth analysis. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 84(2), 315–326. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8325.2011.02028.x>
- Taherdoost, H. (2022). What are different research approaches? Comprehensive review of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method research, their applications, types, and limitations. *Journal of Management Science & Engineering Research*, 5(1), 53–63. <https://doi.org/10.30564/jmser.v5i1.4538>
- Tahiry, M. A., & Ekmekcioglu, E. B. (2023). Supervisor support, career satisfaction, and career adaptability of healthcare sector employees. *Vilakshan – XIMB Journal of Management*, 20(2), 292–301. <https://doi.org/10.1108/xjm-09-2021-0247>
- Technicaluniversity, G., & Faculty, M. (2018). Impact of career adaptability on employee performance. 7(11), 24–28.
- Tien, H. S., & Wang, Y. (2018). Career adaptability, employability, and career resilience of Asian people. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66954-0>

- Tripathy, M. (2020). Relevance of soft skills in career success. *MIER Journal of Educational Studies, Trends & Practices*, 10(1), 91–102. <https://doi.org/10.52634/mier/2020/v10/i1/1354>
- Wang, N., & Yan, Z. (2023). Career adaptability and academic achievement among Chinese high school students: A person-centered longitudinal study. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-023-01884-6>
- Yang, J., Yang, F., & Gao, N. (2022). Enhancing career satisfaction: The roles of spiritual leadership, basic need satisfaction, and power distance orientation. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-00712-5>
- Yu, H., Guan, X., & Zheng, X. (2017). Career adaptability with or without career identity: How career adaptability leads to organizational success and individual career success. August. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072717727454>
- Zacher, H. (2015). Daily manifestations of career adaptability: Relationships with job and career outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 91, 76–86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2015.09.003>.