

## BEYOND SKILLS: SELF-ESTEEM AND LEARNING AGILITY IN CAREER ADAPTABILITY\*

### YETENEKLERİN ÖTESİNDE: KARIYERE UYUM SAĞLAMADA ÖZSAYGI VE ÖĞRENME ÇEVİKLİĞİ

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#### Abstract

In contemporary work environments, characterized by rapid technological advancement and organizational complexity, professionals must continually develop new skills and demonstrate adaptability to sustain career growth. Learning agility, the capacity to learn from experience and apply knowledge in novel situations, has emerged as a critical driver of career success. This study examines the relationship between learning agility and career adaptability, exploring the mediating role of self-esteem. Drawing on Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005) and Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), the research underscores how psychological resources facilitate adaptive career behaviors. A total of 353 employees in Istanbul participated, and structural equation modeling (SEM) were employed to analyze the data. Findings indicate a significant and robust relationship between learning agility and career adaptability, with confidence as the strongest facet and concern as the weakest. Self-esteem, particularly the self-liking component, partially mediates this relationship, suggesting that repeated mastery experiences reinforce self-worth and enhance proactive career behavior.

The results extend theoretical understanding by integrating psychosocial resources into career adaptability models and highlight practical implications for talent development, including mentoring, structured feedback, and targeted interventions for early-career employees. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring cross-cultural contexts, longitudinal designs, and demographic moderators to further

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clarify the mechanisms underlying adaptive career development. Overall, fostering learning agility and self-esteem emerges as a strategic approach to support sustainable career success in dynamic organizational settings.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, career adaptability skills, learning agility, industry 4.0.

**JEL Classification:** J24, M53, O33, D91

## Öz

Günümüz iş ortamları, hızlı teknolojik ilerlemeler ve artan organizasyonel karmaşıklıkla karakterizedir ve profesyonellerin sürekli olarak yeni beceriler geliştirmesi ve uyum yeteneklerini göstermesi kariyer gelişimi için kritik hale gelmiştir. Deneyimlerden öğrenme ve bilgiyi yeni durumlarda uygulama kapasitesi olarak tanımlanan öğrenme çevikliği, kariyer başarısının önemli bir belirleyicisi olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışma, öğrenme çevikliği ile kariyer uyum becerileri arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemekte ve özsaygının bu ilişkideki aracılık rolünü araştırmaktadır. Kariyer İnşası Kuramı (Savickas, 2005) ve Sosyal Öğrenme Kuramı (Bandura, 1977) çerçevesinde, psikolojik kaynakların uyumlu kariyer davranışlarını nasıl desteklediği vurgulanmaktadır. İstanbul'da 353 çalışanla gerçekleştirilen araştırmada veriler Yapısal Eşitlik Modelleme (SEM) yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, öğrenme çevikliği ile kariyer uyumu arasında anlamlı ve güçlü bir ilişki olduğunu göstermektedir; kariyer uyumunun farklı boyutları arasında "özgüven" en güçlü, "kaygı/özen" ise en zayıf boyut olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Özsaygı, özellikle kendini sevmeye (self-liking) boyutu, bu ilişkiyi kısmi olarak aracılık etmektedir; bu durum, tekrar eden başarı deneyimlerinin bireyin öz-değerini güçlendirdiğini ve proaktif kariyer davranışlarını desteklediğini göstermektedir. Bulgular, kariyer uyumu modellerine psikososyal kaynakların entegrasyonunu sağlayarak kuramsal anlayışı genişletmekte ve mentorluk, yapılandırılmış geri bildirim ve erken kariyer desteği gibi uygulamalar için önemli çıkarımlar sunmaktadır. Gelecek araştırmalar, bu bulguları kültürlerarası karşılaştırmalar, uzunlamasına tasarımlar ve demografik değişkenlerin rolü üzerinden genişleterek, uyumlu kariyer gelişimini etkileyen mekanizmaları daha iyi ortaya koyabilir. Genel olarak, öğrenme çevikliği ve özsaygının güçlendirilmesi, dinamik iş ortamlarında sürdürülebilir kariyer başarısını destekleyen stratejik bir yaklaşım olarak öne çıkmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kariyere uyum sağlama becerileri, benlik saygısı, öğrenme çevikliği, endüstri 4.0

**JEL Sınıflandırılması:** J24, M53, O33, D91

## 1. Introduction

In the modern era of dynamic business and technological advancements, significant transformations reshape individuals' career management strategies (Hirschi, 2018). The innovations of Industry 4.0 and the AI revolution have substantially changed job definitions and requirements. Moreover, technological advancements such as artificial intelligence, along with the differing workplace expectations of Generation Z compared to previous generations, have fundamentally disrupted traditional career paradigms (Brougham & Haar, 2018).

Self-esteem, characterized as how a person views own value and ability (Orth & Robins, 2014), is vital for career growth, impacting individuals' resilience during uncertain times and boosting their ability to find satisfaction in their professional experiences. (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001). High self-esteem is correlated with greater psychological readiness to navigate career-related transitions and a stronger sense of agency. (Cai et al., 2015). Additionally, individuals with strong learning agility often boost their self-esteem through positive feedback from their performance experiences, enabling them to make informed career decisions with confidence (Rudolph et al., 2019; Yuen et al., 2021).

Learning agility, career adaptability, and self-esteem are crucial factors that influence employees' professional development. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of learning agility as the capacity to learn from experience and apply that learning to perform successfully under new or first-time conditions (De Meuse, Dai, & Hallenbeck, 2010). Self-esteem, on the other hand, has been identified as a central psychological variable affecting job performance and leadership perception (Rosenberg, 1965).

This study examines the relationship between learning agility and career adaptability, with self-esteem serving as a mediator, aiming to fill gaps in the literature and provide applicable insights for both academia and business. The study's main contribution lies in its potential to develop more informed and practical strategies at both individual and organizational levels. The findings are expected to guide future research and support actionable business applications.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Learning Agility

In today's organizations, success is no longer confined to possessing specific competencies; adapting to changing conditions, demonstrating flexibility, and exhibiting agility have become increasingly critical (De Meuse et al., 2010). The conceptual foundations of learning agility, particularly its emphasis on continuous learning and adaptability, can be traced back to early leadership development studies by McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison (1988), who investigated the traits distinguishing successful and unsuccessful executives. These findings were later interpreted by scholars such as De Meuse and Harvey (2021) as precursors to what is now termed *learning agility*. This construct refers to an individual's capacity to acquire and apply new knowledge quickly, derive meaningful lessons from experiences, and transfer these insights to novel or ambiguous contexts (DeRue et al., 2012). High learning agility is considered a core competency differentiating high-potential talent (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000).

Learning agility extends beyond technical knowledge; it relies on learning from social environments. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory provides a foundational framework, highlighting how individuals learn from professional role models, social networks, and shared experiences (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Social diversity and constructive feedback significantly enhance agile learning capabilities (Dragoni et al., 2011; Dencker et al., 2016). This interplay highlights a conceptual overlap between social capital and learning agility. Some research showed that individuals in socially diverse organizational contexts (Dragoni et al., 2011 and feedback from one's social environment (Dencker et al., 2016) significantly enhances agile learning capabilities

Learning agility has four primary dimensions: *Mental agility* is the ability to analyze complex situations and develop creative solutions; *people agility* reflects our flexibility and empathy in social interactions. *Change agility* is the capacity to quickly adapt to new circumstances, while *agility* emphasizes the commitment to achieving objectives despite challenges (Mitchinson & Morris, 2014).

In evaluating leadership potential, learning agility is considered an essential element. High learning agility enhances leaders' ability to create innovative solutions and address challenges (De Meuse, 2019). In summary, learning agility is essential for success in today's business world, reflecting individuals' and leaders' ability to continuously learn and adapt to change. It is not just an individual's learning orientation; social learning processes significantly contribute to developing this competency. Social learning theory offers a framework for understanding the social and cognitive processes behind learning agility.

## **2.2. Career Adaptability Skills**

These abilities demonstrate a person's capacity to manage changes and exhibit adaptability in their professional life (Gerni & Denizli, 2021). They improve a person's capacity to adapt to workplace changes and seize future career opportunities. (Savickas et al., 2013).

Career adaptability skills consist of four key components. *Concern* encompasses a person's capacity to anticipate future career opportunities and adjust to the changing work landscape. This aspect is essential for effective long-term career planning. (Coetzee et al., 2020; Parola & Marcionetti, 2022). *Control* signifies a person's ability to handle career challenges and determination to achieve career objectives. This aspect highlights self-management strategies and is essential for career development. (Coetzee et al., 2020). *Curiosity* reflects a person's desire to explore career opportunities and acquire new knowledge and skills. Career curiosity supports professional growth and success in the workplace. (Coetzee et al., 2020; Parola & Marcionetti, 2022). *Confidence* is the trust in one's capability to achieve career goals objectives. This conviction strengthens their ability to tackle challenges and fuels their ambition to progress in their career. (Coetzee et al., 2020).

These abilities enhance individuals' capacity to overcome workplace challenges and adapt to changing conditions, positively impact job satisfaction, quality of life, and overall well-being. (Zacher et al., 2015). Additionally, they empower individuals to manage career development effectively and enhance success. (Savickas et al., 2009).

Multiple factors shape career adaptability skills, such as individual psychosocial resources, environmental shifts, and personal situations. (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). Self-confidence, stress management abilities, and emotional intelligence are vital components that enhance career adaptability skills. (Coetzee & Harry, 2014). Additionally, educational background, work experience, and organizational environment factors significantly develop these skills (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020).

## **2.3. Self-Esteem**

The concept of self-worth directly influences career choices and professional performance (Rosenberg et al., 1995). It includes two major dimensions: self-competence, indicating perceived capability, and self-liking, denoting acceptance and positive self-regard (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001). Elevated self-esteem is reliably linked to enhanced career satisfaction and lower anxiety during job

transitions. (Marcionetti & Rossier, 2021). This conviction affects their problem-solving skills and work performance (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001). Self-acceptance involves embracing oneself as one truly is and showing self- (Bosson & Swann, 1999).

Self-esteem significantly impacts individuals' careers and professional lives. Those with elevated self-esteem are more adept at managing challenges, achieving greater professional success, and cultivating fulfilling careers. They frequently establish ambitious goals and strive to achieve them. (Miner, 1992, cited in Cai et al., 2015). Moreover, higher self-esteem enhances life satisfaction and helps people manage career uncertainties more effectively (Lin et al., 2015). Numerous studies highlight the significant role of self-esteem in determining career success. For example, Salmela-Aro and Nurmi (2007) showed that students with greater self-esteem tend to obtain higher-paying and more fulfilling jobs a decade later. In a separate study, Marcionetti and Rossier (2019) discovered that individuals possessing lower self-esteem encountered greater challenges in making career-related decisions and reported elevated levels of career anxiety.

Self-esteem plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' resilience and their reactions to career uncertainties, thereby enhancing proactive career management and success. (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012). In conclusion, self-esteem significantly impacts an individual's career adaptability and success. Enhanced self-esteem elevates self-confidence, facilitates professional accomplishments, and improves life satisfaction. Therefore, enhancing self-esteem is crucial for achieving career success and promoting overall well-being.

### **3. Hypothesis Development**

#### **3.1. Learning Agility and Career Adaptability**

Learning agility, defined as the ability to rapidly acquire and effectively apply new knowledge to novel and complex situations, has emerged as a crucial competence, especially given today's unpredictable and fast-changing professional landscape (DeRue, Ashford, & Myers, 2012). Individuals with high learning agility are more capable of successfully managing career transitions, as they can quickly adapt their behaviors and skills in response to shifting demands (Mitchinson & Morris, 2014). Prior research underscores that individuals with elevated learning agility are typically proactive, flexible, and adept at handling uncertainty, supporting their career adaptability (De Meuse, Dai, & Hallenbeck, 2010).

According to Coetzee, Ferreira, and Potgieter (2020), learning agility significantly contributes to career adaptability by enabling individuals to utilize their experiences constructively and prepare effectively for career-related changes. Similarly, a recent study by Rudolph, Lavigne, and Zacher (2017) highlighted the importance of agile learning in professional settings. This indicates that professionals who continually update their skills and demonstrate mental flexibility achieve superior outcomes in navigating career shifts and transitions. Moreover, Chai and Kong (2017) showed empirically that agility in learning processes positively correlates with better career adaptability among working

professionals, providing further evidence that adaptive learning capacities contribute to long-term career sustainability. Based on these results, it is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 1: Learning agility positively correlates with career adaptability.*

### **3.2. Learning Agility and Self-Esteem**

Learning agility plays a crucial role in developing an individual's self-esteem, affecting their confidence in taking on new challenges and seeking learning opportunities. Social cognitive theory posits that individuals who experience successful learning episodes and adapt quickly to changes tend to reinforce their self-perceptions positively, thereby enhancing their overall self-esteem (Bandura & Walters, 1977). Orth and Robins (2014) supported this perspective by illustrating that individuals who frequently experience success through adaptive behaviors develop stronger self-confidence, motivating them towards further learning experiences.

Empirical evidence from organizational psychology literature further reinforces this argument. Burke and Noumair (2015) suggested that employees who perceive themselves as highly capable learners are likely to possess stronger self-efficacy beliefs, which consequently elevate their self-esteem. Dai, Zhuang, and Huan (2019) highlighted that learning-oriented behaviors, including actively seeking feedback and embracing challenging experiences, positively enhance employees' self-esteem and sense of competence. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 2: Learning agility positively relates to self-esteem.*

### **3.3. Self-Esteem and Career Adaptability Skills**

Self-esteem is generally understood as a person's assessment of their own worth and abilities. (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001), it is a core psychological resource that significantly contributes to adaptive functioning in the career domain. According to career construction theory (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), high self-esteem individuals tend to see themselves as able to navigate transitions, take charge of their career paths, seek out opportunities, and confidently face the future. These components closely mirror the four dimensions of career adaptability: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Empirical research supports this theoretical alignment. Cai et al. (2015) found that individuals with high self-esteem reported greater career adaptability and proactive career behaviors. Similarly, Parola and Marcionetti (2022) demonstrated that self-esteem significantly improved adolescents' confidence in career decision-making and future orientation, both of which are indicators of adaptability. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 3: Self-esteem relates to career adaptability skills.*

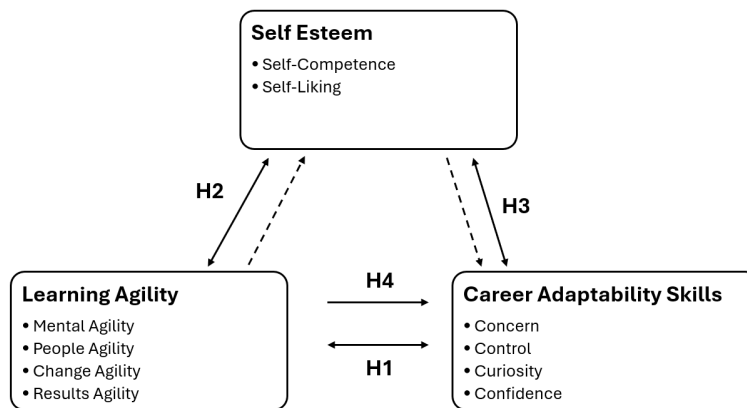
Numerous studies have confirmed the positive correlation between learning agility and career success (Coetzee et al., 2020). Few have explored the underlying psychological mechanisms that explain how learning agility contributes to career adaptability. *Career construction theory* posits that adaptive career behavior is shaped by both cognitive and psychosocial resources (Savickas & Porfeli,

2012). Within this framework, self-esteem may function as a key intervening mechanism, linking learning-oriented behavior to adaptive outcomes.

Individuals with strong learning agility often engage with challenging situations, embrace feedback, and utilize reflective learning for future tasks essential to self-esteem. Although not directly testing mediation, Rudolph et al. (2019) posit that psychological resources such as self-esteem facilitate transforming learning experiences into adaptive career actions. Complementing this, Yuen et al. (2021) empirically found that self-esteem mediated the effect of social support on career adaptability, thereby validating its explanatory power in career development processes.

Building on these insights, it is likely that learning agility enhances self-esteem through accumulated successful learning experiences, which, in turn, fosters career adaptability. By integrating this mediation pathway, the current study aims to unpack the indirect role of self-esteem in explaining how learning agility translates into flexible and future-oriented career behavior. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 4: Self-esteem mediates learning agility and career adaptability.*



**Figure 1:** Research Model

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Participants

The study includes 353 professionals working in Istanbul. Participants were randomly selected and required to have at least one year of professional experience. The demographic profile includes diversity in gender, education, and professional experience, providing comprehensive insight into



the research variables. Participants were informed that their involvement in the study was based on voluntary participation, and verbal consent was obtained.

The research sample comprises 350 employees from various sectors in Istanbul and its surroundings. Participants were selected using a random sampling method. The demographic distribution is as follows: 52% female, 48% male; average age of 34.2 years ( $SD = 7.1$ ); average work experience of 8.5 years ( $SD = 5.6$ ). Regarding educational background, 40% hold a bachelor's degree, 35% a master's degree, and 25% an associate degree. This demographic diversity allows for the analysis of group differences across various categories.

#### 4.2. Scales

Validated measurement tools were used to evaluate the constructs of learning agility, career adaptability, and self-esteem. Factor analyses (both exploratory and confirmatory) and reliability tests (Cronbach's alpha) were conducted to ensure psychometric adequacy and internal consistency. Details and psychometric properties of each scale are described below.

Learning agility was assessed using the scale Gravett and Caldwell (2016) created, which initially consisted of 26 items across four dimensions. The exploratory factor analysis validated the data structure's appropriateness for factor analysis. ( $KMO = 0.854$ ; Bartlett's Test  $\chi^2 = 3147.688$ ,  $df = 231$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated the need to remove four items due to factor loadings below the acceptable threshold (0.50). Thus, the revised scale consisted of 22 items with a confirmed four-dimensional structure. CFA results confirmed a model fit ( $\chi^2/df = 2.043$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.054$ ;  $IFI = 0.933$ ;  $CFI = 0.932$ ;  $GFI = 0.907$ ;  $AGFI = 0.907$ ;  $TLI = 0.919$ ).

Career adaptability was measured using the 24-item Career Adapt-Abilities Scale created by Savickas and Porfeli (2012). The scale comprises four dimensions. Exploratory factor analysis results confirmed the scale's factorability ( $KMO = 0.893$ ; Bartlett's Test  $\chi^2 = 3295.098$ ,  $df = 153$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Following CFA, seven items displaying factor loadings below 0.50 were excluded, resulting in a final 20-item structure. CFA supported the refined four-dimensional scale with satisfactory goodness-of-fit indices ( $\chi^2/df = 2.896$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.073$ ;  $IFI = 0.932$ ;  $CFI = 0.931$ ;  $GFI = 0.906$ ;  $AGFI = 0.863$ ;  $TLI = 0.910$ ). Internal consistency analyses confirmed reliability for all dimensions (Cronbach's alpha  $> 0.70$ ).

Self-esteem assessment utilized the 16-item Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale developed by Tafarodi & Swann (2001), consisting of two subdimensions: self-liking and self-competence. Initial exploratory factor analysis confirmed the data's adequacy ( $KMO = 0.895$ ; Bartlett's Test  $\chi^2 = 3384.561$ ,  $df = 120$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Subsequently, CFA results indicated removing four items with factor loadings below 0.50. The refined two-dimensional scale (12 items) explained 57.45% of the variance and demonstrated acceptable model fit indices, confirming its suitability for further analyses ( $\chi^2/df = 4.476$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.099$ ;  $IFI = 0.938$ ;  $CFI = 0.937$ ;  $GFI = 0.924$ ;  $AGFI = 0.828$ ;  $TLI = 0.875$ ). Reliability analyses indicated high internal consistency across both dimensions.



### 4.3. Reliability Analysis

Table 1 presents the Cronbach's alpha coefficients used to evaluate the reliability levels of the overall scale and its subdimensions in this study.

**Table 1:** Reliability Analyses Results

	Cronbach's Alpha (a)	Standardized Cronbach's Alpha	M	Number of Items
<b>Learning Agility</b>	0.874	0.880	3.952	22
Mental Agility	0.794	0.804	4.056	6
People Agility	0.827	0.830	4.104	6
Change Agility	0.761	0.775	3.678	5
Results Agility	0.861	0.865	3.920	5
<b>Career Adaptability Skills</b>	0.910	0.913	4.325	18
Concern	0.792	0.792	4.156	3
Control	0.794	0.796	4.453	4
Curiosity	0.826	0.833	4.176	5
Confidence	0.881	0.882	4.448	6
<b>Self Esteem</b>	0.897	0.901	3.809	16
Self-Competence	0.868	0.879	3.655	8
Self-Liking	0.894	0.899	3.964	8

According to the analysis results, the internal consistency level of the Learning Agility Scale is high. ( $\alpha = .88$ ). When examining its subdimensions, the highest internal consistency was observed in results-focused agility ( $\alpha = .861$ ), while the lowest was identified in change agility ( $\alpha = .761$ ). For career adaptability skills, the internal consistency level was determined to be excellent ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Among its subdimensions, confidence exhibited the highest internal consistency ( $\alpha = .882$ ), whereas concern showed the lowest ( $\alpha = .792$ ). Finally, the Self-Esteem Scale also demonstrated a high internal consistency level ( $\alpha = .897$ ). Within its subdimensions, the internal consistency for self-liking was measured at  $\alpha = .894$ , while self-competence was reported at  $\alpha = .868$ .

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Demographic Analyses

In this section, the relationships between demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, and professional experience) and the study variables were examined. First, skewness and kurtosis values of the variables were examined to assess normality. The results indicated that all skewness values fell within the acceptable range of  $-1$  to  $+1$ . Regarding kurtosis, most values were within this range as well, with only two dimensions (confidence =  $1.176$ ; concern =  $1.617$ ) slightly exceeding it but remaining within the broader acceptable interval of  $-2$  to  $+2$ , as suggested in the literature (Byrne, 2010; George & Mallery, 2010). Consequently, the findings confirmed that all variables demonstrated

normal distribution. Therefore, parametric tests such as the t-test and ANOVA were employed in the subsequent analyses.

### **Comparison of Scale Scores by Gender**

To examine group differences by gender, independent samples t-tests were conducted since the variables were normally distributed. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences ( $p > .05$ ) between men and women in terms of learning agility, career adaptability skills, and self-esteem. In other words, the levels of these constructions did not vary across gender.

### **Comparison of Scale Scores by Age**

One-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences across age groups (18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55+) for learning agility, career adaptability skills, and self-esteem and their subdimensions. Post-hoc comparisons were performed using Hochberg's GT2 test where appropriate, accounting for unequal variances and sample sizes (Field, 2009). The results indicated significant age-related differences in learning agility ( $F = 6.078$ ,  $p = .001$ ), with the 45–54 age group showing lower scores than the 25–34 and 35–44 groups. Subdimensions analysis revealed:

- Mental agility: The 35–44 age group scored higher than the 45–54 and 55+ groups ( $F = 3.634$ ,  $p = .006$ ).
- People agility: The 25–34 group had higher scores than the 18–24, 45–54, and 55+ groups; 35–44 also scored higher than 45–54 and 55+ ( $F = 9.133$ ,  $p = .001$ ).
- Change agility: The 18–24 group scored higher than the 45–54 group ( $F = 3.315$ ,  $p = .011$ ).
- Result agility: The 35–44 group scored higher than the 25–34 and 45–54 groups ( $F = 5.584$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

For career adaptability, no significant differences were found between age groups overall ( $p > .05$ ), except for the confidence subdimension, where the 35–44 group scored higher than the 18–24 group ( $p < .05$ ).

Regarding self-esteem, significant differences were found across age groups ( $F = 4.332$ ,  $p = .009$ ). Specifically:

- Self-liking: The 18–24 group scored lower than 35–44, 45–54, and 55+; the 25–34 group scored lower than 55+ ( $F = 7.680$ ,  $p = .001$ ).
- Self-efficacy: The 45–54 group scored higher than 18–24 and 35–44 groups ( $F = 4.966$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

Overall, these results indicate that age is significantly associated with specific dimensions of learning agility and self-esteem, while overall career adaptability is largely similar across age groups.

### Comparison of Scale Scores by Educational Level

One-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences across educational levels for Learning Agility, Career Adaptability Skills, and Self-Esteem and their subdimensions. Hochberg's GT2 post-hoc test was applied where appropriate to account for unequal variances and sample sizes (Field, 2009).

The results indicated no significant differences across educational levels for Learning Agility and its subdimensions (Mental Agility, People Agility, Change Agility, Results Agility) ( $p > .05$ ). In other words, learning agility and its dimensions were consistent across education groups. Similarly, Career Adaptability Skills and its subdimensions (Concern, Control, Curiosity, Confidence) showed no significant differences by education level ( $p > .05$ ). For Self-Esteem, including its subdimensions (Self-Liking, Self-Competence), ANOVA results revealed no significant differences across educational groups ( $p > .05$ ). This indicates that self-esteem and its subdimensions do not vary according to participants' educational attainment.

Overall, these findings suggest that educational level does not significantly influence learning agility, career adaptability skills, or self-esteem among participants.

### Comparison of Scale Scores by Professional Experience

One-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences across professional experience groups (1–2 years, 3–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, 16 years and above) for Learning Agility, Career Adaptability Skills, and Self-Esteem and their subdimensions. Hochberg's GT2 post-hoc test was applied where appropriate to account for unequal variances and sample sizes (Field, 2009).

The results indicated significant differences in Learning Agility and some of its subdimensions. Participants with 6–10 years of professional experience showed higher overall learning agility than those with 16 years or more. Mental Agility and People Agility were higher in the 11–15 years' experience group compared to the 16 years and above group. Change Agility was higher in the 3–5 years group compared to the 11–15 years group, while Results Agility did not differ significantly across experience groups.

For Career Adaptability Skills, significant differences were observed. Participants with 1–2 years of professional experience had lower overall career adaptability compared to those with 6–10 years and 16 years or more. Among subdimensions, Control and Confidence were lower in the 1–2 years group, while Concern and Curiosity showed no significant differences.

Regarding Self-Esteem, significant differences were also found. Participants with 1–2 years of professional experience had lower Self-Esteem, Self-Liking, and Self-Competence scores compared to other experience groups, indicating that self-perception improves with longer professional experience.

Overall, these results suggest that professional experience has a significant impact on learning agility, certain career adaptability skills, and self-esteem, with participants in early career stages generally showing lower scores than more experienced groups.

## 5.2. Hypothesis Analysis

To test the hypotheses, the relationships among the variables were examined through correlation analysis, with the findings detailed in Table.

**Table 2:** Correlation Analysis Among Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Learning Agility</b>										
Mental Agility	1	0.261	0.47	0.357	0.422	0.319	0.346	0.285	0.393	0.300
People Agility		1	0.235	0.262	0.35	0.324	0.29	0.244	0.275	0.148
Change Agility			1	0.445	0.454	0.274	0.372	0.401	0.376	0.199
Results Agility				1	0.364	0.227	0.305	0.285	0.33	0.186
<b>Career Adaptability</b>										
Concern					1	0.362	0.595	0.391	0.371	0.310
Control						1	0.511	0.553	0.495	0.419
Curiosity							1	0.566	0.431	0.375
Confidence								1	0.442	0.438
<b>Self Esteem</b>										
Self-Competence										0.499
									1	0.866
Self-Liking										1

*Note: Correlation is significant at  $p < 0.05$  level*

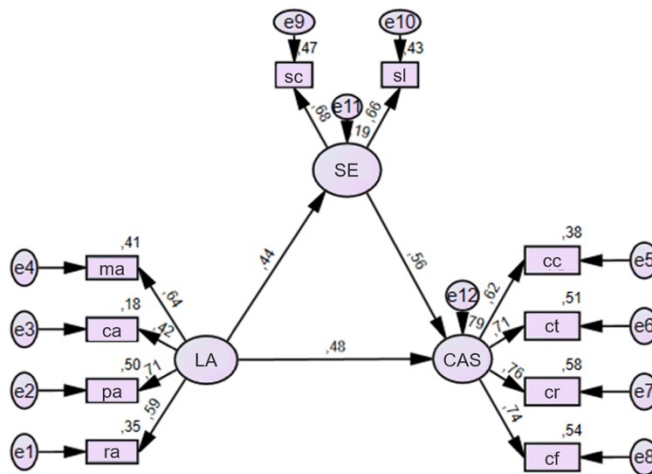
To assess the presence of multicollinearity among the independent variables, tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values were examined. The results demonstrated that all VIF values remained well below the critical threshold of 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern in the model. Subsequently, correlation analyses were performed to explore the relationships among the study variables. The results indicated a positive and significant relationship between learning agility and career adaptability skills ( $r = 0.560$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that individuals with higher levels of learning agility are more likely to develop stronger career adaptability skills. Moreover, learning agility accounted for approximately 31% of the variance in career adaptability skills. In addition, a positive and significant association was found between learning agility and self-esteem ( $r = 0.296$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that increases in learning agility are associated with higher self-esteem. Learning agility explained about 9% of the variance in self-esteem.

Finally, the results revealed a positive and significant correlation between career adaptability skills and self-esteem ( $r = 0.546$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that individuals with greater career adaptability skills

tend to demonstrate higher self-esteem, with career adaptability skills accounting for approximately 30% of the variance in self-esteem.

Collectively, these findings emphasize the importance of learning agility and career adaptability as critical predictors of self-esteem, offering empirical support for their role in personal and professional development.

The study examined the mediating effect through path analysis conducted via structural equation modeling (SEM). Given the established validity of the measurement scales and the adequacy of the sample size, path analysis was employed to obtain a more parsimonious and interpretable model. The model treated learning agility as an exogenous variable, while self-esteem and career adaptability skills were considered endogenous variables. The standardized estimate for the proposed model is presented in Figure 2.



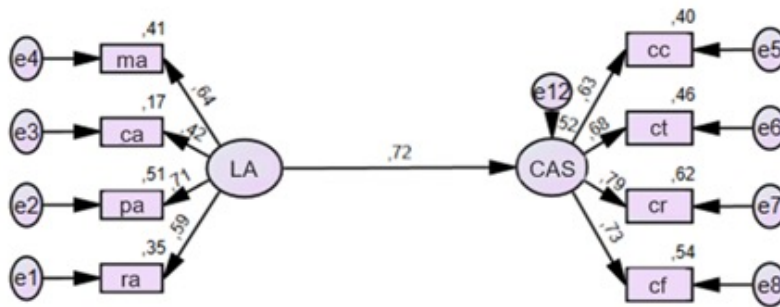
**Figure 2:** Displaying Standardized Estimation Results on the Model

At this stage of the research, the fit of the proposed structural model with the obtained data was examined. To evaluate the degree to which the model developed through the literature review corresponds to the dataset, several fit indices were assessed. The analysis results were as follows:  $\chi^2 = 103.425$ ,  $df = 32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $CMIN/df = 3.232$ ;  $GFI = 0.949$ ;  $IFI = 0.931$ ;  $CFI = 0.930$ ;  $NFI = 0.904$ ;  $RFI = 0.864$ ; and  $RMSEA = 0.080$ . These values indicate that the model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit. In particular, the GFI, IFI, CFI, and NFI values above the threshold of 0.90 show that the model has a good fit, while the RFI value (0.864) indicates an acceptable level of fit. Furthermore, the RMSEA value of 0.080 also suggests that the model meets the acceptable fit criteria.

The results of the structural equation modeling (SEM) further revealed the effects among the variables. Learning agility was found to have a significant and positive effect on career adaptability

( $\beta = 0.48$ ). This finding supports the hypothesis H1: “Learning agility has a positive effect on career adaptability.” Similarly, learning agility was found to have a significant and positive effect on self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.44$ ). Accordingly, the hypothesis H2: “Learning agility has a positive effect on self-esteem” was supported. Finally, self-esteem was shown to have a significant and positive effect on career adaptability ( $\beta = 0.56$ ). Thus, the hypothesis H3: “Self-esteem has a positive effect on career adaptability” was supported.

In order to examine whether self-esteem plays a mediating role in the effect of learning agility on career adaptability, the self-esteem variable was excluded from the model, and the resulting model is presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Displaying Standardized Estimation Results on the Model  
After Controlling for Self Esteem

The fit indices of the non-mediated model were examined. The goodness-of-fit values indicated that the model met the required criteria and was at an acceptable level ( $X^2 = 69.662$ ,  $df = 19$ ,  $CMIN/df = 3.664$ ,  $GFI = 0.955$ ,  $IFI = 0.938$ ,  $CFI = 0.937$ ,  $NFI = 0.916$ ,  $RFI = 0.877$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.087$ ). The estimated values from the structural equation modeling analysis performed to test the hypotheses developed in the study are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Mediation Role of Estimation Results

	Self Esteem		Career Adaptability Skills	
	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
Learning Agility			0,724*	0,067
R <sup>2</sup>				0,524
Learning Agility	0,441	0,189		
R <sup>2</sup>		0,195		
Learning Agility			0,484*	0,056
Self Esteem			0,563	0,029
R <sup>2</sup>				0,792
Indirect Effect			0,248* (0,085-0,267)	

Table 3 presents the SEM results, including the path coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels for each relationship. For example, the path from learning agility to self-esteem is  $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; from self-esteem to career adaptability is  $\beta = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . These detailed explanations facilitate a clearer understanding of the model's structure and the relationships between variables.

The total effect of learning agility on career adaptability was found to be significant ( $\beta = 0.724$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). A positive path coefficient between learning agility and self-esteem was identified ( $\beta = 0.441$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The indirect effect of learning agility on career adaptability through self-esteem was calculated as 0.248, with a 95% confidence interval of 0.085–0.267. Since the confidence interval did not include zero, the indirect effect was determined to be statistically significant. In other words, while the regression coefficient of learning agility on career adaptability was 0.72 without considering self-esteem, this coefficient decreased to 0.48 when self-esteem was included as a mediating variable. Based on this analysis, the share of self-esteem as a mediator in the relationship between learning agility and career adaptability was calculated. The ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect was  $0.248/0.72 = 0.34$ , indicating that the mediator variable accounts for 34% of the relationship.

These findings demonstrate that self-esteem partially mediates the effect of learning agility on career adaptability, thereby supporting the hypothesis that *“self-esteem mediates the relationship between learning agility and career adaptability.”*

In addition, the Sobel test was conducted to further examine the mediating role of self-esteem in this relationship, and the mediation effect was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the mediating role of self-esteem was confirmed. The results of this test are illustrated in Figure 4.

Input:		Test statistic:	Std. Error:	p-value:	
a	0.441	Sobel test:	2.31666066	0.1071728	0.02052222
b	0.563	Aroian test:	2.31363701	0.10731286	0.02068764
s <sub>a</sub>	0.189	Goodman test:	2.3196962	0.10703255	0.02035732
s <sub>b</sub>	0.029	Reset all	Calculate		

Figure 4: Sobel Test

The results collectively indicate that self-esteem serves as a significant partial mediator in the proposed model. This finding contributes to the literature by highlighting the mechanism through which learning agility enhances career adaptability, underlining the critical role of self-esteem in this process.



## 6. Conclusion and Implications

This study demonstrates that learning agility meaningfully enhances career adaptability, operating in part through self-esteem as a substantive partial mediator. Approximately 34% of the total effect is indirect, indicating that agile learners adapt not only because they quickly update skills, but also because repeated mastery experiences strengthen self-efficacy and self-worth beliefs that facilitate agency and future-oriented career behavior. At the facet level, confidence emerged as the strongest component of adaptability, while concern was the weakest, suggesting that technical upskilling alone does not automatically translate into longer-term planning or proactive career management.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analyses revealed a significant and strong relationship between learning agility and career adaptability ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Self-esteem partially mediated this relationship ( $\beta$  mediation = 0.18,  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting the idea that self-regard enhances the effect of learning agility on adaptive career outcomes. Model fit indices indicated a good overall fit (CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.045), confirming that the hypothesized pathways align well with the data.

These results align with career construction and social learning perspectives. Individuals high in learning agility actively seek feedback, treat uncertainty as an opportunity for experimentation, and transfer lessons across roles. Repeated successful mastery experiences elevate self-esteem, which in turn supports a sense of control, exploration, and efficacy in career tasks. The relative weakness of the concern facet likely reflects short-term performance pressures that compress planning horizons, while the strength of confidence reflects cumulative successful experiences in the workplace.

Demographic analyses provided additional insights. ANOVA and t-tests revealed significant differences in learning agility scores among age groups ( $F = 4.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), with younger employees exhibiting higher learning agility. No significant differences were observed by gender ( $p > 0.05$ ). Mid-career professionals demonstrated higher learning agility and confidence, whereas early-career employees tended to have lower self-esteem and adaptability. These patterns highlight the role of professional experience in fostering career adaptability and suggest that targeted developmental support may be needed for early-career employees.

The findings are consistent with career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), which posits that individuals actively construct their careers using personal and psychosocial resources such as self-esteem. Learning agility allows individuals to acquire and apply knowledge effectively, while social learning processes (Bandura, 1977) provide feedback and modeling that enhance self-esteem. Moreover, self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) explains how higher self-confidence strengthens proactive career behaviors, supporting the observed partial mediation of self-esteem in the relationship between learning agility and career adaptability.

Practical implications are substantial. Organizations can design mentoring and leadership development programs to capitalize on employees' learning agility. Training interventions aimed at enhancing self-esteem may further improve career adaptability, leading to higher individual performance and organizational effectiveness. Integrating validated assessments of learning agility

and self-esteem into recruitment and talent development can help identify candidates with high potential for long-term success.

Developmental strategies should focus on creating low-risk mastery experiences, frequent feedback cycles, and opportunities for cross-role learning. For early-career employees, onboarding should prioritize mentoring, quick-win projects, and visible feedback rituals to accelerate mastery. To strengthen the concern facet, organizations can institutionalize structured career conversations, transparent internal opportunity marketplaces, and 12–18-month skill roadmaps, alongside fostering psychological safety through everyday managerial behaviors. Mid – and late-career professionals can be leveraged as mentors or internal coaches, promoting a culture of continuous learning and reinforcing adaptability across the organization.

The findings contribute theoretically by moving beyond simple bivariate associations. They specify and quantify the mechanism through which learning behavior becomes adaptive outcomes via psychosocial resources, highlighting a facet-level asymmetry where self-related beliefs (confidence) exert stronger influence than future orientation (concern) in the absence of structural support. Patterns related to age and experience outline boundary conditions for the effectiveness of learning agility, extending its relevance from leadership development to broader career management in dynamic labor markets.

Limitations must be noted. The study relies on a single-city, single-country, cross-sectional, and self-report design, restricting causal inference and generalizability. Future research should test the mastery → self-esteem → adaptability pathway using longitudinal or experimental designs, ideally including multi-source performance metrics. Multilevel analyses could examine how team climates amplify or dampen these effects. Linking changes in learning agility, self-esteem, and adaptability to mobility, performance, and retention would clarify the return on investment and guide strategic resource allocation.

In conclusion, sustainable career success depends not only on skill acquisition but also on psychological adaptability. Employees who can leverage learning agility through enhanced self-esteem are better equipped to navigate volatile and complex work environments. Organizations that purposefully engineer mastery experiences, foster healthy self-regard, and tailor development interventions according to career stage can cultivate more adaptable talent, enhance individual growth, and achieve superior organizational outcomes. By integrating these insights into HR practices, organizations create resilient workforces capable of thriving amidst uncertainty while simultaneously promoting employee engagement, confidence, and long-term career success.

### Author Contributions

CONTRIBUTION RATE	EXPLANATION	CONTRIBUTORS
Idea or Notion	From the research idea or hypothesis	Tuba Nur Kalyoncu & Müge Leyla Yıldız
Literature Review	Review the literature required for the study	Tuba Nur Kalyoncu & Müge Leyla Yıldız
Research Design	Designing method, scale, and pattern for the study	Tuba Nur Kalyoncu & Müge Leyla Yıldız
Data Collection and Processing	Collecting, organizing, and reporting data	Tuba Nur Kalyoncu & Müge Leyla Yıldız
Discussion and Interpretation	Taking responsibility in evaluating and finalizing the findings	Tuba Nur Kalyoncu & Müge Leyla Yıldız

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest among the authors.

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## Resume

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