

# How Do Proactive Personality and Internal Locus of Control Play a Role in the Links Between Career Adaptability and Job Search Behaviors of Job Seekers? A Two-Moderator Approach

*Proaktif Kişilik ve İç Kontrol Odaklılık İş Arayanların Kariyer Uyumluluğu ve İş Arama Davranışları Arasındaki İlişkide Nasıl Bir Rol Oynar? İkili Moderatör Yaklaşımı*

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords:

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The present labor market's rapid expansion has pressured individuals to enhance their employability and achieve professional success. Therefore, individuals need to be able to adapt and flourish in the face of unforeseen employment challenges, known as career adaptability. While previous studies have established the benefits of career adaptability in the job search process, there is a lack of understanding regarding the influence of personality characteristics on the relationship between career resources and job search behavior. This study investigates the combined moderating effects of proactive personality and internal locus of control on the link between career adaptability and job search behavior, drawing on career construction theory and planned job search behavior theory. The study sample comprises 308 individuals actively seeking employment in Istanbul and Kocaeli. SPSS AMOS was used for confirmatory factor analysis, and PROCESS Macro was used to examine moderator effects. The findings demonstrated a positive relationship between career adaptability, proactive personality, internal locus of control, and job-seeking behavior. Moreover, as predicted, the combined effect of proactive personality and internal locus of control moderates the relationship between career adaptability and job search behavior, suggesting the relationship is more robust when both traits are high. These findings are essential for researchers in the field of career and job search as well as for practitioners such as career counselors or training and development specialists.

## ÖZET

### Anahtar Kelimeler:

Kariyer Uyumluluğu,  
İş Arama Davranışı,  
Proaktif Kişilik  
Özelliği,  
İç Kontrol Odaklılık

### Jel Kodları:

M10

Mevcut iş piyasalarının hızla genişlemesi, bireylere kendi istihdam edilebilirliklerini artırmaları ve mesleki başarı elde edebilmeleri için baskı oluşturmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bireylerin beklenmedik kariyer zorluklarına uyum sağlama ve gelişme kapasitesine sahip olmaları kritik öneme sahiptir. Daha önceki çalışmalar, iş arama sürecinde kariyer uyumluluğunun olumlu etkilerine ilişkin bulgulara yer vermiş olsa da kariyer uyumluluğu ve iş arayışı davranışları arasındaki ilişki üzerindeki kişilik özelliklerinin etkisi konusunda sınırlı sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Kariyer İnşası Kuramı ve Planlı İş Arama Davranışı Kuramına dayanarak, proaktif kişiliğin ve iç kontrol odaklılığın kariyer uyumluluğu ve iş arama davranışları arasındaki bağlantıda düzenleyici rollerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini İstanbul ve Kocaeli bölgelerinde aktif olarak iş arayan 308 kişi oluşturmaktadır. SPSS AMOS doğrulayıcı faktör analizi için ve PROCESS Macro düzenleyici etkilerin incelenmesi için kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, kariyer uyumluluğu, proaktif kişilik, iç kontrol odaklılık ve iş arama davranışları arasında pozitif yönde ilişkiler bulunduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, öngörüldüğü gibi, proaktif kişiliğin ve iç kontrol odaklılığın birlikte, kariyer uyumluluğu ve iş arama davranışları arasındaki ilişkiyi düzenlediği ve her iki özellik de yüksek olduğunda ilişkilerin daha güçlü olduğunu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bu araştırmanın sonuçları kariyer ve iş arama alanındaki araştırmacılar ile kariyer danışmanları veya eğitim-geliştirme uzmanları gibi uygulayıcılar için önemlidir.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Job seekers in developing nations face numerous obstacles when navigating the complicated and competitive job search process in the constantly evolving labor markets. Seeking employment in these environments entails confronting challenging circumstances that can be exceedingly difficult, forcing individuals to have a considerable level of adaptability in order to obtain meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities. Unemployment is a stressful experience, and the majority of unemployed individuals actively seek new jobs. Nevertheless, not all endeavors related to searching for employment result in successful or fulfilling job placements. The significance of the employability of new market entrants has grown in response to the evolving labor market. According to some research findings, unemployment can seriously jeopardize people's financial and mental well-being and that of their families (Liu et al., 2014). Therefore, the consequences of unemployment exhibit a multifaceted and complicated nature. Employability, which is a combination of traits, behaviors, and social and human capital, is essential for success in the workplace (Clarke, 2018). Employability, encompassing factors such as career adaptability, is strongly correlated with favorable job search outcomes (Gerçek, 2023).

Thus, the need for highly competent and adaptable workers is increasing, highlighting the need to develop a diverse range of abilities that might go beyond specific job positions. As stated by Kristof (1996), when there is a discrepancy between the expectations of a job seeker and the qualifications needed for a particular position, it can lead to reduced job satisfaction, increased employee exhaustion, intentions to quit, and diminished productivity. Moreover, the negative outcomes of this discrepancy are similar to those experienced when losing a job and remaining unemployed, such as decreased life satisfaction and symptoms of depression (McKee-Ryan et al., 2009). Therefore, the job search process is a critical journey that has long-lasting effects on people even after obtaining a job.

The young population is at a distinct disadvantage since they struggle to understand the evolving requirements of employers and lack the experience of modern business values (ILO, 2022; Reay et al., 2006). In July 2022, the seasonally adjusted overall unemployment rate in Turkey was 10.1%, whereas the unemployment rate for the youth population was 19.1%. Furthermore, as per the data released by TÜİK in the previous year, it is worth mentioning that the average duration for a university graduate to find employment is 13.6 months (TÜİK, 2022). According to the data, the unemployment rate among young people is significantly high. Additionally, it indicates that university graduates face unemployment or have to engage in temporary employment for over a year after completing their studies (Kirazcı et al., 2023). These statistics indicate the significance of the job search process and the career adaptability of individuals.

Previous research indicates that the various strategies employed in job search have a significant influence on job search outcomes (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). This includes the success of newcomers in finding employment, which in turn has meaningful implications for understanding an individual's long-term professional success (DiPrete & Eirich, 2006). Career adaptability is an essential characteristic for individuals looking for employment. It refers to the capacity to effectively navigate and adjust to changes in the work environment (Savickas, 2005). In a dynamic work environment characterized by changing job requirements and rapid industry shifts, the key to achieving success depends on one's ability to adapt, acquire new skills, and quickly embrace emerging opportunities. Additionally, certain individual factors are also important in the process of job search (Kanfer et al., 2001). Previous studies offer empirical support for the influence of personality traits on the process of seeking employment (Pan et al., 2018; van den Hee et al., 2020; Le & Lin, 2023). Individuals with a proactive personality are inclined to exhibit initiative and actively explore opportunities (Brown et al., 2006). A proactive mindset when it comes to job searching motivates individuals to look beyond conventional paths. Proactive personality traits help people utilize their connections to discover opportunities that are not widely recognized, and they are receptive to embracing change. Also, individuals who have an internal locus of control have the potential to perceive job transitions and changes as being within their sphere of influence.

The concept of locus of control pertains to an individual's personal evaluation of their level of control over the results of their life (Rotter, 1966). The locus of control is an important factor in assessing the ability of job seekers to impact the results of their job search while they are unemployed (McGee & McGee, 2016). Research indicates that the degree to which individuals believe they have control over their own lives influences the effectiveness of their job search efforts. Individuals with internal locus of control assume that their personal endeavors have a substantial influence on their prospects for employment (Madsen & Mikkelsen, 2022). Thus, a proactive personality and internal locus of control could strengthen the interdependent relationship between career adaptability and job search behaviors. These psychological traits may act as catalysts, influencing how individuals approach their career growth and handle the complexities of the job search process in developing countries. Although there have been previous studies examining the impact of personality traits on the relationship between

career adaptability and the job search process, there is limited knowledge regarding the collective influence of proactive personality and internal locus of control. This study seeks to investigate the multifaceted relationship between some personal characteristics. The combination of proactive personality, internal locus of control, and career adaptability may create a strong foundation for successful job search behaviors in the competitive work settings of developing countries. The results of this study may contribute to filling the gap in the career and job search literature and provide significant findings for career counselors and other professionals. Moreover, this research provides useful insights into how contextual variables may impact the impact of personal traits on job search behaviors by examining these associations. This research not only aims to contribute to academic knowledge but also provides practical insights that can directly benefit job seekers, and policymakers, particularly in the dynamically changing job markets of Istanbul and Kocaeli. In particular, the knowledge obtained from this study can help policymakers create more successful career counseling services and workforce readiness programs that are customized to the particular needs and characteristics of the local workforce in the quickly changing job markets of Istanbul and Kocaeli. This will help to create a more proactive and adaptive pool of job seekers who can successfully navigate the complexities of contemporary employment environments.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1. Career Adaptability and Job Search Behavior

The origins of career adaptability can be traced back to the 1980s, when Super and Knasel introduced the concept of an individual's ability to effectively navigate and respond to the changing dynamics of work and working conditions. Career adaptability pertains to adjusting to new career-related circumstances with the meaning of *"a boundaryless mindset, planfulness, exploration, decision-making, information and realism, career planning, career exploration, and confidence"* (Savickas, 1997, 2002). Career adaptability was defined by Savickas (2005:51) as *"a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and imminent occupational development tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas."* Career adaptability, a concept based on career construction theory (CCT), is pivotal in how individuals navigate career transitions and job search processes. CCT posits that career development is driven by one's adaptation to various transitions in life, such as moving from school to work or changing occupations, with the overarching goal of achieving person-environment integration. Based on CCT (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), individuals who are willing to respond appropriately to career transitions will be motivated to engage in interpersonal and intrapersonal processes that help them adapt to the challenges. Hence, career adaptability is advantageous in understanding the process of job searching. It refers to the readiness and range of tools that help people deal with and prepare for changes in their careers in the job search process (Rottinghaus et al., 2012). In the context of Turkey, career adaptability has been associated with various concepts such as occupational anxiety (Gerçek, 2018), future work self (Çarkıt, 2022), and job satisfaction (Sökmen & Aydın, 2016). These findings highlight the multiple roles played by career adaptability, which not only helps individuals navigate changes in employment but also improves their job satisfaction. This suggests that interventions aimed at improving adaptability could have significant effects on both individual career achievements and organizational productivity in Turkey's dynamic job market.

There are several components to the individual job search process. One of them is job search self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's perceived level of competence in actively participating in the process of seeking employment (Ellis & Taylor, 1983). Traditionally, it has been believed that job searching precedes voluntary turnover or job choice behavior (Bretz et al., 1994). Although there are several descriptions of job search behavior, most acknowledge its multifaceted nature. Barber et al. (1994) define job search behavior as the systematic exploration of employment opportunities and the acquisition of detailed knowledge about specific career options. As Kanfer et al. (2001) stated, job search behavior is the result of a dynamic self-regulatory process that starts with the identification and dedication to a specific employment purpose, which triggers search behavior intended to achieve the intended purpose. The objective is to conclude the process of seeking employment and all associated endeavors and actions by either attaining or abandoning the goal of securing a job.

Job search behavior has been generally examined in Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (van Hooft et al., 2021). The theory of planned behavior explains how objectives and plans affect behavior (Ajzen, 1985). According to the TPB, a person's purpose to carry out a specific activity directly determines that person's behavior. In the context of a job search, for instance, particular intentions about the amount of effort one wants to put into finding a job should be able to predict the amount of effort one ultimately puts into the search. The premise is that a person's attitude toward the activity, subjective norm, and perception of control over the perceived difficulty of carrying out the conduct all have an impact on their intention to act. Within the context of a job search, an

unemployed person's cognitive or affective assessment of applying effort to their job search reflects their attitude toward the action. For example, one person can feel that making a solid effort to get a job is pointless, while another would think such an effort is beneficial (Song et al., 2006). The subjective norm is the degree to which unemployed people think their significant others expect them to put effort into finding employment (Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992; Ajzen et al., 2018; van Hoof et al., 2021). The TPB argues that a person's job search attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control all play a significant role in determining their intention to search for a job (Ajzen, 2018). Previous studies have consistently shown that the TPB is a dependable indicator of job-seeking behavior (Caska, 1998).

Typically, the chances of finding a new job are higher when a person puts more effort into searching for employment (Wanberg et al., 2002). On the other hand, the level of effort put forth by job seekers in their job search and the strategies they use can affect their ability to find employment (McArdle et al., 2007). Individuals who have clear career objectives in the job search process adopt a more focused strategy. Exploration refers to the process of investigating various career options to gain knowledge about the preferred type of work (Savickas, 2005). The significance of exploration in career adaptability is apparent from its high priority in job research (Zikic & Hall, 2009). Most of the existing research on reemployment has focused on the level of effort put into job searching as a predictor of measurable unemployment outcomes, such as obtaining a job, receiving multiple job offers, and finding work within a specific timeframe. The effectiveness of job-search strategies will influence the quality of newly obtained employment. In the field of work and organizational psychology, the factors that are most frequently studied in relation to this are person-organization fit, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. Prior research suggests that career adaptability is a determinant of job search strategy (Koen et al., 2010; Lim et al., 2019), job search outcomes (Guan et al., 2013), and job search success (Pan et al., 2018). Guan et al. (2013) found that career adaptability is a dependable measure of an individual's capacity to efficiently seek employment and their current employment status. Therefore, drawing from both theoretical and empirical evidence, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Career adaptability has a positive effect on job search behavior.*

## **2.2. The Moderator Role of Proactive Personality and Internal Locus of Control**

Proactive personality refers to the tendency to take personal initiative in different situations and activities (Crant, 2000). Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), as defined by Bandura (1997), focuses on the belief in one's ability to utilize available resources rather than the possession of those resources (Bandura, 2007). Individuals who demonstrate initiative typically possess the belief that they are capable of achieving their goals. Proactive individuals actively seek opportunities, take the lead, take action, and persist until they achieve a resolution that ultimately brings about a conclusion (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Proactive personality is a significant trait that has been extensively studied about various aspects of behavior and career achievement. Also, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) highlights the importance of individuals' beliefs in their ability to influence the outcomes of their lives (Lent et al., 2002). Research has shown that the proactive personality is particularly important in predicting innovative work behavior, job performance, and work engagement in various work settings (Bakker et al., 2012; Mubarak et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2021). Furthermore, empirical evidence has shown that it has a positive effect on both entrepreneurial ambitions and academic performance (Luo et al., 2022; Bilal et al., 2021). Additionally, it has been associated with proactive workplace practices and career self-efficacy (Kim & Park, 2017; Presbitero, 2015). Individuals' willingness to engage in adaptive behaviors is influenced by differences in personality (Teixeira et al., 2012). Consequently, there exists a correlation between personality traits and career adaptability. Previous research has demonstrated connections between various personality traits, such as optimism, self-esteem, proactive personality, and self-efficacy, and the Big Five personality traits are related to career adaptability (Van Vianen et al., 2012; Hui et al., 2018; Fang et al., 2018; Pan et al., 2018; Johnston, 2018). Also, prior research has shown that career adaptability plays a mediating role in the connection between employability and proactive personality. Proactive individuals are more inclined to develop adaptability in their careers, which in turn increases their chances of achieving success in the workplace (Yu et al., 2023). Individuals who have proactive personalities are more likely to engage in activities that can improve their ability to adapt (Cai et al., 2015). The proactive personality trait has an impact on the relationship between career adaptability and job search success, according to a study by Pan et al. (2019). Thus, we hypothesize:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Career adaptability is positively related to a proactive personality.*

According to Rotter (1954), the idea of locus of control refers to a person's perception of the degree to which external factors like fate, luck, or the influence of influential people have an impact on their actions as well as internal factors like personal abilities and choices. An individual's perception of their ability to influence the

outcomes of events in their lives is referred to as their internal locus of control (Levenson, 1981). Individuals with a stronger internal locus of control believe that their actions have the ability to influence and control their circumstances. Individuals with a weaker internal locus of control are less inclined to perceive themselves as having control over their own fate (Rotter, 1966). Research on career achievement (Ng et al., 2006) suggests that individuals with a stronger internal locus of control are more inclined to actively explore and strategize ways to attain their career objectives. They also demonstrate greater determination and perseverance in overcoming obstacles that limit their career progress and show higher levels of motivation for continuous learning (Wang et al., 2010). Individuals with an internal locus of control are inclined to display a high degree of career adaptability. This is due to their confidence in their capacity to shape their own career paths and the desire to actively respond to evolving situations (Kim et al., 2018). The presence of an internal locus of control serves as a basis for the development of career adaptability skills. When individuals perceive that their actions can influence their career outcomes, they are more motivated to participate in continuous learning, actively pursue new opportunities, and demonstrate resilience in the face of obstacles. Thus, we hypothesize:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *Career adaptability is positively related to internal locus of control.*

Job search behavior encompasses not only the act of submitting applications for openly posted jobs but also engaging in networking activities and actively seeking information about the current state of the job market. Proactive individuals demonstrate a tendency to allocate time and energy towards establishing a network and remaining updated on job opportunities (Le et al., 2023). The process of job search can be characterized as dynamic and demanding, necessitating individuals to effectively cope with new circumstances. Individuals who are proactive are more inclined to perceive challenges as chances for personal development and adapt their strategies for job searching accordingly. Engaging in a job search needs persistent effort and intrinsic motivation. Academic research investigates proactive personality traits, such as initiative and persistence, to ascertain their impact on facilitating a smoother transition and improving job search outcomes for individuals (Zhu et al., 2021). Thus, we hypothesize:

**H<sub>4</sub>:** *Job search behavior is positively related to proactive personality.*

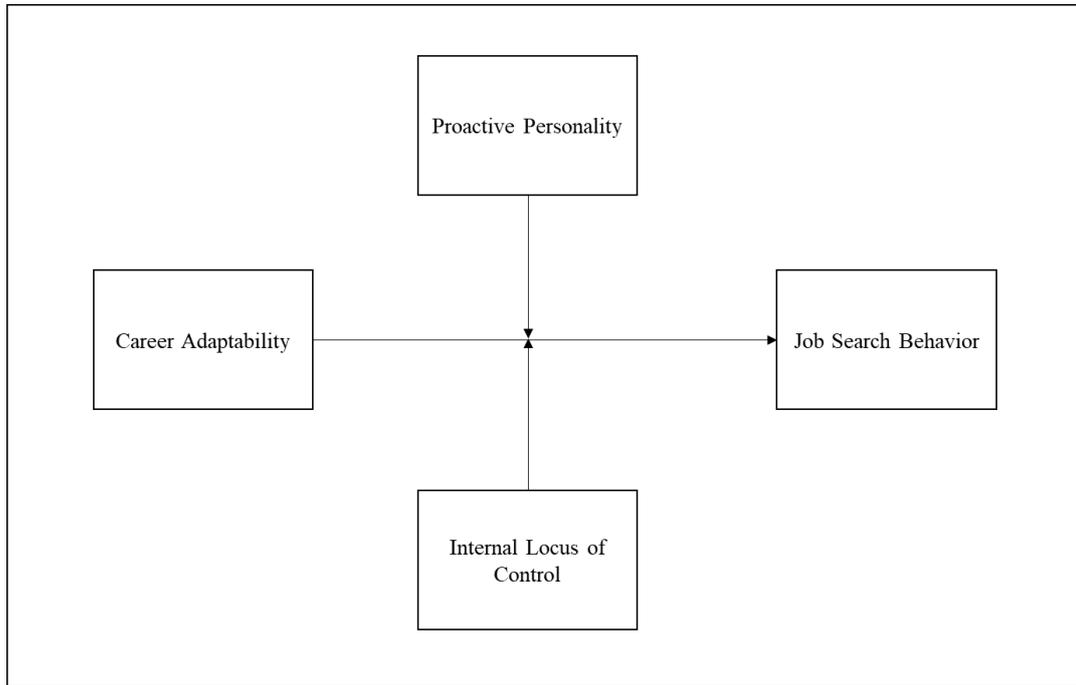
Several studies in the literature have emphasized the notable impact of internal locus of control on career adaptability (Ningsih & Musoli, 2023; Kim & Lee, 2018; Safitri & Wibowo, 2021). According to social learning theorists such as Bandura (1997), individuals who possess an internal locus of control tend to perform more effectively in unfamiliar circumstances. Research has specifically investigated the locus of control as the main determinant of career adaptability (Duffy, 2010; Hirshi, 2009). Research in the field of career literature has shown that there is a positive correlation between having an internal locus of control and engaging in job search behavior (Caliendo et al., 2019; Caliendo et al., 2015; McGee, 2015; McGee & McGee, 2016). McGee (2015) conducted a study on the role of locus of control in job searching. The findings indicate that young unemployed males with an internal locus of control tend to set higher reservation salaries and engage in more comprehensive job searches (Cobb-Clark, 2015). Thus, we hypothesize:

**H<sub>5</sub>:** *Job search behavior is positively related to the internal locus of control.*

Prospective job seekers face numerous challenges that require significant dedication and resources. These challenges include researching job opportunities, assessing personal capabilities, completing necessary documentation, participating in interviews, and ultimately choosing the most suitable position (Guan et al., 2013; Wanberg et al., 2010). Strong self-efficacy is likely an essential component in this process. Individuals who are proactive exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy, possess a greater orientation towards the future, and are more inclined to engage in actions that enhance their employability (Seibert et al., 1999; Tolentino et al., 2014). Proactive people are more likely to take the initiative, pursue difficult goals, and persevere in their endeavors as a result of their self-efficacy beliefs, all of which support their proactive approach to tasks and challenges. In a study by Kuang et al. (2011), the researchers investigated the relationship between proactive personality, self-efficacy, locus of control, and economic confidence in making career decisions. Those with high levels of self-confidence demonstrated a higher level of self-efficacy when it came to making decisions regarding their careers. The locus of control moderated this association, with the external locus of control predicting a more significant positive relationship compared to the internal locus of control, which predicted a less significant relationship. Examining the combined effect of proactive personality and internal locus of control within the CCT framework enables researchers to investigate how these personal traits affect the way individuals build and adjust their careers over time. Also, the proactive personality and internal locus of control can be seen as factors that affect the perceived behavioral control in the TPB framework (Cobb-Clark, 2015). Investigating these characteristics as

moderators aids in comprehending how they can either strengthen or weaken the connection between career adaptability and the inclination to participate in job search activities. Thus, we hypothesize:

**H<sub>6</sub>:** *The combined effect of proactive personality and internal locus of control moderates the relationship between career adaptability and job search behavior, suggesting the relationship is stronger when both traits are high.*



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Research Model

The conceptual research model (Figure 1) depicts the multifaceted connections of a proactive personality, internal locus of control, career adaptability, and job search behaviors in individuals seeking employment. The model suggests that a proactive personality and an internal locus of control play important roles in strengthening the positive influence of career adaptability on successful job search behaviors. This framework supports the idea that job seekers who have a high level of career adaptability, along with a proactive attitude and a strong belief in their ability to control their career outcomes, are more likely to use effective job search strategies. Consequently, they will be able to navigate the competitive job market easier and more successfully.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Participants

The data were collected using the snowball sampling method, which involved convenience sampling through online survey forms. The snowball sampling method was selected to target and assess the job search behavior of current job seekers. Job-seeking participants were recruited through personal connections by distributing online survey forms. Ethical consent was received from each participant via online forms. The study sample consisted of a total of 308 job seekers who were located in Istanbul and Kocaeli. Istanbul and Kocaeli are major economic hubs with a rich blend of cultural and commercial activities in Turkey. Istanbul, being the largest city by population in Turkey, functions as a central center for finance, culture, and the economy, including many industries such as banking, tourism, media, and manufacturing. Also, Kocaeli is known for its substantial industrial foundation, namely in the automobile and petrochemical industries. The varied economic environment in these regions provides an extensive framework for examining job-seeking behaviors across various sectors and forms of employment. Additionally, both Istanbul and Kocaeli exhibit significant population densities and accommodate a demographically varied populace in terms of age, level of education, and socioeconomic status. Regarding gender, 170 participants (55.25%) were female, while 138 participants (44.8%) were male. The age distribution was as follows: 48.7% (n = 147) were between the ages of 18 and 20, 37.3% (n = 118) were between the ages of 21 and 23, and 14% (n = 43) were 24 years old or older. Additionally, 62 (20.1) of the participants were unemployed, while 246 (79.9%) of them were employed at the time.

### 3.2. Measures

All measurement tools were on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Completely disagree;5=Completely agree). Reliability and validity results are presented in the methods section.

**Career Adaptability:** The "Career Future Inventory" (CFI) developed by Rottinghaus et al. (2005) employed 11 items to assess career adaptability as a sub-dimension. A sample item is *"I can overcome potential barriers that may exist in my career."* A 5-point Likert scale, with options ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), was utilized. The original study reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.94.

**Job Search Behavior:** Job search behavior was measured with a 12-item "Job Search Behavior Scale" developed by Blau (1994). The participants indicated how they have done each of the items over the past six months, where 1 = never (0 times), 2 = rarely (1-2 times), 3 = occasionally (3-5 times), 4 = frequently (6-9 times), 5 = very frequently (at least 10 times). Example items are *"read a book or article about getting or changing jobs"*, and *"had a job interview with a prospective employer"*. The internal consistency value was 0.89 in the original study. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.92.

**Proactive Personality:** Proactive personality was measured with a 10-item version (Seibert et al., 1999) of "Proactive Personality Scale" developed by Bateman and Crant (1993). A sample item is *"I am constantly on the look out for new ways to improve my life."* This scale consists of 10 items. The internal consistency value was 0.92 in prior studies (e.g. Major et al., 2006). In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.93.

**Internal Locus of Control:** Internal locus of control was measured with "Locus of Control" scale adapted by Mueller and Thomas (2001) from Rotter's work (1966) which comprises 10 items and includes both internal and external locus of control statements. A sample item is *"My life is determined by my own actions"*. The internal consistency was 0.81 in the original study. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.80.

### 3.3. Analytical Procedure

Descriptive statistics were calculated via IBM SPSS. In order to check the validity and reliability of the study measures, alternative measurement models were developed, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was assessed using SPSS AMOS. The standardized path coefficients and fit statistics are reported. A number of statistical fit indices are used to compare the fit of different measurement models. These include the  $\chi^2$  statistic, normed chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and comparative fit index (CFI). Also, to test the moderator effects on the relationship between career adaptability and job search behavior, SPSS PROCESS Macro was used.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Descriptives

The descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, internal consistency values (composite reliabilities), and average variance extracted (AVE) values of the measurement tools, are presented in Table 1. All of the correlations between the constructs were significant. According to the data presented in Table 1, there is a positive correlation between career adaptability and job search behavior ( $r = 0.30, p < 0.01$ ), proactive personality ( $r = 0.58, p < 0.01$ ), and internal locus of control ( $r = 0.49; p < 0.01$ ). Job search behavior is positively correlated with proactive personality ( $r = 0.16, p < 0.01$ ) and internal locus of control ( $r = 0.15; p < 0.01$ ). Also, proactive personality was positively correlated with internal locus of control ( $r = 0.68; p < 0.01$ ). The correlation results indicate that H2, H3, H4, and H5 are accepted. As seen in Table 1, the composite reliability values of the scales are 0.93, 0.80, 0.94, and 0.91, respectively. The average values of the scales are 0.58, 0.50, 0.63, and 0.52, respectively. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), these values show that they are higher than the suggested threshold of 0.50.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among PP, ILOC, CA, and JSB

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	CR	AVE	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. PP: Proactive Personality	4,06	0.75				.93	.58	-1,66	1,60
2. ILOC: Internal Locus of Control	4,03	0.72	0.68**			.80	.50	-1,40	1,20
3. CA: Career Adaptability	4,13	0.73	0.58**	0.49**		.94	.63	-1,62	2,56
4. JSB: Job Search Behavior	2,74	0.97	0.16**	0.15**	0.30**	.91	.52	0,57	-0,50

Note. N= 308. CR: Composite Reliability, AVE: Average Variance Extracted  
\*\*p < .01

#### 4.2. Validity Results

Initially, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using SPSS to determine the validity of the measurement tools. The results validated the expected scale constructs in accordance with the existing literature, with all factor loadings above 0.50: Career Adaptability (Total Variance Explained = 70.72%; KMO = 0.936; p < 0.000); Job Search Behavior (Total Variance Explained = 62.78%; KMO = 0.835; p < 0.000); Proactive Personality (Total Variance Explained = 62.40%; KMO = 0.933; p < 0.000); Internal Locus of Control (Total Variance Explained = 61.576%; KMO = 0.779; p < 0.000). Subsequently, as suggested by Bagozzi and Edwards (1998), different measurement models were tested using SPSS AMOS and the maximum likelihood approach through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This was done to see if the measurement tools used in the study were valid. Four separate confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were conducted to assess the distinctiveness of the study variables. The model fit was evaluated using the  $\chi^2$  statistic, normed chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ), RMSEA, SRMR, and CFI. RMSEA and SRMR values below 0.05 indicate a good fit, according to Browne and Cudeck (1992). On the other hand, CFI values of 0.90 or higher are considered acceptable.

**Table 2.** Fit Indices for the Alternative Measurement Models

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	p	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI
1.Four-factor model	1049,238	515	2,037	0,000	0,06	0,05	0,93
2.Three-factor model	2052,927	518	3,963	0,000	0,10	0,13	0,79
3.Two-factor model	2143,301	520	4,122	0,000	0,10	0,14	0,78
4.One-factor model	3130,788	521	6,009	0,000	0,13	0,15	0,64

Note. N = 308. RMSEA root mean square error of approximation; SRMR= standardized root mean square residual; CFI= comparative fit index.

The four-factor model comprised proactive personality, internal locus of control, career adaptability, and job search behavior as distinct factors. As seen in Table 2, The statistical analysis yielded the following results:  $\chi^2(1049,238) / df(515) = 2,037$ , p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0,006; SRMR = 0,05; CFI = 0,93, indicating an acceptable model fit. The three-factor model included proactive personality and internal locus of control as a single factor, while career adaptability and job search behavior were taken as separate factors ( $\chi^2(2052,927) / df(518) = 3,963$ , p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0,010; SRMR = 0,13; CFI = 0,79). The two-factor model comprises proactive personality and internal locus of control collapsed into one factor, whereas career adaptability and job search behavior collapsed into one factor ( $\chi^2(2143,301)/df(520) = 4,122$ , p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0,010; SRMR = 0,14; CFI = 0,78). Finally, the one-factor model has collapsed all constructs into a single factor ( $\chi^2(3130,788)/df(521) = 6,009$ , p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0,013; SRMR = 0,15; CFI = 0,64). As a result, compared to the other models, the four-factor model yielded the most acceptable fit among all, indicating our measurement tools have acceptable validity.

### 4.3. The Moderator Test Results

In order to assess the combined moderator effect of proactive personality and internal locus of control on the relationship between career adaptability and job search behavior, SPSS PROCESS Macro was used. Model 2 by Hayes (2022) was chosen to test the dual moderation approach. Through the utilization of the SPSS Process Macro Hayes Model 2, we successfully incorporated both proactive personality and internal locus of control as moderators within a single analysis. The model subsequently calculated the interaction between these two moderators, enabling us to evaluate their combined influence on the relationship between career adaptability and job search behavior. As seen in Table 3, career adaptability has a significant and positive affect on job search behavior ( $b = 0,55$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ) with significant model statistics ( $R^2 = 0,12$ ;  $F = 8,5436$ ;  $p < 0,001$ ). By taken separately, the interaction of career adaptability and proactive personality ( $b = 0,11$ ;  $p > 0,01$ ) and the interaction of career adaptability and internal locus of control ( $b = 0,07$ ;  $p > 0,01$ ) were statistically insignificant. However, the combined moderator roles of proactive personality and internal locus of control were statistically significant ( $b = 0,03$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ). Thus, H1 and H6 were supported.

**Table 3.** Moderator Role of Proactive Personality and Internal Locus of Control

Variable		<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI	
<b>Independent Variable (Job Search Behavior)</b>								
Career Adaptability		0,5556	0,1002	5,5456	0,000	0,3585	0,7528	
Proactive Personality		-0,0324	0,1050	-0,3088	0,7577	-0,2392	0,1743	
Career Adaptability X Proactive Personality		0,1196	0,0880	1,3587	0,1752	-0,0536	0,2928	
Internal Locus of Control		0,0507	0,1021	0,4960	0,6202	-0,1503	0,2516	
Career Adaptability X Internal Locus of Control		0,0778	0,0931	0,8355	0,4041	-0,1055	0,2611	
<b>Model Summary</b>			<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>MSE</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	
			0,3520	0,1239	0,8533	8,5436	0,000	
<b>Index of Moderation</b>			<b>R<sup>2</sup>Δ</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>df1</b>	<b>df2</b>	<b>p</b>	
Career Adaptability X Proactive Personality			0,0054	1,8462	1,000	302	0,175	
Career Adaptability X Internal Locus of Control			0,0020	0,6981	1,000	302	0,404	
Career Adaptability X (Proactive Personality + Internal Locus of Control)			0,0326	5,6248	2,000	302	0,004	
<b>Conditional Effects</b>	<b>PP</b>	<b>ILOC</b>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<b>SE</b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
<b>M-1SD (Low)</b>	-0,7530	-0,7223	0,4094	0,0919	4,4550	0,0000	0,2286	0,5902
	-0,7530	0,0000	0,4656	0,1060	4,3926	0,0000	0,2570	0,6742
	-0,7530	0,7223	0,5218	0,1519	3,4349	0,0007	0,2229	0,8207
<b>M (Average)</b>	0,0000	-0,7223	0,4994	0,1193	4,1847	0,0000	0,2646	0,7343
	0,0000	0,0000	0,5556	0,1002	5,5456	0,0000	0,3585	0,7528
	0,0000	0,7223	0,6118	0,1220	5,0149	0,0000	0,3718	0,8519
<b>M+1SD (High)</b>	0,7530	-0,7223	0,5895	0,1698	3,4719	0,0006	0,2554	0,9236
	0,7530	0,0000	0,6457	0,1328	4,8633	0,0000	0,3844	0,9069
	0,7530	0,7223	0,7019	0,1244	5,617	0,0000	0,4571	0,9467

Notes. N=308, PP: Proactive Personality, ILOC: Internal Locus of Control

Figure 2 depicts a graph that shows how the combination of proactive personality and internal locus of control influences the relationship between career adaptability and job search behavior. The visual depiction indicates that the relationship becomes considerably more powerful when both proactive personality and internal locus of control are at increased levels, emphasizing the combined impact of these characteristics on job search behavior.

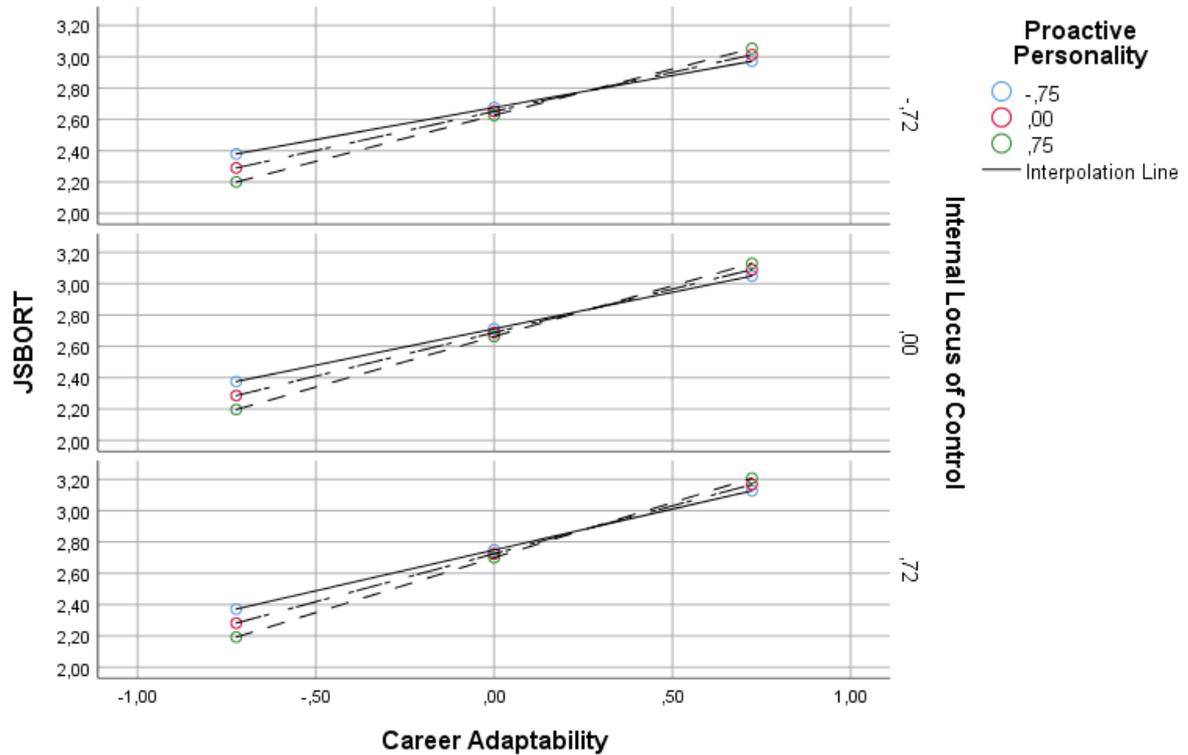


Figure 2. Visualization of the Moderator Role of Proactive Personality and Internal Locus of Control

## 5. CONCLUSION

As anticipated, this study yielded results parallel to prior studies by showing that career adaptability positively affects job search behavior (Pan et al., 2019; Tolentino et al., 2014). Most of the existing research on seeking employment has focused on the level of effort put into job searching as a predictor of measurable job search outcomes, such as successfully securing a job, receiving multiple job offers, and finding work within a specific timeframe. However, despite their efforts, these studies have been unable to accurately predict substantial differences in the level of job search quality, such as job satisfaction and the extent to which a new job aligns with an individual's requirements (Wanberg et al., 2002). The effectiveness of job-search strategies can significantly influence the quality of a recently obtained job. Also, individuals must invest a lot of time, effort, and energy into their job search to overcome several obstacles, including gathering information about jobs, evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, preparing the necessary paperwork, attending job interviews, and selecting the ideal position (Guan et al., 2013), personality traits play a key role in that process.

This study contributes to the career literature, especially to the CCT approach, by investigating the moderator role of proactive personality and internal locus of control. Although prior studies have taken proactive personality and internal locus of control into consideration separately, this study showed that those variables have a combined moderator role in the links between career adaptability and job search behavior. The findings indicate that the combined effect of proactive personality and internal locus of control moderates the relationship between career adaptability and job search behavior, suggesting the relationship is stronger when both traits are high. The evidence we provide corroborates the prior research findings, which posit that proactive personality is a significant boundary condition that impacts the intensity of the relationship between career competencies and job search behavior, ultimately affecting job search outcomes (Yu et al., 2023). In this context, highly proactive employees can initiate change and are driven by their internal motivation to develop resources that help them cope with challenges in their career development processes (Tolentino et al., 2014).

Our research supports the idea that having an internal locus of control positively impacts career-related outcomes. Individuals with a strong internal locus of control exhibited increased career adaptability and, as a result, reported increased career adaptability. This is consistent with social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the significance of individuals' beliefs in their capacity to affect the consequences of their lives (Lent et al., 2002). The presence of an internal locus of control indicates that individuals who believe they have more control over their life events are more likely to utilize career adaptability in the job search process.

This study also enhances the current body of knowledge by investigating the interaction among internal locus of control, career adaptability, and job search behavior. Results from practical research suggest that the internal locus of control affects the direction and strength of the association between job search behavior and career adaptability (van Hooft & Crossley, 2008). Our study revealed that individuals who possess a robust internal locus of control are more inclined to effectively apply their career adaptability by engaging in proactive job search behavior. Individuals' sense of personal control may contribute to the positive relationship between career adaptability and job search efforts.

Consequently, career counseling efforts focused on improving job seekers' career adaptability should involve developing their personal qualities and highlighting the practicality of adaptable job prospects (Hou et al., 2014). The practical implications can be categorized into individual and external factors. First and foremost, job seekers should conduct a comprehensive self-evaluation to gain insight into their proactive inclinations and locus of control. Identifying individual strengths and weaknesses can provide valuable insights for making informed choices in job search and career planning (van Hooft et al., 2021). They can also utilize proactive personality traits to broaden professional networks. Proactively pursuing networking opportunities, actively participating in informational interviews, and engaging in industry events could be advised. An extensive network can offer valuable perspectives, guidance, and potential employment opportunities. In the second category, both public and private sector entities could organize job fairs, networking events, and industry-specific expos to establish connections between individuals seeking employment and prospective employers. State-funded events can enhance chances for professional networking and employment placement. The results align with previous studies that highlight the significance of career adaptability in different aspects of the job search process. Earlier research, exemplified by the works of Koen et al. (2010), Lim et al. (2019), and Pan et al. (2018), has firmly established career adaptability as a pivotal factor influencing job search strategy, results, and overall career satisfaction. Moreover, Guan et al. (2013) emphasized the importance of career adaptability by illustrating its function as an accurate predictor of an individual's capacity to efficiently pursue employment and maintain their existing job position. Thus, the current study combines existing research with an exploration of how proactive personality and internal locus of control affect these dynamics. In this regard, organizations are advised to select employees with high levels of internal locus of control and to develop training programs to increase their employees' internal locus of control. Previous research reveals that employees with high levels of internal locus of control make more effective decisions (Rahmawati et al., 2023), and employees with more proactive personalities are more innovative (Ullah et al., 2023). In today's business world, where unexpected events emerge very quickly, it is necessary to react quickly to change. The competence to make fast and accurate decisions has become even more critical.

Although this study enhances our comprehension of the collective impacts of proactive personality and internal locus of control, it is important to recognize certain limitations. The study's reliance on self-report measures and its cross-sectional design limits its ability to establish causal relationships. To gain a more thorough understanding of these connections, future studies could utilize longitudinal methodologies and objective measures of career adaptability, job search behavior, proactive personality, and internal locus of control. Furthermore, it is worth considering other individual traits that may elucidate the relationship between career adaptability and job search behavior. Additionally, other job search outcomes that could be examined include the number of applications and successful interviews, among others.

This study provides valuable findings for career counselors, human resource professionals, educators, and job seekers, especially in developing countries where the employment market can be extremely competitive and demanding. This research highlights the significance of developing personal qualities such as proactive personality, internal locus of control, and career flexibility in individuals since they have a beneficial influence on job search success. Career counselors and educators may use these findings to customize their guidance and training programs. By doing this, organizations may improve the fit between employees' abilities and job requirements, aid in career development initiatives beyond the job search process, and increase the effectiveness of the organization as a whole. To shift demands in a dynamic global environment, organizations need a highly flexible workforce. Since supervisors assess employee performance, career adaptability, and compensation are closely related. Furthermore, it is advisable to emphasize the research implications for career counseling and career adaptability (Haibo et al., 2018). Organizations that make investments to help their employees become more career-adaptable experience higher employee engagement and retention rates. Organizational culture and training initiatives that support adaptability, learning, and development also facilitate employees in making more successful career transitions within an organization. This improves the organization's capacity to retain top personnel while improving employee satisfaction. Thus, HR professionals could improve recruiting methods and interventions that increase employee engagement and retention by comprehending the crucial role these attributes play in effective job search behaviors. In essence, this study not only enhances the theoretical foundation of career

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and job search literature but also offers practical implications for empowering individuals to deal with the challenges of the labor market more effectively.

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#### AUTHORS' DECLARATION

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#### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, writing-original draft, data collection, data analysis, editing – **MG**, data collection, data analysis, writing, editing – **CGÖ**, final approval, and accountability - **MG and CGÖ**.

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