

BAB I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The world of work in Indonesia continues to undergo changes in line with shifts in economic structure and increasing competition in the labour market. Changes in the world of work require individuals to be well prepared for their careers through career maturity and career decision-making skills, as career decision-making and career maturity have been shown to have a significant impact on individual career preparation behaviour (Jee & Yang, 2024). This condition is also felt by vocational school graduates who have entered the world of work because they are faced with the demands of adjusting to the work system and organisational culture.

Vocational high schools are formal educational institutions in Indonesia that play a strategic role in preparing skilled workers through vocational education models. Based on Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 29 of 1990 concerning Secondary Education Article 3 paragraph 2, Vocational High Schools have a primary focus on honing professional attitudes and equipping students to be ready to face the world of work. Research on vocational high schools graduates who are already working shows that the process of adapting to tasks, colleagues, and the work environment is a challenge in the early stages of employment (Afrizal, 2021). Work experience during vocational education plays a role in shaping career

adaptability after graduation and employment, making career adaptability an important factor in the success of vocational high schools graduates in the world of work (Mahfud et al., 2024). This condition shows that the career adaptability of vocational high schools graduates needs further attention, which can be seen from national employment data.

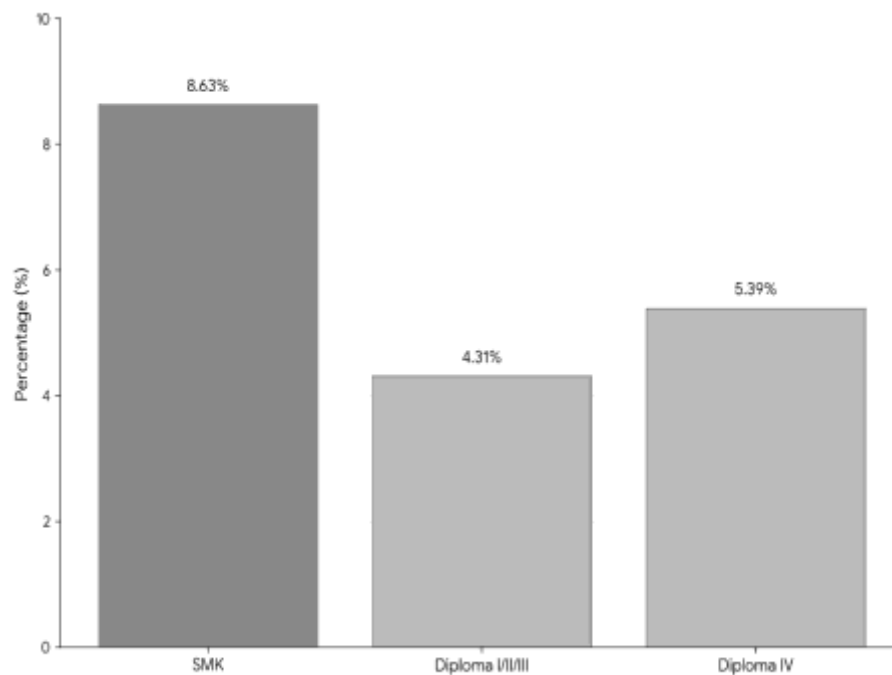


Figure 1. 1 Indonesia's Open Unemployment Rate in February 2025

Source: Central Statistics Agency (2025)

According to the image, vocational school graduates have the greatest open jobless rate (8.63%), which is higher than other levels of education such as diploma. The Central Statistics Agency reported that Indonesia's open unemployment rate in February 2025 was 4.82%, indicating that employment issues remain a national concern. The data shows that vocational high schools

graduates face greater challenges in entering and maintaining their position in the world of work. This condition indicates that the success of vocational graduates is not only determined by technical competence but also by the individual readiness to plan and adapt to their career development. This phenomenon is related to the value of professional adaptability as the ability to deal with changes and dynamics in the workplace after completing vocational education.

SMK PGRI Wlingi was selected as the research location because it offers several vocational programmes, namely Mechanical Engineering, Automotive Engineering, Heavy Equipment Engineering, Computer Engineering, Software Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Beauty and Hair Care Department, which cover distinct fields of work across both the industrial and service sectors. Of all these programmes, the Beauty and Hair Care Department course was chosen because it is directly related to the field of cosmetology, which focuses on skin and hair care and falls within the service sector that is continuously growing and highly competitive. According to data from the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Indonesia, the national cosmetics and personal care industry has exhibited constant growth in recent years and is dominated by small and medium-sized firms, thereby creating employment opportunities whilst simultaneously intensifying competition in the sector.

The beauty industry is a sector heavily driven by trends and social media exposure, which means graduates need a higher level of career adaptability

than in other fields, as market demands change rapidly. This situation requires jobseekers to constantly update their skills and be able to adapt to the industry's dynamics. On the other hand, it was found that some jobseekers who are graduates of Beauty and Hair Care Department at SMK PGRI Wlingi still face difficulties in securing employment and do not yet fully understand the actual working conditions and demands of the beauty industry, such as service standards and the realities of working in the field. The selection of jobseekers for the 2022–2024 period was based on the consideration that they have entered the workforce or started their own businesses, and have thus experienced career dynamics first-hand, making them relevant research subjects for investigating professional decision-making, career maturity, and career adaptability during career changes and development following the completion of their education at SMK PGRI Wlingi.

As part of efforts to improve graduate quality and adapt to industry demands, every job seeker will inevitably face various real challenges in the field, such as the rapidly changing dynamics of beauty trends and working conditions that require extra physical endurance. Educational institutions hope that their graduates will pursue linear professional careers in line with the skills they have learned over three years. However, in practice not all job seekers exhibit behaviour or career choices that are consistent with their training. There is a tendency for some graduates to experience difficulties in transitioning, characterised by an inability to cope with the pressures of working in a salon

or beauty clinic, leading them to prefer to move to other sectors of employment that are not relevant to their skills. This symptom of unpreparedness in managing transitions, changes, and obstacles in one's career indicates a problem with an individual psychological resources known as Career Adaptability (Savickas and Porfeli, 2012).

According to Savickas (2005), professional adaptability is an individual's psychosocial capability to deal with career development responsibilities, job transitions, and changes in the workplace. Career adaptability refers to an individual's ability to plan their career, make effective choices, seize opportunities, and confidently face adversities. Individuals with high levels of professional adaptability likely to be better equipped to cope with changes and job transitions (Wang et al., 2025), hence it is a key feature in the career transition process. According to Savickas and Porfeli (2012), Career Adaptability is formed by three major indicators: concern, control, and confidence. These indicators represent the psychosocial resources that enable individuals to prepare for and manage current as well as future career tasks, transitions, and challenges. Concern refers to an individual's attitude and understanding of their future job. Control indicates the ability to accept responsibility for career decisions. Confidence is the belief in one's capacity to overcome challenges and achieve career goals. In line with this perspective, Johnston (2020) explains that Career Adaptability reflects the psychological resources that help individuals manage both present and future career

transitions, thereby enabling them to cope effectively with the current job market is becoming increasingly complex and uncertain.

One important indicator of Career Adaptability is Concern, which refers to an individual level of awareness, planning, and preparation for their future career. This indicator involves the ability to anticipate future career opportunities and challenges, as well as the willingness to actively prepare for them through thoughtful career planning and goal setting. People with a high level of concern tend to demonstrate a stronger future orientation and are more proactive in preparing themselves to enter the workforce. However, the Concern indicator appears to be one of the challenges faced by job seekers from the Beauty and Hair Care Department of SMK PGRI Wlingi, as reflected in several observable situations that indicate a relatively low level of future orientation among these job seekers. This condition suggests that some graduates may lack adequate preparation and long-term planning for their career paths, which can ultimately affect their ability to meet the demands and dynamics of the labour market.

If this condition persists, it may hinder graduates' ability to navigate the school-to-work transition effectively. A limited level of career concern can reduce individuals' awareness of future career opportunities and emerging industry requirements, resulting in a weaker capacity to anticipate and prepare for occupational changes. Consequently, graduates may become more reactive than proactive in managing their careers, relying on immediate employment

opportunities rather than pursuing positions that align with their long-term career aspirations. Without a strong future orientation, jobseekers may encounter difficulties in identifying relevant upskilling opportunities, expanding their professional networks, and pursuing sustainable career development.

Table 1. 1 Jobseeker Waiting Period for SMK PGRI Wlingi Graduates in 2022-2024

Year of Graduation	Waiting Period	Linear Sector Within The Scope Cosmetology	Sektor Non-Linear Within The Scope Cosmetology	Total
2022	< 1 Month	16	2	18
	1 – 2 Month	12	4	16
	3 – 4 Month	5	8	13
	> 5 Month	3	5	8
Subtotal		36	19	55
2023	< 1 Month	9	2	11
	1 – 2 Month	9	6	15
	3 – 4 Month	4	6	10
	> 5 Month	1	3	4
Subtotal		23	17	40
2024	< 1 Month	5	1	6
	1 – 2 Month	4	4	8
	3 – 4 Month	2	6	8
	> 5 Month	1	12	13
Subtotal		12	23	35
Grand Total		71	59	130

Source: BKK SMK PGRI Wlingi Document (2026)

According to the statistics in Table 1.1, the absorption of job seekers at

SMK PGRI Wlingi is separated into two primary groups, namely the linear sector within the scope of cosmetology and the non-linear sector that deviates from their educational background. Individuals with low future orientation or concern for the future tend to have lower Career Adaptability, making them less able to maintain their career direction when facing difficulties in the job search process (Monteiro et al., 2019). This condition proves the low indicator of concern for the future, where the longer the waiting period for work, the greater the tendency for job seekers to leave their professional path. The absorption trend in the linear sector also shows a significant decline in consistency from 36 graduates in 2022 to 12 graduates in 2024. This situation reached a critical point in the 2024 cohort, where despite having the smallest number of 35 graduates, 12 of them were forced to move to the non-linear sector after a long waiting period of more 5 months.

This phenomenon is highly relevant as an indication of low Concern, which is an individual ability to see the future and realise that what they do today will have an impact on tomorrow. This condition is reinforced by a literature study by Chen et al. (2020), which proves through scientific mapping that Career Adaptability is a crucial element in successful job transitions, where a lack of Concern for the future often triggers reactive adaptation behaviour amid the uncertainty of the job market. The weakness of this Concern indicator is directly related to the employment distribution profile of graduates, where individuals who do not have a clear future orientation tend to be trapped in

instant employment that is not relevant to their skills and expertise. Concern is one of its important qualities, reflecting an individual's ability to anticipate and prepare for future career-related duties and obstacles. A low level of concern may limit an individual's readiness to plan their career development strategically and increase the likelihood of accepting employment opportunities without considering long-term career objectives.

Table 1. 2 Distribution of Absorption Work of SMK PGRI Wlingi in 2022-2024

Year of Graduation	Industrial Sector	Name of Workplace
2022	Within The Scope Cosmetology	Jonny Salon, Rins Royal Salon, Salon Tiara Ayu, Laurencia MUA, Kay Skincare
	Outside Scope Cosmetology	Building Supplies Store, Distributor Administrator, Shop Assistant
2023	Within The Scope Cosmetology	Idatrizanti Salon, Zenny Salon, Kendedes Salon, RH Glow Clinic, Rahma Salon
	Outside Scope Cosmetology	PT Digital Artha (Illustrator), Ayam Geprek Miroso, Sinarmakmur Wholesale, Cigarette Factory
2024	Within The Scope Cosmetology	Martha Tilaar, Salon Zahra, Yeni Salon, Yasmin Salon, Spa Narsya
	Outside Scope Cosmetology	Roso Cigarette Factory, Cake Tart Dessert, Wholesale Shop, Shop Employees

Source: BKK SMK PGRI Wlingi Document (2026).

The data in Table 1.2 shows a rather contrasting fragmentation of alumni career paths over the past three years, where the increasing trend of mobility to

the manufacturing and retail sectors reflects low Concern indicators among job seekers. This phenomenon indicates that most job seekers tend to make pragmatic career transition decisions for short-term economic stability, while neglecting their future professional orientation and the relevance of the beauty management skills they have learned. The inconsistency of this absorption data is empirical evidence supported by Haenggli and Hirschi (2020), who state that career concern serves as a planning resource that determines objective career success. The weakness of this indicator causes jobseekers to fail to align their work decisions with their competencies, so that the non-linear work distribution profile in the table directly confirms the existence of obstacles in the career adaptability process of graduates in the field.

As a vocational education institution, SMK PGRI Wlingi certainly hopes that all of its graduates can immediately work in the beauty industry in accordance with the skills they have learned during their three years of education. With these skills, job seekers are expected to have a strong mentality and be well prepared to compete in professional salons and other beauty industries. However, in reality, some job seekers take steps that are not in line with this goal, such as choosing to switch professions to become factory workers or shop employees. This phenomenon of moving to jobs that are not in line with their field of expertise shows that some job seekers have lost their career direction and are unable to maintain their professional aspirations. This condition can be influenced by the level of career maturity because Career

maturity represents an individual's ability to comprehend themselves and make career decisions based on their future employment. According to research, people with higher levels of Career Maturity are better prepared to deal with career transitions and adapt to the demands of the workplace.

Career Maturity is an idea coined by Super (1957) that explains an individual's readiness to confront career development responsibilities based on their age and life stage. job Maturity refers to an individual's ability to comprehend themselves, investigate job possibilities, prepare for their future work life, and make sound career decisions. Individuals with a high level of Career Maturity have a definite career path and are psychologically prepared to enter the workforce. In the transition phase from education to the world of work, Career Maturity serves as the basis for determining work choices and maintaining career decisions that have been made. These findings are supported by research by Putri et al. (2024), which shows that Career Maturity has a significant effect on the work readiness of vocational education graduates. The study explains that individuals with high Career Maturity are better able to adapt to the demands of their first job and tend to stay longer in their first job. This shows that Career Maturity plays an important role in shaping the career readiness and work adaptation of vocational school graduates.

In this study, career maturity was measured using the Career Maturity Scale by Zhang et al. (2006), which comprises three main indicators. Firstly, Career Value, which measures the extent to which individuals recognise the

importance of long-term career goals and priorities. Second, Career Independence, which assesses an individual ability to make decisions independently and take responsibility for their choices. Finally, Career Decisiveness, which measures the firmness and clarity of an individual goals in making career choices to reduce hesitation when entering the world of work.

One indication of the low level of Career Independence among jobseekers at SMK PGRI Wlingi is the continued influence of external factors in determining their future career direction. This phenomenon reflects a tendency among some graduates to base career decisions on the opinions and expectations of family members, friends, or their surrounding environment.

Table 1. 3 Details of Actions Indicators Career Independence Jobseeker SMK PGRI Wlingi in 2022-2024

No	Action	Number of Respondents
1.	Following Friends in Choosing a Job	7
2.	Choosing Work due to Urgent Economic Demands	4
3.	Dependence on External Decisions	4
4.	Making Your Own Choices	5
Total		20

Source: Data processed by researchers (2026)

Based on the data in Table 1.3, the low dimension of Career Independence among job seekers at SMK PGRI Wlingi can be seen from the dominance of external influences in the career decision-making process. As an

indicator of interpersonal Career Maturity, Career Independence should demonstrate an individual ability to determine their career path independently without relying on social pressure from their surroundings. However, in practice external variables like family and peers often impact professional selections, which can shape or even direct a person's career choices. This is evidenced by the fact that 7 respondents simply followed their friends' choices in applying for jobs in order to remain in the same group (conformity), while 4 other respondents showed dependence on external decisions, such as cancelling plans to work in the beauty industry due to not obtaining permission from their parents or following their family's instructions to work in another field. This low level of interpersonal independence causes job seekers to lose authority over their professional choices, where their future direction is determined more by social influences than their own aspirations.

This is in line with Liu, Chong, & Han (2024), who emphasise that Career Maturity plays a critical part in an individual's capacity to create the right career decisions and adapt to job demands. Interpersonal dependence and low self-control over one's career path not only cause attitudinal problems but also directly impact the quality of job seekers' career decision-making. When individuals are unable to break free from the influence of others and tend to be resigned to their circumstances, their decision-making process becomes subjective and poorly planned. This then creates obstacles at the technical stage of decision making, such as a lack of initiative to independently seek out job

information and an inability to solve problems when their desired career choices do not match the reality in the field.

Career Decision-making is a rational and systematic thought process developed by John O. Crites (1969) to explain how individuals determine their career path based on self-understanding and available opportunities. This theory emphasises that the right career decision is not just a momentary choice, but the result of an objective assessment of personal potential and an understanding of the consequences of each choice made. Individuals who have mature decision-making skills will have a clearer and more stable direction in life, as they are able to responsibly align their potential with the realities of the working world. Research by Şeker (2025) demonstrates that the ability to make professional decisions supported by self-confidence in selecting a job has an essential role in minimizing career uncertainty and enhancing individuals' readiness to confront changes in their career path.

In its implementation, this process is measured through three main indicators, namely Self-Appraisal, Occupational Information, and Problem Solving. Self-Appraisal relates to an individual ability to recognise their interests and strengths, while Occupational Information requires individuals to actively research qualifications and real labour market conditions. Finally, Problem Solving dictates the extent of people ability to overcome adversities or conflicts that arise during the career selection process. Kulcsár et al. (2020) explain that difficulties in Career Decision-making are influenced by a lack of

clarity in career goals, limited job information, and low individual readiness to face the consequences of career decisions. These variables directly affect an individual's capacity to adjust to job changes and work environment expectations.

The low quality of Career Decision-making among job seekers from SMK PGRI Wlingi is clearly evident in the Occupational Information indicator. This indicator is crucial because accurate job information is the main foundation for ensuring that decisions are not speculative. For vocational school graduates, maturity in decision-making should be measured by the individual efforts to conduct in-depth research on job responsibilities, working conditions, and salary schemes. However, the reality in the field shows that job seekers tend to make superficial decisions, prioritising the prestige or physical appearance of the workplace over studying the applicable work regulations and contract agreements. Research by Ebner and Paul (2023) demonstrates that adaptive professional decision-making processes are positively associated to career adaptability because individuals who can process career information efficiently have a greater level of professional Adaptability.

The phenomenon of career choices based solely on the physical aspects of a company is reinforced by tracer study data showing the employment patterns of alumni in linear and non-linear sectors over the past three years. The inconsistency of these career paths indicates that job seekers tend to make speculative decisions without conducting in-depth research on the workload

and compensation system that applies. This proves the low quality of Occupational Information, where alumni prioritise the prestige of certain industrial sectors over understanding the actual responsibilities of the profession.

The high level of career volatility in this non-linear sector is triggered by a mismatch between the information received by job seekers and the reality of the workload in the beauty industry. Informants stated:

"These young people often just want to work in salons that look cool and fancy in big cities, but they don't find out what the daily workload is like there. They are shocked when they start working and find that the hours are very long and there is often overtime. They are attracted by the big name of the place without considering that the high salary is actually based on a commission system, so most of it comes from a percentage of each client's treatment."

Source: Productive Teacher Beauty and Hair Care Department at SMK PGRI Wlingi (2026)

The disparity in perceptions regarding the wage system can be visualized by comparing the initial expectations of prospective employees with the actual compensation structures prevalent in the beauty industry. Based on preliminary observations, the following simulation illustrates the divergent wage schemes that frequently induce a reality shock among jobseekers. Graduates often enter the labor market anticipating a fixed monthly salary, yet they frequently encounter performance-based remuneration such as commission-driven systems. This misalignment poses a significant challenge that requires a high

degree of career adaptability to navigate the resulting financial uncertainty. Consequently, this wage tension serves as a critical determinant for jobseekers in deciding whether to persist in the cosmetology sector or pursue more stable employment in other fields. The comparison between the regional minimum wage (UMK) and salaries across different sectors shows that expected income standards are not always aligned with actual conditions in the field, especially in the beauty industry where earnings tend to be variable and less stable. This situation leads job seekers to reconsider their career choices, whether to remain in the cosmetology field with uncertain income or move to other jobs that offer more stable and predictable earnings.

Table 1. 4 Comparison of Minimum Wages and Average Salaries between the Beauty Industry and Non-Linear Jobs (Factory and Retail Workers)

Region	UMK	Average Salary	
		Beauty Industry	Non-Beauty Industry
Surabaya City	Rp. 4.961.753	Rp 2.500.000 – Rp 3.500.000	Rp 2.500.000 – Rp 5.000.000
Malang City	Rp. 3.507.693	Rp 2.000.000 – Rp 3.000.000	Rp 2.000.000 – Rp 4.000.000
Blitar City	Rp. 2.481.450	Rp1.000.000 – Rp 2.000.000	Rp 1.500.000 – Rp 2.500.000
Blitar Regency	Rp. 2.413.974	Rp 800.000 – Rp 2.000.000	Rp 1.000.000 – Rp 2.500.000

Source: Results of Researcher Interviews and Observations, 2026.

The data in table 1.4 presents a comparison between the regional minimum wage (UMK) and the average salaries in the beauty industry and non-

beauty sectors such as factory and retail jobs across several regions in East Java, showing that earnings in the beauty industry generally fall below the UMK and tend to be lower and more variable compared to non-beauty jobs that follow more standardized wage systems. This comparison is relevant to the occupational information indicator because it reflects how well job seekers understand key aspects of employment, particularly salary structures, income stability, and working conditions across different sectors. The gap between UMK standards and actual earnings in the beauty industry highlights the importance of accurate job-related information in forming realistic career expectations. Job seekers inability to align their income expectations with the actual workload indicates a lack of understanding of job information. The lack of research on commission systems and working hours causes job seekers to experience a reality shock when they realize that a prestigious workplace does not always equate to easy tasks or a high net income.

This information gap leads to short-lived career decisions. Job seekers tend to take reactive steps to resign in a short period of time because they feel pressured by industry demands that they did not anticipate. In addition, research by Söner and Yılmaz (2025) found that career decision-making components are related to stronger self-efficacy in navigating career transitions and adjusting to changes in career paths. These findings indicate that the ability to make mature career decisions is a major factor in shaping the career adaptability of vocational school job seekers.

Previous studies have shown that career maturity, career decision making, and career adaptability are closely related in the process of individual career development. Furthermore, Rahim et al. (2021) found that Career Maturity and Career Decision-Making self-efficacy have a significant effect on Career Adaptability. Then, Stead et al. (2021) identified a positive correlation between Career Adaptability and Career Decision-Making self-efficacy. This is in line with the findings of Pang et al. (2021) and Leung et al. (2021), which prove that Career Adaptability acts as a mediator in reducing barriers to Career Decision-Making. Thus, these research results confirm that Career Maturity and Career Decision-Making have an important contribution in increasing individual Career Adaptability.

Based on information and data obtained from job seekers majoring in Beauty and Hair Care at SMK PGRI Wlingi, there is a phenomenon related to job seekers ability to determine their career path, the suitability of jobs to their competencies, and their ability to adapt to job changes. This condition shows variations in the levels of Career Decision-Making and Career Maturity among job seekers, which have an impact on their Career Adaptability. Thus, this phenomenon forms the basis for conducting this study with a title chosen in accordance with the focus of the study, namely **"The Influence of Career Maturity and Career Decision-Making on Career Adaptability among Cosmetology Jobseekers in 2022–2024 at SMK PGRI Wlingi"**.

1.2 Problem Statement

1. Does Career Maturity influence Career Adaptability among cosmetology jobseekers 2022–2024 at SMK PGRI Wlingi?
2. Does Career Decision-making influence Career Adaptability among cosmetology jobseekers 2022–2024 at SMK PGRI Wlingi?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the effect of Career Maturity on Career Adaptability among cosmetology jobseekers 2022–2024 at SMK PGRI Wlingi.
2. To analyze the influence of Career Decision-making on Career Adaptability among cosmetology jobseekers 2022–2024 at SMK PGRI Wlingi.

1.4 Benefits of Research

1. Theoretical Benefits
 - a. This study is expected to enrich the study of human resource management and career guidance, particularly in vocational education. The results of this study provide empirical evidence on the role of Career Maturity and Career Decision-making in improving the Career Adaptability of vocational high school job seekers.
 - b. The findings of this study can also reinforce the application of Career Construction Theory and Career Development Theory, particularly among vocational school graduates in the field of beauty.

2. Practical Benefits

a. For Schools

The results of this study can serve as a basis for schools in developing more targeted career guidance programs.

b. For Vocational School Job Seekers

This study is expected to help job seekers understand the importance of career maturity and career decision-making skills in facing changes in the world of work.

c. For Future Researchers

This study can be used as a reference for further research examining the career development of vocational education graduates.