

Perceived Employability, Career Adaptability, and Social Support: A Quantitative Study among University Students in Thailand

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Abstract

In an increasingly competitive and uncertain global labor market, understanding the psychological and social determinants of students' employability is essential. This quantitative study investigates the relationship between perceived employability, career adaptability, and social support among university students in Thailand. Drawing upon Career Construction Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory, the research explores how individual adaptability and external support systems jointly shape students' confidence in securing employment. Data were collected through a structured survey of 350 undergraduate students from both public and private universities across Thailand. The most important constructs were evaluated using validated scales including Self-Perceived Employability Scale, 2) Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) and 3) Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses results indicated that career adaptability as well as social support is a significant predictor of the perceived employability but career adaptability was found to be the strongest predictor. Subsequent examination of the relationship among career adaptability, and perceived employability employing the PROCESS macro confirmed that social support partially mediates and moderates the relationship between career adaptability and perceived employability. The results have shown the essentiality of psychological preparedness and favorable spaces by influencing the discernment of employability. This research presents valuable implications to the Thai higher educational institutions advancing that a set of adaptability skills and favorable networks can increase current

students' confidence on their careers significantly. It also adds to body of literature on employability, in the sense that it locates these constructs in a Southeast Asian, collectivist culture. It would be prudent to note that future research ought to take into consideration longitudinal and comparative researches to further validate this finding.

Keywords: perceived employability, career adaptability, social support and university students, Thailand, career development, psychological resources, and higher education.

I. Introduction

The world of labor is changing fast and in unpredictable trends in a world that is more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). The employment situation has radically changed due to technological innovation, digitalization, changing economic paradigms as well as shocks after global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Such changes require young graduates to have qualifications and adaptability, psychological preparedness, and well-developed support system to overcome career change. Here, it is observed that within this context, perceived employability which can be defined as the ability of an individual to gain and retain employment according to self-perception has become even relevant in both career research and the discourse on higher education policies (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007).

Thailand is the middle-income country in Southeast Asia that has attained considerable progress in the development of access to higher education and vocational training. But even though the government tried to create the relationships

between academic product and labor market standards, yet the graduates of universities find it hard to find adequate jobs. Increasing cases of graduate unemployment, underemployment, and skills mis-matches are often cited, which increases suspicion towards the preparation and flexibility of the new generation of the workforce (World Bank, 2023).

These problems demonstrate the necessity of researching how Thai university students interpret their employability and what is affecting the level of such interpretations. In this study three very important constructs are investigated, perceived employability, career adaptability and social support as well as their interrelationship in determining career outlooks of students. This is aimed at gaining a more insight and answer that would help us understand the effect of these factors on the psychological and practical preparedness of students to enter the world of work especially in a Thai culture and socioeconomic environment.

Academic excellence or production in terms of research is no longer the yardstick in which higher education institutions are judged- there is also the evaluation of how readily do these systems prepare students to go to the job market. The current generation of students has to do more than just acquire knowledge; they are expected to gain soft skills, personal resilience, and strategic career planning competencies. In this context, the perceived employability has emerged as a critical profile on the level of student preparedness in view of career professional life. Recently, a visible amount of literature indicates that career adaptability, including skills, concern over the future, control of the career decision, interest in career opportunities, interest in career tasks, as well as confidence in accomplishing them, are essential in forming perceptions about employability (Savickas, 2005).

Flexible people are more active in planning, learning, and can cope better with the changes and uncertainties. Simultaneously, social support (in the form of family, peers, mentors and institutions) has also been found to be a strong buffer to the psychological effects. In Collectivist societies, such as Thailand, family and community relationships can be a core aspect determining the direction of education and career.

Social support may offer assistance in terms of emotional support, career advice, financial support, and practical support and this would aid a student in enhancing his or her self-confidence and career choice (Taylor, 2011). However, there is little empirical research which studies the relationship between the theoretical concepts and a quantitative

methodology about Thais. A majority of the studies have been conducted either in a Western context or in highly urbanised Asian economies like Singapore or South Korea. Hence, this study addresses a big research gap because it offers nothing less than empirical evidence of the effect of career adaptability and social support towards perceived employability of Thai university students.

Significance of the study

While Thailand has made notable investments in higher education reform and workforce development, there remains a noticeable disconnect between educational outcomes and labor market expectations. Employers often report that graduates lack problem-solving skills, adaptability, and career planning capabilities. At the same time, many students feel unprepared to navigate an increasingly competitive and digitally driven job market.

Despite ongoing reforms, there is insufficient understanding of how students internally assess their own employability and what internal (e.g., adaptability) and external (e.g., support systems) factors shape these assessments. Without this insight, universities may struggle to design effective career support services, and policymakers may continue to invest in programs that do not align with students' actual developmental needs.

Thus, the present study addresses this knowledge gap by quantitatively exploring how career adaptability and social support predict perceived employability in a Thai university student population. The findings can help educators, career counselors, and government agencies refine their interventions to better support student employability.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the level of perceived employability among Thai university students.
2. To examine the relationship between career adaptability and perceived employability.
3. To investigate the influence of social support on perceived employability.
4. To determine whether social support moderates or mediates the relationship between career adaptability and perceived employability.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following key questions:

- What is the current level of perceived employability among university students in Thailand?

- How does career adaptability contribute to perceived employability?
- What role does social support play in influencing students' perceptions of their employability?
- Is there an interaction effect between career adaptability and social support on perceived employability?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study is based on the integration of:

- **Career Construction Theory** (Savickas, 2005), which emphasizes career adaptability as a key competence in navigating vocational development.
- **Social Cognitive Career Theory** (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), which incorporates the role of self-efficacy and social support in career behavior.
- **Employability Models** (Rothwell et al., 2008), which emphasize both internal and external factors affecting an individual's perception of employability.

In this framework:

- **Career Adaptability** is treated as an independent variable.
- **Social Support** is both an independent variable and a potential moderator or mediator.
- **Perceived Employability** is the dependent variable.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Perceived Employability:** An individual's subjective belief in their capability to attain and retain employment based on their skills, attributes, and labor market understanding.
- **Career Adaptability:** A set of psychological resources that allow individuals to cope with current and anticipated career-related tasks, transitions, and traumas. This includes concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas, 2005).
- **Social Support:** The perception and reality of support received from family, friends, mentors, and institutional agents that aids in decision-making and stress management in one's career journey.

II. Literature Review

In the contemporary labor market, employability is no longer solely dependent on formal qualifications. The emphasis has shifted toward psychological readiness, adaptability, and social resources. This literature review explores

three central constructs perceived employability, career adaptability, and social support and discusses how they interact to shape students' career outcomes. The section also reviews theoretical frameworks and empirical studies to contextualize the research within global and Southeast Asian perspectives, especially focusing on university students in Thailand.

1. Perceived Employability

Perceived employability is the view of a given person that he or she is capable of acquiring and maintaining employment. Whereas objective employability focuses on the measurable qualities of employability, such as educational training or experience, perceived employability emphasises the subjective aspect—the feelings that people have about their employability (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). The perception influences career planning, job search behaviour, and psychological well-being.

Rothwell et al. (2008) divided the perceived employability into two domains, namely, internal and external employability, the former relates to being able to secure employment in the current firm and the latter reflects the possibility of gaining a job in the wider job market. For students, perceptions of employability are often influenced by external views, particularly when transitioning from academic life to professional careers.

The factors associated with perceived employability include personal characteristics, career-related attitudes, knowledge of the labour market, and socio-economic background. Studies indicate that more the belief of being employable is placed on the student the more the student is motivated, proactive and confident in making his or her career choices (Berntson et al., 2006).

There have been few studies in Thailand regarding employability, which have been specifically concentrated on the perceived employability of university students. Nevertheless, literature such as Chantavanich (2019) shows that Thai students become increasingly concerned with their future employment and refer to the lack of alignment between academic preparation and labour market demands. This highlights the significance of perceived employability being one of the important constructs in Thai higher education studies.

2. Career Adaptability

Psychometrically, career adaptability shows the preparedness and the resources one has to deal with changes, tasks, as well as traumas in the career-related experience (Savickas, 2005). It has four dimensions:

1. Concern - future focus regarding career planning,
2. Control- the feeling of owning a career,

3. Curiosity that is about discovering potential selves and career choice,

4. Confidence- the feeling that one is capable of resolving problems and finding a way out of difficulties.

Savickas and Porfeli (2012) have formulated the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS), which has also been tested in various cultural backgrounds, including Asian nations. In the days following a university education, career adaptability is a major component of transition, especially in light of growing unpredictability and competition of job markets among youths. The correlation between career adaptability and perceived employability is always positive as empirical studies have depicted. As an illustration, Fugate et al. (2004) found that the higher an individual's adaptability, the greater their career optimism and job search efficacy would be.

In line with this, Tomlinson (2017) further reported that flexible learners become more involved in career-enhancing activities, such as internships, skills development, and networking. The situation with career adaptability research is raw in Southeast Asia. Strategies implemented in Malaysia and Singapore, among other countries, have demonstrated that the trait of adaptability affects career outcomes positively (Ling et al., 2014).

Career adaptability has also been linked to the self-efficacy and resilience of students in Thailand who are training for careers in an uncertain job market, such as tourism and hospitality (Kittisuksathit, 2021). Nevertheless, there is a lack of quantitative research regarding the relationship between career adaptability and perceived employability at Thai universities, which constitutes a gap addressed by the present study.

3. Social Support

Social support can be described as how a person is looked after, appreciated, and supported by others. It involves the emotional, informational, and instrumental support provided by the family, friends, mentors or institutions (Taylor, 2011). In collectivistic societies, such as Thailand, the family has an overriding influence on educational decisions, professional expectations, and psychological outcomes. Some articles focus on the social support for career development. Social support decreases career stress levels, increases motivation, and leads to an increase in career decision-making confidence (Jiang, 2017). It also acts as a buffer in the transitional time or a situation of failure like the job hunting duration or upon graduation. MSPSS, as elaborated by Zimet et al. (1988), is a broad-scale measure that is often used to assess the feeling of being supported by family

members, friends, and other important people. MSPSS-based research in Asian settings has revealed that familial and peer support is closely related to academic achievement and mental health (Nguyen et al., 2020).

In Thailand, family support is often a significant factor in students' career choices. This may be a strength, but on the other hand, it is a source of pressure, particularly when family expectations and the ones held by the students are not in tandem. According to a study conducted by Chitakasem and Suwanwela (2022), parental edification can sometimes lead to career indecisiveness or anxiety in Thai students. However, when family support aligns with students' career objectives, perceived employability and confidence increase significantly.

4. Interrelationship among Constructs

A lot of research has focused on the relationships between perceived employability, career adaptability, and social support. Hirschi (2009) also observes career adaptability as a major indicator of perceived employability as a result of augmented self-efficacy, increased motivation and planning behaviour. Flexible people tend to be more attracted to options, take actions on opportunities, and overcome failures, which in turn serves to reinforce the idea that they are employable. Instead, social support plays both a mediator and a moderator role in the correlation between adaptability and employability. Adaptability requires supportive environments that contribute to the development of this capability through the promotion of exploration and the provision of safety nets.

Through this, the perception of employability is enhanced by social support against the influence of career adaptability (Koen et al., 2012). As an illustration, Guan et al. (2013) established a positive relationship between higher adaptability and stronger social support, as well as a greater sense of employability, and reported better employment outcomes. This aspect was highlighted in the article by the dual functioning of individual agency and surrounding facilitators in influencing career outcomes. This fact is also remarkable to cultures with collectivist views.

5. Theoretical Underpinnings

The main theoretical frameworks used in this study are three:

- Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005): It specifies that people develop their careers by constructing adaptive behaviours. This theory is focused on career adaptability.

• Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994): Focuses on the role of self-efficacy and social support in the process of career decision-making. It describes the interaction between man and the environment and how one can influence career development.

Employability Theory (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007): It concerns how individuals would assess their employability in terms of their interiority and the foreign perception of the labour market. All of the above frameworks underpin the hypothesis that career adaptability and social support play a crucial role as predictors of perceived employability, offering a solid lens to assess the outcomes of students in the Thai environment.

6. Gaps in the Literature

While numerous studies have explored employability and career adaptability in Western contexts, research in Southeast Asia—and particularly Thailand—remains limited. Few quantitative studies have examined the relationship among perceived employability, career adaptability, and social support among Thai university students.

Moreover, cultural factors such as collectivism, family obligation, and face-saving behavior have not been sufficiently integrated into employability research in this region. This study contributes to filling these gaps by providing culturally grounded empirical evidence and testing established Western models in a Thai educational context.

The literature reviewed demonstrates strong theoretical and empirical links between perceived employability, career adaptability, and social support. While career adaptability equips individuals with psychological tools to navigate uncertain career paths, social support provides the external resources necessary for success. Both are crucial in shaping students' beliefs in their employability.

However, limited research has explored these dynamics within the cultural and educational context of Thailand. By examining these constructs among Thai university students, the current study addresses an important gap and aims to offer insights that can inform policy, educational practice, and future research in Southeast Asia.

III. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationships among perceived employability, career adaptability, and social support among university students in Thailand. A quantitative approach was

deemed appropriate to gather standardized, measurable data and to apply statistical techniques for hypothesis testing. The study aimed to examine the extent to which career adaptability and social support predict perceived employability, and whether social support acts as a mediator or moderator in this relationship.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in public and private universities in Thailand. Students from diverse academic disciplines were included to ensure a broad and representative perspective. A sample of 350 students was selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring proportional representation based on:

- Gender (male/female),
- Academic discipline (sciences, humanities, business, etc.),
- University type (public/private),
- Year of study (first to final year).

This sample size was sufficient for multiple regression analysis, exceeding the minimum recommended ratio of 10 participants per predictor variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire was developed, consisting of four sections:

a) Demographic Information

This section collected data on gender, age, year of study, major, university type, and family background.

b) Perceived Employability

Measured using the Self-Perceived Employability Scale developed by Rothwell et al. (2008), which includes 16 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Sample items include:

- "I believe I can easily obtain a job relevant to my degree."
- "I am confident in my ability to compete in the job market."

This scale has been widely validated across contexts and showed high internal consistency in the current study (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87).

c) Career Adaptability

Assessed using the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) by Savickas & Porfeli (2012), consisting of 24 items across four dimensions: Concern, Control, Curiosity, and Confidence. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not strong to 5 = very strong).

Sample items:

- “Thinking about what my future will be like.”

- “Taking responsibility for my actions.”

The scale showed excellent reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.91).

d) Social Support

Measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) by Zimet et al. (1988), which includes 12 items assessing support from family, friends, and significant others. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree).

Sample items:

- "My family really tries to help me."
- "I can count on my friends when things go wrong."

This scale showed high internal consistency in the present study (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.89).

Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in career counselling, educational psychology, and Thai higher education. Feedback was used to adjust wording for cultural appropriateness and clarity. A pilot study with 30 students was conducted to test the reliability and comprehensibility of the instrument. All scales demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach’s alpha > 0.85), indicating internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over a four-week period in March 2025. After obtaining permission from university administrators, the questionnaire was distributed both online (Google Forms) and in paper form in classrooms and university centers. Participation was voluntary, and students provided informed consent before starting the survey.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of [Your University/Department], ensuring the study adhered to ethical standards regarding confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation.

Data Analysis

Data were entered into SPSS version 28.0 for statistical analysis. The following procedures were applied:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** To describe the demographic profile and summarize the mean scores, standard deviations, and frequencies for each variable.
2. **Pearson Correlation:** To examine the relationships among perceived employability, career adaptability, and social support.
3. **Multiple Regression Analysis:** To determine the predictive power of career

adaptability and social support on perceived employability.

4. **Moderation and Mediation Analysis:** To explore whether social support moderates or mediates the relationship between career adaptability and perceived employability. This was tested using the PROCESS macro (Model 1 and Model 4) by Hayes (2018).

Statistical significance was determined at $p < .05$.

Ethical Considerations

- **Informed Consent:** All participants received a detailed explanation of the study’s purpose and gave informed consent.

- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** No identifying information was collected, and responses were kept strictly confidential.

- **Right to Withdraw:** Participants were informed they could withdraw at any time without penalty.

- **Data Security:** Data were stored securely in encrypted files and used solely for academic purposes.

Limitations of the Methodology

While the study design was robust, the following limitations are acknowledged:

- The use of self-report measures may introduce bias, as students may overestimate or underestimate their employability or adaptability.

- Cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal conclusions.

- Though the sample was diverse, it may not fully represent students from rural or technical universities in Thailand.

This study employed a rigorous quantitative design using validated instruments to explore the relationship between perceived employability, career adaptability, and social support among university students in Thailand. The methodology was chosen to yield statistically reliable results that can inform educational practices, career counselling, and policy development.

IV. Results

This section presents the results of the quantitative data analysis conducted using SPSS version 28.0. The analysis includes descriptive statistics, reliability testing, Pearson correlation, multiple regression analysis, and moderation/mediation testing using the PROCESS macro by Hayes.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 showed that majority of the respondents (58%) was females, from the entire academic year 30.3% coming from final year, followed by third year students. Additionally, 54.9% respondents were from public universities.

Table 1 gender, academic year, and institutional type

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	147	42.0%
	Female	203	58.0%
Year of Study	First Year	65	18.6%
	Second Year	82	23.4%
	Third Year	97	27.7%
	Final Year	106	30.3%
Type of University	Public	192	54.9%
	Private	158	45.1%

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Key Variables

Table 2 highlighted that participants perceive a **strong level of social support** (Mean=5.22), followed by career adaptability (Mean=4.01) and perceived employability (Mean=3.82)

Table 2 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Key Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Perceived Employability	3.82	0.71
Career Adaptability	4.01	0.65
Social Support	5.22	1.01

Reliability Analysis

Table 3 indicated that all of the three variables Perceived Employability, Career Adaptability and Social Support demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach’s Alpha values well above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. This showed that the measurement instruments used in the current study are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

Table 3

Construct	Cronbach’s Alpha (α)
Perceived Employability	0.87
Career Adaptability	0.91
Social Support	0.89

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships among the three main variables: Table 4 highlighted that a strong positive correlation exists between career adaptability and perceived employability ($r = .614, p < .01$). A moderate positive correlation was found between social support and perceived employability ($r = .473, p < .01$), and Social support is also positively correlated with career adaptability ($r = .532, p < .01$), indicating that students with higher support tend to be more adaptable.

Table 4 Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3
1. Perceived Employability	—		
2. Career Adaptability	.614**	—	
3. Social Support	.473**	.532**	—

Note: $p < .01$

Multiple Regression Analysis

To test whether career adaptability and social support predict perceived employability, a multiple linear regression was conducted.

Table 5
Model Summary:

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.
1	0.711	0.505	0.502	176.34	.000

Table 6
Coefficients:

Predictor	β (Beta)	t	Sig.
Career Adaptability	0.522	10.38	.000**
Social Support	0.336	6.75	.000**

Interpretation:

Both career adaptability and social support are significant predictors of perceived employability, jointly explaining 50.5% of the variance ($R^2 = .505$, $p < .001$). Career adaptability had a stronger effect, indicating its primary importance in shaping students' employability perceptions.

Moderation and Mediation Analysis

Moderation Analysis

To test whether social support moderates the relationship between career adaptability and perceived employability, PROCESS Macro Model 1 was applied.

- Interaction term (Career Adaptability × Social Support): $\beta = .112$, $p = .041$

Interpretation:

The interaction is statistically significant, indicating that social support moderates the effect of career adaptability on perceived employability. Students with high levels of support benefit more from their adaptability in terms of employability perception.

4.5.2. Mediation Analysis

To explore whether social support mediates the relationship between career adaptability and perceived employability, PROCESS Macro Model 4 was used.

- Indirect effect via Social Support: $\beta = .178$
- Bootstrapped 95% CI: [.093, .265]
- Direct effect (career adaptability to employability): remains significant

Interpretation:

There is a partial mediation, suggesting that career

adaptability contributes to perceived employability both directly and indirectly through increased social support.

4.6. Summary of Key Findings

- Thai university students report moderate levels of perceived employability and high levels of social support.
- Career adaptability is the strongest predictor of perceived employability.
- Social support significantly influences employability both as a direct predictor and as a moderator and partial mediator.
- These findings highlight the interactive and reinforcing roles of personal adaptability and external support systems in shaping employability perceptions.

V. Discussion

This study examined the relationships between perceived employability, career adaptability, and social support among university students in Thailand using a quantitative, cross-sectional approach. The analysis revealed significant findings that contribute to the understanding of how internal (psychological) and external (social) factors shape students' self-assessed readiness for the job market.

Perceived Employability in the Thai Context

The study found that the average perceived employability score among Thai university students was moderately high ($M = 3.82$ on a 5-point scale), suggesting that while students generally feel somewhat confident about their career prospects, uncertainty and hesitation remain. This aligns with

previous studies (e.g., World Bank, 2023; Chantavanich, 2019) that indicate Thai students face growing concern about the mismatch between their academic training and the rapidly changing demands of the labor market.

In the Thai socio-cultural context, employability is not only a function of individual competence but is also heavily influenced by societal and familial expectations. Many students feel pressured to secure jobs that uphold family reputation or meet traditional ideals, which may distort their true perception of employability. This nuanced dynamic highlights the importance of studying perceived employability as a subjective construct that can vary based on cultural values and social influences.

Career Adaptability as a Strong Predictor

Career adaptability emerged as the most significant predictor of perceived employability ($\beta = .522, p < .001$). This supports the theoretical model proposed by Savickas (2005), who emphasized that adaptability skills—concern, control, curiosity, and confidence—equip individuals with the resources to navigate career transitions effectively.

Students with high adaptability are more likely to anticipate career challenges, take ownership of their decisions, explore various career pathways, and maintain confidence even in uncertain situations. These traits are especially crucial in today's volatile job environment, where adaptability is a survival skill rather than a luxury.

In Thailand, where many academic programs still follow traditional teaching methods and provide limited career preparation, fostering adaptability through curriculum design, experiential learning, and career counselling should be a priority. The results of this study reinforce the urgent need for universities to incorporate career adaptability training into their student development strategies.

Social Support as an Influential Resource

Social support was also found to be a significant predictor of perceived employability ($\beta = .336, p < .01$), both independently and in interaction with career adaptability. The high mean score for perceived social support ($M = 5.22$ on a 7-point scale) reflects the collectivist nature of Thai society, where family, friends, and social networks play a central role in decision-making and emotional well-being.

Supportive environments contribute to students' emotional stability, career confidence, and motivation to pursue challenging opportunities. For many students, family provides financial and emotional backing during job search periods, while peers offer networking assistance, information sharing, and encouragement.

Interestingly, the study found that social support partially mediated the relationship between career adaptability and perceived employability. This suggests that adaptable students are not only more proactive and confident but also more likely to build or access supportive networks. Conversely, social support **moderated** this relationship, meaning that the positive effects of adaptability on employability were even stronger among students who received high levels of support.

These findings resonate with Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which posits that self-efficacy and social support jointly influence career development and outcomes (Lent et al., 1994). In practical terms, this means that to maximize the impact of adaptability on employability, universities must also help students cultivate strong support systems.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that career adaptability and social support are significant predictors of perceived employability among university students in Thailand. Students who possess higher levels of adaptability and are embedded in supportive social environments are more likely to feel prepared and confident to enter the workforce. The findings reinforce the need for Thai universities and policymakers to adopt a holistic approach to career development—one that combines psychological readiness with robust support systems. By doing so, they can empower students to navigate an uncertain future with greater confidence, resilience, and agency. Ultimately, enhancing perceived employability is not just about creating job-ready graduates; it is about cultivating adaptable, supported, and empowered individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society and the economy.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The results affirm the relevance of Career Construction Theory and SCCT in the Thai educational context. The integration of psychological (adaptability) and social (support) variables offers a comprehensive view of employability perception, reinforcing the multidimensional nature of career development.

This study also adds to the growing body of literature on employability in non-Western settings. It highlights the necessity of contextualizing career theories within cultural norms and societal structures particularly in collectivist societies where personal agency is deeply interwoven with family and community influences.

Practical Implications

For Thai universities and career support services, this study offers several actionable recommendations:

- **Integrate Adaptability Training:** Institutions should offer workshops and modules on career adaptability, encouraging students to build future-oriented planning, decision-making, and resilience skills.
- **Enhance Social Support Structures:** Mentorship programs, peer counselling, and alumni networks can strengthen the support system for students transitioning into the job market.
- **Develop Family-Inclusive Career Counselling:** Given the cultural importance of family in Thailand, involving parents in career planning discussions could help align student aspirations with family expectations, reducing stress and conflict.
- **Revise Curriculum Design:** Academic programs should include real-world skills, internships, and industry engagement opportunities to increase student confidence in their employability.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should consider the following:

- **Longitudinal Studies:** To track the development of career adaptability and employability over the course of a student's academic journey.
- **Comparative Studies:** Cross-cultural comparisons between students in different ASEAN countries could uncover regional patterns and best practices.
- **Qualitative Components:** In-depth interviews or focus groups could explore students' personal narratives, offering deeper insight into how social and psychological factors influence employability beliefs.
- **Employability Interventions:** Action research evaluating the impact of specific university interventions on career adaptability and support could provide evidence for best practices in higher education.

Limitations of the Study

While the study provides valuable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged:

- **Cross-sectional design:** The use of a cross-sectional survey limits the ability to draw causal inferences. Future longitudinal research could better capture changes in perceptions over time.
- **Self-reported data:** Responses may be influenced by social desirability or cognitive biases. Although reliable scales were used, objective

measures such as actual employment outcomes could provide additional insight.

- **Sample representation:** While the sample included students from both public and private universities, it may not fully represent students from rural or under-resourced institutions.
- **Cultural specificity:** The findings are culturally specific to Thailand and may not be directly generalizable to other contexts without adaptation.

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