

Theoretical Foundations of Adaptive Performance in Early Career Transition: Integration of Talent Identity Threat Perspectives, Learning Goal Orientation, and Government Career Context in Indonesia

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Abstract

The contemporary work environment is characterized by rapid change, uncertainty, and increasing complexity, requiring employees to demonstrate strong adaptive performance, particularly during early career transitions. In Indonesia, the growing interest of university graduates in careers within the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) creates unique challenges, as young employees must adapt simultaneously to bureaucratic structures, organizational expectations, and public service demands. This study aims to analyze the theoretical foundations of adaptive performance in early career transitions by integrating the perspectives of learning goal orientation, career adaptability, identity threats, and the Indonesian government career context. This research employed a qualitative approach using an integrative literature review design. Data were collected from scholarly articles, academic books, government reports, and empirical studies indexed in reputable databases, such as Scopus and Google Scholar. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis and integrative synthesis techniques to identify relationships among key concepts and contextual factors influencing adaptive performance. The findings indicate that learning goal orientation plays a significant role in strengthening career adaptability, buffering transition shocks, supporting identity construction, and enhancing resilience among early-career employees. In addition, organizational support, mentoring systems, and an adaptive bureaucratic culture significantly influence successful career transitions. This study concludes that adaptive performance in the Indonesian government sector is shaped by the interaction between individual motivational orientation, organizational context, and identity management processes, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and supportive talent management systems.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world of work is characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), which demands that individuals constantly adapt to ever-evolving professional roles, organizational structures, and expectations (Borg et al., 2020; Ismawaty, 2022). Early career transitions, defined as periods that include the first years of employment after completing education or entering a new organization, are a critical point in career development. During this phase, individuals form self-concepts, develop skills and identities in relation to work, and establish path-dependent trajectories with long-term consequences for mobility, adaptation, and subsequent well-being (Lawrence-Thomas, 2025).

In Indonesia, the transition into an early career in the government sector has very high significance. The State Civil Apparatus (ASN) plays a critical and strategic function as public servants, policy implementers, and unifiers of the nation, requiring alignment in concepts and working methods from the central government to local governments (Widyastuti et al., 2023; Tumiran et al., 2023). A highly prominent phenomenon in the Indonesian context is the strong interest of top university graduates in registering as ASN. Data from the State Civil Service Agency (BKN) show that the 2025 selection of State Civil Apparatus Candidates (CASN) recorded 3,963,832 registrants in the CPNS selection, of whom 2,855,597 applicants were verified as meeting the requirements and could continue the selection process. Meanwhile, the government provided only 250,407 CPNS formations, resulting in a very tight competition ratio of around 11:1. Surveys conducted by various research institutions, such as the IDN Research Institute, consistently rank civil servants as one of the most in-demand professions among Indonesia's young generation, especially university graduates, with the main reasons including job stability, pension guarantees, social prestige, and structured career development opportunities.

This high level of interest creates an interesting paradox: while thousands of top graduates enter the government bureaucracy, they then face organizational realities that are very different from the expectations formed during education. Hierarchical bureaucratic structures, strict staffing regulations, a culture of seniority, and simultaneous demands for bureaucratic reform create a unique context in which early career transitions take place. Ongoing bureaucratic reforms in Indonesia require early-career employees to demonstrate high adaptive performance.

Recent research further complicates this picture by showing that talent designations in early career programs, which are often assumed to be uniformly positive, can be considered "mixed blessings," triggering identity threats and identity struggles throughout the talent journey (Bolander et al., 2024). These findings challenge conventional assumptions about talent management and raise important questions about how individual dispositions, particularly learning goal orientation, interact with organizational contexts to shape adaptive outcomes.

The contemporary world of work is increasingly shaped by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, making adaptive performance a central requirement for employees entering professional life after graduation. Early career transition is not merely a movement from university to the workplace, but a formative period in which individuals build professional identity, negotiate role expectations, and develop long-term career patterns. In this phase, employees are expected to adjust quickly to new tasks, organizational cultures, performance standards, and social relationships. The manuscript emphasizes that early career experiences create "path-dependent trajectories" that may influence mobility, adaptation, and well-being over time.

This issue becomes highly relevant in the Indonesian government sector because the State Civil Apparatus plays a strategic role as public servants, policy implementers, and national unifiers. The manuscript notes that ASN careers remain highly attractive to university graduates because they offer job stability, pension security, social prestige, and structured career development. Data cited in the manuscript show that the 2025 CASN selection recorded 3,963,832 CPNS registrants, while only 250,407 formations were available, creating a highly competitive ratio of around 11:1.

However, the strong interest of graduates in ASN careers creates a paradox. Many talented young graduates enter government institutions with expectations of meritocracy, innovation, and meaningful public impact, but they often encounter hierarchical bureaucracy, strict staffing regulations, a culture of seniority, and slow organizational procedures. This gap between expectations and reality may trigger transition shock, identity tension, and pressure to

prove competence. Therefore, adaptive performance becomes essential not only for completing work tasks, but also for sustaining motivation and professional identity in a bureaucratic environment.

Previous research has shown that career adaptability is a crucial resource for early-career employees. Haenggli and Hirschi describe career adaptability through concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, while Alkhemeiri et al. indicate that career competencies can strengthen adaptability among early-career workers. In the Indonesian context, Sumarmi et al. found that career adaptability positively affects employee performance in government organizations, and Azzahra et al. showed that career adaptation mediates the relationship between career competence and career success among local government employees.

Another important stream of research concerns identity threats in talent programs. Bolander et al. argue that being labeled as “talent” is not always beneficial because it may become a mixed blessing that creates identity burden, expectation pressure, and social tension. This finding is especially relevant for early-career ASN employees placed in talent pools or strategic development programs. While such programs aim to prepare future leaders, they may also expose young employees to resistance from senior colleagues, excessive expectations, and pressure to continuously demonstrate superior performance.

Learning goal orientation offers a useful psychological lens for understanding why some early-career employees adapt better than others. Individuals with strong learning goal orientation tend to view challenges, mistakes, and feedback as opportunities for development rather than threats to their competence. In the ASN context, this orientation aligns with the BerAKHLAK values, especially “Competent” and “Adaptive,” which require public servants to continue learning, improve their capabilities, innovate, and respond positively to change. Thus, learning goal orientation can support adaptive performance by encouraging feedback seeking, resilience, and continuous self-development.

Despite the growing literature on career adaptability, identity threats, and learning goal orientation, a research gap remains in integrating these perspectives within the specific context of Indonesian government careers. Many studies discuss adaptive performance in general organizational settings, while fewer studies explain how early-career ASN employees manage adaptation under bureaucratic hierarchy, public service demands, merit system reforms, and talent management pressures. This gap is important because government organizations have distinctive cultural, structural, and regulatory characteristics that may shape how employees experience adaptation.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to strengthen the quality of Indonesia’s public sector workforce. Bureaucratic reform, digital transformation, and increasing public expectations require ASN employees who are not only technically competent but also adaptive, reflective, and resilient. If early-career employees fail to adapt, government institutions may lose the potential contributions of talented graduates. Conversely, if adaptation is supported through learning orientation, mentoring, transparent talent management, and supportive organizational culture, early-career ASN employees can become important drivers of public service improvement.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative theoretical focus. Rather than treating adaptive performance as a simple outcome of individual capability, this study connects career adaptability, learning goal orientation, identity threat, and the Indonesian government career context into one coherent framework. This perspective allows adaptive performance to be understood as the result of interaction between personal motivation, identity construction, organizational support, and bureaucratic structure. Such integration provides a richer explanation of how young ASN talents navigate the tension between personal ambition, institutional expectations, and public service values.

Therefore, this research aims to develop a theoretical foundation for understanding adaptive performance during early career transition in the Indonesian government sector. This study contributes to the career development literature by contextualizing adaptive performance within ASN careers and contributes practically by offering insights for talent management, mentoring, and early-career development programs. The benefit of this research is that it can help government institutions design more supportive systems that cultivate learning goal orientation, reduce identity threats, and strengthen adaptive capacity among young public servants.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using an integrative literature review design to develop a comprehensive understanding of adaptive performance during early career transitions within the Indonesian government sector. The population of this study consisted of scholarly literature discussing adaptive performance, career adaptability, learning goal orientation, identity threats, organizational socialization, and public sector career development. The sample comprised selected international journal articles, conference proceedings, academic books, and reputable publications indexed in databases such as Scopus and Google Scholar that were considered relevant to the research focus. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, in which the researcher selected literature sources based on inclusion criteria, including relevance to adaptive performance, publication recency, empirical contribution, and contextual relevance to early career transitions and government organizations.

The primary research instrument in this study was a literature review matrix designed to systematically identify, classify, and synthesize theoretical concepts, empirical findings, and contextual evidence from the selected publications. To ensure validity, the study applied source triangulation by comparing findings from multiple scholarly references and cross-checking conceptual consistency among theories and empirical studies. Reliability was maintained through a systematic review procedure involving repeated examination of the selected literature, coding consistency, and transparent documentation of the analysis process. Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation and literature exploration by accessing journal databases, electronic libraries, government reports, and academic publications related to career adaptability, learning goal orientation, identity threat, and adaptive performance in organizational settings.

The research procedure began with identifying the research problem and determining the conceptual scope of adaptive performance in early career transitions. The researcher subsequently conducted literature searching, screening, classification, and critical evaluation of the selected sources. Relevant findings were then categorized into major themes, including career adaptability, learning goal orientation, identity threat, organizational context, and government career systems in Indonesia. The collected data were processed and organized using Microsoft Excel and Mendeley reference management software to facilitate coding, citation management, and thematic classification. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative thematic analysis and integrative synthesis techniques, where theoretical concepts and empirical findings were interpreted systematically to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework explaining adaptive performance among early-career employees in the Indonesian government sector.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Core Theoretical Foundations of Adaptive Performance Lifelong Career Development and Pathway Dependence

The lifespan perspective and life-course emphasize that early career decisions and transitions set a trajectory with long-term consequences. The Super Lifelong Framework highlights the establishment stage, in which individuals form a vocational self-concept and navigate identity in relation to work. Narrative and storytelling play a dominant role in Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005), Career Contextualist Action-Contextualist Theory, and Systems Theory Framework, all of which position meaning-making as the core of career development and planning.

Contemporary research reinforces the argument that early career choices create path-dependent trajectories with long-term implications. Lawrence-Thomas (2025) demonstrates that reproductive decisions during the early career period represent a critical turning point that initiates divergent pathways with path-dependent effects lasting over a 30-year period on women's economic trajectories. This evidence underlines that adaptive performance in early career is not just the performance of momentary tasks, but also the management of self-concept that continues to develop and long-term career continuity (Lawrence-Thomas, 2025).

In the context of the Indonesian government, the dependence on the line is very prominent. Early placement, class of rank, and selection of career paths at an early stage often determine career trajectory over decades. Staffing regulations governing recruitment, placement, promotion, and career development formally limit individual agencies in career navigation (Azzahra et al., 2022). This makes the decision to apply for ASN—and the initial placement it receives—one of the most decisive career decisions for Indonesian university graduates.

Career Adaptability as a Core Resource

Career adaptability—defined as a set of psychosocial resources to cope with developmental tasks, job transitions, and work trauma—has emerged as a central predictor of adaptive performance in early career (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023). This construct includes four key dimensions: concern (future orientation), control (self-regulation), curiosity (exploration), and confidence (self-efficacy). These resources allow individuals to navigate transitions, align themselves with evolving roles, and maintain performance trajectories (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023; Alkhomeiri et al., 2020).

Empirical evidence consistently shows that career adaptability resources predict task performance and career outcomes, especially in changing working conditions and during transition (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023; Duff & Chan, 2014). In the context of the Indonesian government, Sumarmi et al. (2022) found that career adaptability positively affects the performance of employees in Indonesian government organizations, while Azzahra et al. (2022) demonstrated that career adaptation mediates the relationship between career competence and career success among Aceh Besar Regency government employees. Gulan and Aguilung (2022) further show that organizational climate mediates the relationship between career adaptability and career intention among Philippine government employees, highlighting the contextual attachment of adaptability resources.

Organizational and contextual factors shape the deployment and effectiveness of these resources. Alkhomeiri et al. (2020) found that although career competencies directly affect career adaptability among early-career employees, proactive personalities are not significantly related to career adaptability. In contrast, early-career employees with low proactive personalities actually benefit the most from high career competence, suggesting that competency development can compensate for dispositional limitations.

Career Construction, Self-Concept, and Identity Work

Career Construction Theory frames career development as a narrative construction process in which individuals actively design and renegotiate meaning, identity, and action through transition (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023). This dimension of identity is significantly deepened by Bolander et al. (2024), who show that designation as a "talent" in an early career program does not necessarily strengthen an individual's identity, but can instead trigger complex identity threats. They define identity threats at the individual level as "experiences that are judged to indicate a potential danger to an identity" (Bolander et al., 2024, p. 1).

Their qualitative study, conducted at a large Swedish multinational company during the three phases of the talent program, revealed that early-career talents face a variety of identity threat threats that change over time. The default response is to protect threatened identities rather than restructure them; however, when threats are perceived as strong and persistent, or when individuals feel a lack of social support, they are more likely to turn to identity-altering efforts (Bolander et al., 2024). These findings challenge the assumption that talent recognition automatically reinforces professional identities and instead reveals the designation of talent as a "mixed blessing" that fuels identity struggles throughout the talent journey.

In the context of the Indonesian government, this dynamic is very relevant. Talent development programs in government agencies—such as talent pools, fast-track schemes, and strategic placements for high-achieving employees—often place early-career individuals in positions of high expectations from employers, colleagues, and institutions. The basic values of ASN with AKHLAK include service orientation, accountability, competence, harmony, loyalty, adaptive, and collaborative (Widyastuti et al., 2023; Tumiran et al., 2023) set high standards of behavior that can add to identity pressure for early-career employees who seek to internalize and demonstrate these values simultaneously.

Systems Perspectives and Life Journeys on Transition

Systemic and socio-contextual models highlight how transitions lie within organizational, national, and cultural structures as well as biographical time (White et al., 2024; Borg et al., 2020; Atta et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). The whole-school approach in career education, which emphasizes services tailored to individuals, schools, communities, and cultures, reflects this systemic perspective (Keele et al., 2020). Education and career development are increasingly recognized as critical transitional mechanisms for young people, with one-on-one counseling, experiential learning opportunities, and activities aimed at inspiring forward-thinking, reflection, flexibility, and decision-making identified as critical components (Keele et al., 2020).

In the context of the Indonesian government, the implementation of the merit system through the SIPINTER application has increased the transparency, accountability, and effectiveness of ASN management at various levels of local government (Afisa et al., 2024). This conceptual innovation in ASN management creates a work environment that is adaptive, transparent, and oriented towards quality public services (Afisa et al., 2024), but also requires early-career employees to continue to adapt to new systems and procedures.

Learning Goal Orientation as a Critical Antecedent of Adaptive Performance

Conceptualization of Learning Goal Orientation

Learning goal orientation (LGO) is a motivational disposition in which individuals view achievement situations as opportunities to develop competencies, acquire new knowledge, and master new skills, rather than simply proving existing abilities or avoiding negative judgments. Within the broader framework of goal orientation theory, LGO is distinguished from performance goal orientation and is the most consistent orientation associated with adaptive behavior, feedback seeking, and resilience to failure.

Individuals with high LGOs tend to interpret challenges, errors, and negative feedback as useful diagnostic information for improvement, rather than as a threat to self-competence.

This disposition is particularly relevant in early career transitions, where individuals face intensive learning demands, role uncertainty, and the need to adapt quickly to a new work environment. In the context of Indonesian civil servants, where the basic value of "Competent" requires employees to "continue to learn and develop capabilities" (Widyastuti et al., 2023), LGO becomes a very relevant and functional disposition.

Mechanism of Influence of Learning Goal Orientation on Adaptive Performance

The influence of LGOs on *adaptive performance* can be explained through several interrelated theoretical mechanisms:

First, through increasing career adaptability resources. LGOs encourage individuals to proactively explore new work environments (*curiosity*), take control of their learning process (*control*), build confidence through gradual mastery (*confidence*), and maintain a future orientation towards career development (concern) (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023). Thus, LGO functions as a driver that activates and strengthens the four dimensions of career adaptability. Early career individuals with high LGOs are more likely to view the transition as a learning opportunity than a threat, so they are better able to mobilize adaptability resources effectively (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023; Alkhemeiri et al., 2020).

Second, through a buffer against transition shocks. Atta et al. (2024) show that transition shocks negatively affect the competence of early-career nurses, and that system *thinking* can buffer these negative effects, with transition shocks and systems thinking explaining 23.9% of variances in nursing process competencies. LGOs operate through a similar mechanism: individuals with high LGOs are better able to interpret transitional shocks as a normal part of the learning process, rather than as an indicator of personal failure (Atta et al., 2024). In the context of Indonesian civil servants, the shock of the transition from the academic environment to the reality of bureaucracy—with slow procedures, rigid hierarchies, and resistance to change—can be particularly intense for the best graduates accustomed to the dynamic and meritocratic academic environment.

Third, through moderating responses to identity threats. Bolander et al. (2024) found that early-career talents face a variety of identity threats throughout their talent journey, and that responses to these threats vary between individuals and over time. LGOs can serve as critical moderators: individuals with high LGOs are more likely to respond to identity threats with growth-oriented strategies—for example, interpreting critical feedback as development opportunities, seeking mentors for guidance, or reflecting on experiences to reinforce professional identity narratives—than with defensive or *withdrawal* strategies (Bolander et al., 2024).

Fourth, through improved feedback-seeking behavior and proactive learning. LGOs encourage individuals to actively seek *feedback* (*feedback seeking behavior*), which is a critical component of adaptive performance. This is consistent with the findings that career competencies strengthen career adaptability (Alkhemeiri et al., 2020), as LGOs encourage the development of career competencies in a sustainable manner. (Nainggolan et al., 2023) emphasized that state apparatus needs to be supported by innovative, creative, and transformative skills to increase the productivity of public services in the era of revolution 4.0, which is in line with the orientation of continuous learning driven by LGOs.

Fifth, through the formation of career resilience. Borg et al. (2020) propose that work *readiness* and *career resilience* are dynamic capabilities that are interrelated in the VUCA environment. LGOs strengthen both of these capabilities by encouraging individuals to view challenges as growth opportunities, maintain intrinsic motivation in the midst of uncertainty, and develop a broader repertoire of *coping* strategies (Borg et al., 2020). (Ismawaty, 2022) emphasizes the importance of improving the competence of civil servants in the VUCA era in order to have qualified leadership qualities, which is directly related to the adaptive capacity driven by LGOs.

Learning Goal Orientation in the Context of Early Career Talent Programs

The integration of LGOs with the findings of Bolander et al. (2024) results in a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of early-career talent programs. Bolander et al. (2024) found that talent shows a "*strong willingness to protect the talent identity*," but responses vary based on critical experience regarding career advancement and perceived social support. LGOs can explain some of these variations:

Talents with high LGOs are more likely to interpret talent program challenges as development opportunities and are better able to maintain identity coherence because their identity narratives are built on a foundation of growth and learning (Bolander et al., 2024; Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023). In contrast, talent with low LGOs is more vulnerable to identity threats because they tend to interpret challenges as indicators of inadequacy, adopting rigid defensive strategies that in the long run can hinder adaptation (Bolander et al., 2024).

The interaction between LGOs and social support is essential. Bolander et al. (2024) identified perceived social support as a critical factor. LGOs can amplify the positive effects of social support: individuals with high LGOs are more likely to leverage mentor and peer support for learning and development, while individuals with low LGOs may view social support primarily as status validation (White et al., 2024; Bolander et al., 2024).

Mediation Pathway from Learning Goal Orientation to Adaptive Performance

Based on the synthesis of the literature, the influence of LGO on *adaptive performance* in early career transitions can be mediated through several pathways:

1. **LGOs → Career adaptability → Adaptive performance:** LGOs increase career adaptability resources which in turn predict adaptive performance (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023; Alkhemeiri et al., 2020).
2. **LGOs → Feedback Seeking → Behavioral adjustments → Adaptive performance:** LGOs encourage feedback seeking behaviors that facilitate faster and more accurate behavioral adjustments.
3. **LGOs → Buffer of transition shocks → Competency development → Adaptive performance:** LGOs buffer the negative effects of transition shocks on competence (Atta et al., 2024).
4. **LGOs → Identity threat navigation → Identity coherence → Adaptive performance:** LGOs facilitate a more adaptive response to identity threats (Bolander et al., 2024).
5. **LGOs → Career resilience → Adaptive performance:** LGOs strengthen career resilience through growth-orientation (Borg et al., 2020).

The Career Context of Indonesian Government: Background and Implications

The Phenomenon of High Interest of the Best Graduates in ASN Careers

Indonesia is facing a unique phenomenon where a career as an ASN is one of the most in-demand choices for university graduates, including the best graduates from well-known universities. Several data and indicators support this claim:

Applicants' interest in CASN selection is consistently among the most in-demand professions among Indonesia's young generation. The main reasons include: (a) job stability and pension guarantees; (b) the social prestige attached to the status of civil servants; (c) structured career development opportunities; and (d) competitive benefits and perks.

This phenomenon creates important implications for adaptive performance. The best graduates who enter the bureaucracy carry high expectations of meritocracy, innovation, and social impact—expectations that often collide with the reality of hierarchical and procedural bureaucracy. This expectation-reality gap is a major source of transition shock and identity threats for early-career employees in government.

Unique Characteristics of ASN Careers and Transition Challenges

ASN careers have a number of characteristics that form a unique context for early career transitions:

Hierarchical and bureaucratic structure. The rank, class, and job system creates a relatively structured career path but also limits flexibility. Path dependence is particularly strong: initial placement and rank groups often determine long-term career trajectory (Lawrence-Thomas, 2025). Gulan and Aguilung (2021) found no significant differences in career adaptability based on job title level and length of service among government employees, but found significant differences in career intentions, suggesting that structural constraints can even out variations in adaptability while intentions remain differentiated.

Strict staffing regulations. Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning ASN and various derivative regulations regulate formal recruitment, placement, promotion, and career development. The implementation of the merit system through SIPINTER aims to increase the transparency and accountability of ASN management (Afisa et al., 2024), but also adds complexity that early career employees must navigate.

The basic values of ASN are AKHLAK. The launch of the basic values of BerAKHLAK—Service-Oriented, Accountable, Competent, Harmonious, Loyal, Adaptive, and Collaborative—aims to standardize the basic values of ASN which previously still varied in each government agency (Widyastuti et al., 2023; Tumiran et al., 2023). The value of "Adaptive" explicitly requires ASN to continue to innovate and be enthusiastic in driving and facing change, which is directly related to the adaptive performance construct. However, the internalization of these values by early-career employees can give rise to identity pressures when there is a gap between the declared values and the organizational practices experienced.

Government talent development program. Many Indonesian government agencies have adopted *talent management* programs to identify and develop outstanding employees. As shown by Bolander et al. (2024), talent designation can give rise to a "talent burden" in the form of identity threats, expectations pressures, and social struggles. In a bureaucratic culture that emphasizes seniority, young employees labeled as talented may face stronger social resistance.

Public service demands and reforms. Early career employees face the demand to immediately contribute to quality public services in conditions of limited resources and complex bureaucracy (Sumarmi et al., 2022; Zeke et al., 2024). (Nainggolan et al., 2023) emphasized that state apparatus needs to be supported by innovative, creative, and transformative skills to increase the productivity of public services in the era of the 4.0 revolution. (Ismawaty, 2022) added that the VUCA era demands a sustainable improvement in the competence of civil servants.

The Role of Learning Goal Orientation in the Context of Indonesian Civil Servants

LGOs play a critical role in the context of the early career transition of Indonesian civil servants through several mechanisms:

Buffering the shock of the bureaucratic transition. The best graduates who enter the bureaucracy often experience a gap between academic expectations and bureaucratic realities. LGOs help interpret these shocks as part of the learning process, maintaining motivation to develop the necessary bureaucratic competencies (Atta et al., 2024).

Buffering the threat of identity in talent programs. LGOs provide growth-oriented interpretive frameworks that help talents interpret social resistance as challenges that can be overcome through demonstrations of competence and tangible contributions (Bolander et al., 2024).

Compensates for structural mobility limitations. The rigid career structure of ASN can limit the *curiosity* and *control* dimensions of career adaptability (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023). LGOs encourage employees to seek learning opportunities in existing roles (*job crafting*) and develop new competencies independently.

Supporting the internalization of the value of AKHLAK. LGOs encourage a continuous learning orientation that aligns with the values of "Competent" and "Adaptive" in Moral

(Widyastuti et al., 2023), facilitating the internalization of these values as part of professional identity rather than simply formal compliance.

Integrative Theoretical Framework

Integrated Conceptual Model

Based on a comprehensive synthesis, adaptive performance in early career transitions in Indonesian government can be modeled through seven interrelated components:

1. **Learning goal orientation** as a motivational disposition that encourages growth and learning orientation;
2. **Active construction of career identity** through the process of career development throughout life, including the formation of identity as a public servant (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023);
3. **Career adaptability resource mobilization** strengthened by LGOs (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023; Alkhemeiri et al., 2020);
4. **Identity threat navigation** from talent designation and bureaucratic social dynamics, moderated by LGOs (Bolander et al., 2024);
5. **The role of organizational socialization**, mentorship, and structured development programs (White et al., 2024; Atta et al., 2024);
6. **The interaction of personal career competencies and organizational contextual support** (Alkhemeiri et al., 2020; Borg et al., 2020; Azzahra et al., 2022);
7. **Contextual specificity of the Indonesian government sector**—personnel regulations, seniority culture, moral values, and demands for bureaucratic reform (Widyastuti et al., 2023; Afisa et al., 2024; Ismawaty, 2022).

Temporal Dynamics: LGOs as Identity Stabilizers

Following Bolander et al.'s (2024) emphasis on the temporal dimension, LGOs serve as identity stabilizers that help ASN talents maintain narrative coherence throughout the early career phases:

Social Support as a Critical Moderator

Bolander et al. (2024) identified perceived social support as a critical factor. LGOs interact with social support: when both are high, talent is in optimal condition; when social support is low but LGO is high, individuals still have internal motivational resources; when both are low, the risk of adaptation failure is highest (Bolander et al., 2024; White et al., 2024).

White et al. (2024) found that effective retention interventions for early-career professionals include mentorship, *preceptorship*, structured competency frameworks, and integration into leadership and organizational culture. These findings can be directly applied to the Indonesian government's talent program.

Theoretical Contributions

This synthesis makes several theoretical contributions. First, integrating previously separate literature on career adaptability, identity threats, *learning goal orientation*, and government career contexts into a coherent framework. Second, expanding the identity threat framework of Bolander et al. (2024) by proposing LGOs as moderators to determine whether talent designation triggers constructive or destructive identity dynamics. Third, contextualizing adaptive performance theory in the Indonesian government sector—a domain that is less explored in career adaptability research.

Nuances and Conditions of the Boundary

Some important nuances need to be discussed. First, although LGOs and career adaptability generally predict positive outcomes, government bureaucratic structures can limit the extent to which individual dispositions and capacities translate into performance and career advancement (Alkhemeiri et al., 2020; Borg et al., 2020; Gulan & Aguilung, 2021). Second, Azzahra et al. (2022) found that *psychological capital* negatively affects career adaptation in the context of the Aceh Besar government—a counterintuitive finding that may reflect the

inhibiting effect of bureaucratic structures on the expression of psychological resources. Third, Indonesian cultural values such as *ewuh pakewuh* (sungkan), social hierarchy, and collectivism can influence how LGOs are expressed and how identity threats are experienced and responded.

Practical Implications for Indonesian Government Talent Management

Indonesian government agencies need to consider several practical implications:

First, developing LGOs through structured interventions. Training programs for early-career employees need to explicitly foster learning goal orientation through task design that emphasizes learning and formative feedback. Carvalho et al. (2021) demonstrated that career adaptability interventions can achieve expected outcomes related to the confidence and control dimensions, suggesting that structured programs can effectively develop adaptability-related resources.

Second, designing talent programs that are sensitive to identity threats. ASN talent programs need to not only identify and develop outstanding employees, but also explicitly anticipate and manage identity threats (Bolander et al., 2024), including transparent communication about program expectations and mechanisms to address social dynamics.

Third, providing structured social support in the form of mentoring, coaching, and talent communities as a buffer against identity threats and transition shocks (White et al., 2024; Atta et al., 2024).

Fourth, ensuring transparency and fairness in the talent designation process to minimize identity threats from perceived injustice (Bolander et al., 2024; Afisa et al., 2024).

Fifth, creating an environment that supports LGO expression through an organizational culture that values learning from mistakes, experimentation, and continuous development—in line with the values of "Adaptive" and "Competent" in BerAKHLAK (Widyastuti et al., 2023).

Future Research Directions

Several future research directions emerged from this synthesis. First, empirical testing of the role of LGOs as antecedents and moderators in the relationship between talent designation, identity threats, and adaptive performance in the Indonesian government sector is needed. Longitudinal designs that capture temporal dynamics will be invaluable (Bolander et al., 2024; Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023).

Second, comparative studies across government contexts in different countries will help establish the generalizability of the findings. Preliminary evidence from Indonesia (Azzahra et al., 2022; Sumarmi et al., 2022) and the Philippines (Gulan & Aguilung, 2021, 2022) provide the foundation, but a broader cross-national comparison is needed.

Third, the interaction between LGOs and local cultural factors in shaping responses to identity threats and adaptive performance in government needs to be explored. Fourth, intervention studies that examine the effectiveness of LGO enhancement programs, identity-threat-sensitive talent management designs, and structured social support systems in the context of early career governance will provide actionable evidence for practice.

CONCLUSION

This article has provided a comprehensive theoretical synthesis of the foundations of adaptive performance during early career transitions, integrating lifelong career development theory, career adaptability frameworks, identity threat perspectives, and learning goal orientation in the unique context of Indonesian government sector careers. The synthesis shows that adaptive performance arises from the ever-evolving interaction of self-concept and identity (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023), proactive mobilization of adaptability resources (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023; Alkhemeiri et al., 2020), navigating identity threats from talent designation (Bolander et al., 2024), and the driving or inhibiting influences of organizational context and social support (White et al., 2024; Borg et al., 2020; Atta et al., 2024).

Learning goal orientation plays a multifaceted role: as a driver of career adaptability resource mobilization, a buffer against transition shocks, a moderator of responses to identity threats, and a foundation of career resilience. In the context of Indonesian government—where millions of top university graduates are racing to enter the bureaucracy but then face organizational realities that are very different from expectations—understanding the role of LGOs is crucial.

ASN talent programs, while noble in order to develop future leaders, need to be designed with full awareness of the potential threat of identity and the accompanying psychological burden (Bolander et al., 2024), as well as with explicit strategies for cultivating LGOs among early-career employees. Core principles remain valid: developing a learning goal orientation and leveraging adaptability resources in a supportive organizational ecosystem—including adequate social support, structured mentoring, institutional transparency, and an organizational culture that values continuous learning aligned with the values of BerAKHLAK—is essential for a successful and sustainable early career transition in Indonesia's government sector.

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