

CAREER ADAPTABILITY OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS TEACHERS: THE ROLE OF EMOTION REGULATION AND RESILIENCE

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Abstract

Teachers in special schools in Indonesia face greater psychological and emotional demands than those in regular schools due to the diverse needs of students with disabilities, intensive classroom interactions, administrative workload, and continuous curriculum changes. These conditions require strong psychological resources, particularly emotion regulation, resilience, and career adaptability. This study examined the relationships between emotion regulation and resilience with career adaptability among 70 special schools teachers in Kudus Regency using a quantitative correlational design. Data were collected using self-report scales developed based on established theoretical frameworks. The results showed a significant positive relationship between emotion regulation and career adaptability ($r = 0.475$, $p < 0.01$) and between resilience and career adaptability ($r = 0.488$, $p < 0.01$). Multiple regression analysis revealed that emotion regulation and resilience jointly predicted career adaptability ($R = 0.560$, $R^2 = 0.314$, $p < 0.01$). These findings indicate that teachers with higher emotional regulation abilities and resilience are better equipped to adapt to professional demands and career challenges in special education settings. The study highlights the importance of strengthening psychological resources to support sustainable career development among special schools teachers.

Keywords: career adaptability, emotion regulation, resilience, special schools teachers, special education.



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INTRODUCTION

Education for children with special needs in Indonesia is provided through special education institutions known as special schools. These schools are designed to deliver educational services to students who have physical, emotional, intellectual, or social barriers but still possess the potential to develop optimally (Diwanti, 2021). In addition to academic services, special schools also provide various non-academic facilities that support students' talents, skills, and potential (Indriarti et al., 2022). In Indonesia, special education services are regulated not only under Regulation No. 72 of 1991 but also reinforced by Government Regulation (PP) No. 13 of 2020 concerning reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, which emphasizes inclusive support, teacher readiness, and adaptive instructional strategies. (Tumanggor et al., 2023). This condition is also evident in special schools in Kudus Regency, where teachers serve students with diverse disabilities, requiring them to adjust teaching strategies flexibly and consistently.

Along with the development of inclusive education in Indonesia, the demand for professional special schools teachers continues to increase. Teachers in special schools must possess pedagogical competence, psychological understanding, and communication skills tailored to individuals with special needs. Their challenges are far more complex because they must adjust teaching strategies, intervention methods, and interaction patterns to accommodate students with various disabilities such as visual impairments, hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, and autism (Eva et al., 2022). Teachers in Special schools in Kudus experience similar complexities, particularly because they must manage diverse student needs while navigating varying school resources. These challenges indicate that the teaching profession in special schools requires strong psychological resilience.

Field phenomena further highlight the importance of psychological competencies for special schools teachers. A case reported by JoglosemarNews.com (2024) regarding the alleged abuse of a student with special needs by a special schools teacher illustrates how poor emotion regulation can negatively affect students and undermine teacher professionalism. This case demonstrates the urgency of child protection in school settings, especially for students with special needs who are more vulnerable. Additionally, data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2022) show that there are more than 26,000 special schools teachers across Indonesia, with several regions reporting high turnover rates due to job pressure, emotional stress, and low job satisfaction. Initial observations in Special schools in Kudus show similar issues, with teachers reporting emotional fatigue, increasing work demands, and the need for ongoing adaptation to shifting educational requirements. These conditions emphasize the necessity of strong adaptive capacities for special schools teachers.

In this context, career adaptability becomes an essential aspect that reflects an individual's ability to adjust to changing career demands, face challenges, and anticipate future professional development (Ramdhani et al., 2020). Individuals with high career adaptability are generally better at coping with career barriers, more prepared to deal with complex work situations, and have clearer and more directed career goals (Yolanda et al., 2022). Career adaptability also helps individuals maintain emotional stability, manage pressure effectively, and sustain professional commitment. This is highly relevant for teachers in Special schools in Kudus, who must navigate shifting curricular expectations, diverse student characteristics, and varying demands from parents and the community.

One important factor influencing career adaptability is emotion regulation, defined as an individual's ability to manage, modify, and express emotions appropriately according to

situational demands (Galuh Shisilia et al., 2024). Emotion regulation is crucial in the workplace, especially for special schools teachers who frequently encounter emotionally intense situations. Research by Iramdhani et al. (2024) emphasizes that effective emotion regulation is necessary to prevent aggressive behavior, burnout, and interpersonal conflict, especially among teachers working with students who frequently display challenging behaviors. Additionally, Lee and Jung (2022) found that adaptive emotion regulation positively affects career adaptability, while maladaptive patterns negatively influence confidence in career decision-making. This aligns with the experiences of teachers in Special schools in Kudus, who often encounter students with tantrums, emotional dysregulation, or high dependency on teachers situations requiring stable emotional management.

Furthermore, resilience is another psychological component that significantly supports career adaptability. Resilience refers to an individual's ability to recover from stress, adapt to difficulties, and continue functioning optimally in challenging situations (Nurjanah et al., 2024; Syafira Faradina & Rosdiana, 2022). In work settings, resilience helps individuals remain emotionally stable, reinterpret negative experiences constructively, and find adaptive strategies to manage change. Research by Reynardo et al. (2024) indicates that individuals with high resilience tend to show stronger career adaptability, while Seibert et al. (2016) state that resilience forms a key foundation for dealing with "career shocks" or unexpected career changes. For teachers in Special schools in Kudus, resilience is essential in maintaining motivation, professional commitment, and emotional endurance amidst educational, behavioral, and policy-related challenges.

Teachers in special schools who face psychological pressure, complex student behaviors, and shifting educational policies rely heavily on resilience to remain effective in their roles. Teachers with low resilience are more susceptible to stress, emotional exhaustion, reduced performance, and difficulty adapting to environmental changes (Alueyana et al., 2024). Preliminary findings in Kudus indicate that some teachers continue to struggle with job-related pressure, particularly when confronted with increasing individualized learning needs and rapidly changing educational guidelines.

Therefore, this study aimed to examine: (1) the relationship between emotion regulation and career adaptability, (2) the relationship between resilience and career adaptability, and (3) the joint contribution of emotion regulation and resilience to career adaptability among special schools teachers.

We hypothesized that: Emotion regulation would be positively associated with career adaptability, Resilience would be positively associated with career adaptability, Emotion regulation and resilience would jointly predict higher levels of career adaptability.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a correlational method. This design was selected because the primary aim of the research was to examine the relationships between two independent variables emotion regulation and resilience and one dependent variable, namely career adaptability among teachers in Special schools. This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationships between emotion regulation, resilience, and career adaptability among teachers working in special schools.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants were 70 teachers from special schools in Kudus Regency, Central Java, selected using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were: (1) active special school teachers, (2) minimum one year of teaching experience, and (3) direct involvement in teaching students with special needs. The minimum sample size was determined using Green's (1991) formula for multiple regression analysis ($N \geq 50 + 8m$), with two predictors, resulting in a minimum of 66 participants. The teachers were drawn from schools serving students with mixed disability categories (general special schools), including intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, hearing impairments, and multiple disabilities.

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

Career adaptability was measured using a Career Adaptability Scale developed by the researchers based on the four dimensions proposed by Savickas (2012), namely concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. The initial scale consisted of 40 items arranged in a 4-point Likert format with response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (agree), to 4 (strongly agree). All items underwent expert judgment by five raters. Using Aiken's V analysis, only items with coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.90 were retained. A total of 10 items were removed for not meeting the content validity requirements, resulting in a final scale of 30 valid items (15 favorable and 15 unfavorable). The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of the final scale was 0.927, indicating excellent internal consistency (Periantalo, 2020). This instrument measured teachers' readiness and psychological resources for facing career-related tasks and transitions.

Emotion regulation was measured using an Emotion Regulation Scale constructed by the researchers based on Thompson's (2010) theoretical model, which includes monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional responses. The initial scale consisted of 42 items formatted on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). After expert judgment and Aiken's V calculation, items with low content validity were removed, resulting in 31 valid items (17 favorable and 14 unfavorable). The retained items demonstrated a content validity range of 0.80 to 0.90. The final version of the scale showed a high reliability coefficient of 0.941. This scale assessed the extent to which teachers could observe, interpret, and modify their emotional reactions during challenging situations.

Resilience was measured using a Resilience Scale developed based on the seven dimensions outlined by Wolin and Wolin (2014), including insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humor, and morality. The original instrument contained 42 items in a 4-point Likert format. Based on expert validation using Aiken's V, only items scoring between 0.80 and 0.90 were retained, resulting in 32 valid items (19 favorable and 13 unfavorable). Items with values below the threshold were removed to maintain scale brevity and reduce respondent fatigue, considering the workload of special education teachers. The final resilience scale produced a reliability coefficient of 0.904, indicating strong reliability. The instrument captured teachers' abilities to withstand pressure, adapt positively, and maintain functional performance in demanding work environments.

All instruments underwent content validation through expert judgment involving five raters, consisting of psychology lecturers and practitioners in psychological assessment. Aiken's V analysis was applied to determine item eligibility, and only items meeting the minimum validity threshold were included. The final instruments used in the study consisted of 30 items for career adaptability, 31 items for emotion regulation, and 32 items for resilience, all of which met the required standards for validity and reliability. All three scales were self-developed based on the above theoretical models rather than direct translations of existing instruments.

Procedure and Data Analysis Technique

The data collection technique used in this study involved administering three psychological scales career adaptability, emotion regulation, and resilience—to teachers working in special schools in Kudus Regency. Data were obtained through self-report questionnaires distributed directly to respondents at their respective schools. The researcher conducted field visits to SLB Negeri Cendono, Yayasan Darul Fathonah, and Sekolah Inklusi Talenta, and all participants completed the questionnaires voluntarily after being informed about the study's objectives and ethical procedures.

Before conducting the main statistical analyses, the researcher administered assumption tests, including normality and linearity tests. The results of the normality test indicated that all variables were normally distributed, as shown by significance values greater than 0.05, fulfilling the requirements for parametric statistical analysis. The linearity tests demonstrated that the relationships between emotion regulation, resilience, and career adaptability followed a linear pattern, with deviation-from-linearity significance values exceeding 0.05, confirming the suitability of further correlation and regression analyses.

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to describe participant characteristics and variable distributions. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine bivariate relationships among variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to assess the simultaneous contribution of emotion regulation and resilience to career adaptability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The majority of participants were female (80%), reflecting the gender distribution commonly found in special education teaching professions in Kudus regency. Descriptive data are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Table Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variable	Dominant category	Range / distribution
Gender	56 females (80%)	14 males (20%), 56 females (80%)
Age	26 – 30 years	19 - 56 years
Teaching experience	3 - 5 years	1 – 15 years

Note: Table 1 presents participant demographics, indicating an imbalanced gender ratio, an age range of 19–56 years, and a majority having taught for 1 to 15 years.

Data collection in this study was conducted by distributing research instruments to 70 participating special schools teachers. The instruments were given directly to teachers who met the criteria for research subjects.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of research variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Category	Score interval	Frequency	Percentage
Emotion Regulation	91.00	4.073	Very High	$X \geq 97$	13	13%
			High	$93 \leq X < 97$	17	17%
			Moderate	$89 \leq X < 93$	19	19%
			Low	$85 \leq X < 89$	18	18%

Resilience	64.94	3.662	Very Low	$X \leq 85$	3	3%
			Very High	$X \geq 70$	15	15%
			High	$67 \leq X < 70$	9	9%
			Moderate	$63 \leq X < 67$	28	28%
			Low	$59 \leq X < 63$	13	13%
Career Adaptability	79.26	4.565	Very Low	$X \leq 59$	5	5%
			Very High	$X \geq 86$	16	16%
			High	$82 \leq X < 86$	14	14%
			Moderate	$77 \leq X < 82$	27	27%
			Low	$72 \leq X < 77$	11	11%
			Very Low	$X \leq 72$	2	2%

Table 2 presents the categorization of the three research variables: emotion regulation, resilience, and career adaptability. For the emotion regulation variable, the total scores ranged from very low to very high. The mean score obtained was 91.00, with a standard deviation of 4.073. Based on the categorization results, 13 teachers (13%) fell into the very high category, 17 teachers (17%) into the high category, 19 teachers (19%) into the moderate category, 18 teachers (18%) into the low category, and 3 teachers (3%) into the very low category.

For the resilience variable, the mean score was 64.94, with a standard deviation of 3.662. The categorization results showed that 15 teachers (15%) were in the very high category, 9 teachers (9%) in the high category, 28 teachers (28%) in the moderate category, 13 teachers (13%) in the low category, and 5 teachers (5%) in the very low category.

Meanwhile, for the career adaptability variable, the mean score obtained was 79.26, with a standard deviation of 4.565. A total of 16 teachers (16%) were categorized as very high, 14 teachers (14%) as high, 27 teachers (27%) as moderate, 11 teachers (11%) as low, and 2 teachers (2%) as very low.

Normality testing in this study was conducted by calculating the residuals using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. The data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test results

No	Variabel	K-SZ	Significance (P)	Distribution
1.	Emotion Regulation	0.129	0.154	Normal
2.	Resilience	0.113	0.200	Normal
3.	Career Adaptability	0.095	0.200	Normal

The normality test used the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method for each variable. The results showed that the emotion regulation variable had a significance value of 0.154 with a K–SZ value of 0.129. The resilience variable had a significance value of 0.200 with a K–SZ value of 0.113, and the career adaptability variable had a significance value of 0.200 with a K–SZ value of 0.095. Since all significance values were greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the

three variables in this study were normally distributed. Thus, the data met the normality assumption.

Linearity testing in this study used the deviation-from-linearity significance value as the basis for interpretation. The results showed that the significance value for the deviation from linearity between emotion regulation (X_1) and career adaptability (Y) was 0.447, and between resilience (X_2) and career adaptability (Y) was 0.930. As both values were greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the relationships between each independent variable and the dependent variable did not deviate significantly from linearity, thereby meeting the linearity assumption required for regression analysis.

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to test the main hypothesis and determine whether emotion regulation and resilience jointly predicted career adaptability in special schools teachers. This analysis was used to assess the extent to which the independent variables (emotion regulation and resilience) could predict the dependent variable (career adaptability). The results of the multiple linear regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Squared	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig (p)
1-Regression	0.560	0.314	0.271	3.898	7.320	0.002

Table 4 shows the results of the multiple linear regression analysis. The regression model produced a significance value of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$) with $R = 0.560$ and $R^2 = 0.314$, indicating that there was a significant relationship between emotion regulation (X_1) and resilience (X_2) and career adaptability (Y). Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is a relationship between emotion regulation and resilience and career adaptability was accepted, with an effective contribution of 31.4%.

The results of the Pearson product-moment correlation tests showed that emotion regulation (X_1) had a significant positive relationship with career adaptability (Y), with a p value of 0.002 ($p < 0.01$) and $r_{x_1y} = 0.475$. This means that the higher the emotion regulation, the higher the career adaptability. Similarly, resilience (X_2) had a significant positive relationship with career adaptability, with a p value of 0.001 ($p < 0.01$) and $r_{x_2y} = 0.488$. This implies that the higher the resilience, the higher the career adaptability.

Thus, all three hypotheses proposed in this study were supported: emotion regulation and resilience were each positively associated with career adaptability, and together they significantly predicted career adaptability among special schools teachers.

The results of this study indicate a significant relationship between emotion regulation and resilience and career adaptability among teachers in special schools. These findings reinforce the idea that personal psychological capacities (particularly the ability to regulate emotions and the strength to recover from stress) play essential roles in shaping teachers' readiness to face challenges, transitions, and professional demands in special education settings. Given the complexities of working with students with diverse needs, emotional and adaptive capacities become key predictors of career adaptability for special schools teachers.

The dominance of female teachers (80%) in this study reflects the broader trend in special education, where caregiving-oriented roles are often occupied by women. Previous studies suggest that female teachers tend to exhibit higher emotional sensitivity and

interpersonal engagement, which may influence emotion regulation strategies and resilience development.

Emotion regulation enables teachers in special schools to manage stress effectively, maintain emotional balance, and respond appropriately to challenging classroom behaviors. Teachers with strong emotion regulation skills are more capable of controlling negative emotional reactions, staying focused, and maintaining motivation in fulfilling their duties. This aligns with the findings of Sari et al. (2021), who demonstrated that emotion regulation significantly contributes to teacher well-being and professional efficacy. Xie (2021) also found that emotion regulation supports work engagement and enhances readiness for career-related changes.

Resilience similarly plays a crucial role in strengthening career adaptability. Resilient special schools teachers tend to interpret challenges as opportunities for growth rather than as threats. They possess the capability to recover after setbacks and maintain professional commitment despite the emotional and administrative pressures inherent in special education environments. This is consistent with Nurjanah et al. (2024), who found that teacher resilience is influenced by social support, teaching experience, and professional confidence. Reintjes et al. (2025) further emphasized that resilience functions as a protective factor, helping teachers cope with stress and educational system changes.

Theoretically, the findings of this study support the resilience framework proposed by Wolin and Wolin (2014), which suggests that adaptive strengths allow individuals to navigate adversity more effectively. Emotion regulation acts as a stabilizing internal factor, while resilience serves as a dynamic adaptive mechanism that enables teachers to maintain long-term effectiveness. From a practical standpoint, these results imply that educational institutions serving students with special needs should implement programs designed to enhance emotion regulation skills and resilience among special schools teachers. Training on emotional management strategies, peer support systems, and structured mentorship can better equip teachers to adapt to professional pressures (Fadia et al., 2025; Janetiana & Wibowo, 2024).

However, the present study has several limitations. First, the correlational design does not permit causal conclusions. Second, the use of self-report questionnaires introduces the possibility of social desirability bias. Third, the sample was limited to teachers in special schools located in Kudus, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Although the findings provide meaningful insights, the relatively small sample size ($N = 70$) limits the generalizability of the results to all special school teachers in Indonesia. Future studies with larger and more diverse samples are recommended. Future research may consider longitudinal designs to track changes in emotion regulation, resilience, and career adaptability over time. Expanding the sample to include teachers from different regions and incorporating qualitative approaches may also provide deeper insights into how special schools teachers navigate psychological demands and professional challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the relationships between emotion regulation and resilience and career adaptability among teachers in special schools. The findings confirmed that both emotion regulation and resilience significantly and positively contributed to teachers' career adaptability. Emotion regulation supported teachers in maintaining emotional stability, managing stress, and responding adaptively to the complex behaviors and challenges encountered in special education contexts. Meanwhile, resilience strengthened teachers' capacity to recover from adversity and maintain professional engagement despite demanding work conditions.

Overall, this study highlights that psychological strengths specifically emotion regulation and resilience—function as critical resources that enhance special schools teacher ability to navigate career transitions, job demands, and structural changes in the educational system. The novelty of this research lies in its focused examination of teachers in special schools within Kudus. By analyzing emotion regulation and resilience simultaneously, this study contributes to the field of educational and career psychology by emphasizing the importance of strengthening internal psychological capacities to support sustainable professional growth among teachers in special education settings. In line with these findings, special schools and educational authorities should consider incorporating regular training on emotion regulation and resilience building into teacher professional development programs to strengthen teacher career adaptability.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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