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Career Crafting Strategies Developed by Generation Z in Navigating Career Uncertainty: A Multi-Case Study in the Creative Sector

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Abstract: Career uncertainty has become a structural condition confronting Generation Z within Indonesia's creative sector, marked by high layoff rates, global competition, and technological disruption. Unlike job crafting approaches that focus on modifying tasks within an organization, this study introduces career crafting as a more fundamental process of career construction beyond organizational boundaries. Employing a qualitative approach with a multi-case study design, this research involved 24 Generation Z participants aged 18–27 working as content creators, freelance designers, creative startup founders, and portfolio workers in Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, digital observations, and documentation, and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings identify three primary career-crafting strategies: portfolio polymorphism through cross-platform diversification and algorithmic management; communal buffering through the formation of collectives as a mechanism for collective risk mitigation; and existential pivoting, characterized by a shift in values from passion toward well-being as a career orientation. This study extends Career Construction Theory by demonstrating that Generation Z's career adaptability is realized through proactive withdrawal rather than merely adjusting to existing structures. Policy implications highlight the need for portable social protection schemes and community-based creative infrastructure.

Keywords: *Career Crafting, Generation Z, Creative Sector, Career Uncertainty, Adaptability*

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world of work is undergoing an unprecedented fundamental transformation. Generation Z—those born between 1997 and 2012—are entering a labor market where uncertainty is no longer an anomaly but the norm. In Indonesia, data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) as of August 2023 indicate that nearly 10 million, or 22.5 percent, of the 44.5 million residents aged 15–24 experience difficulties accessing employment or higher education. This figure represents a structural crisis that transcends cyclical economic fluctuations.

The creative sector, which should serve as an aspirational space for this digitally native generation, instead reveals sharp contradictions. The Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions (KSPI) recorded 60,000 layoffs from January to early March 2025, with manufacturing and labor-intensive industries hardest hit. In West Java alone, 22 labor-intensive companies have closed, forcing workers—including recent graduates—to

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compete in an increasingly shrinking job market. The viral incident in April 2025, in which job applicants fell into a drainage ditch after being pushed at PT Let Solar Energi Indonesia in Batam, serves as a painful metaphor for the desperation underlying the school-to-work transition for Indonesia's Generation Z.

Amid this constricting structure, another irony emerges. The creative economy sector—heralded as a game-changer—presents new forms of uncertainty. The World Economic Forum (2023) predicts that 14 million jobs could be lost by 2028 due to automation and artificial intelligence. Meanwhile, Minister of Manpower Yassierli identified three global factors reshaping the employment landscape: AI & Digitalization Disruption, Green Transition & Sustainability, and Demographic & Care Economy Shift. An estimated 92 million jobs will be lost or replaced, while 59 percent of the workforce will need reskilling and upskilling.

Generation Z faces an existential paradox: they are the most technologically literate generation (72 percent have mastered digital platforms from an early age), yet also the most vulnerable to anxiety (29 percent admit to being highly susceptible to anxiety). On the other hand, the IDN Research Institute found that 67 percent of Gen Z are willing to work overtime and 64 percent consider career progression very important. This irony confirms that Generation Z is not a lazy generation—a stigma often attached to them—but rather a generation trapped between high aspirations and narrowing opportunity structures.

Research on Generation Z's career construction remains dominated by job crafting approaches, which focus on individual proactive efforts to reshape task, relational, and cognitive boundaries within their jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Twenge, 2023). A study in Indonesia by Asshaderi (2018) at PT. XYZ showed that job crafting can benefit both employees and companies, but faces obstacles such as difficulty understanding task boundaries and time management. Another study by the FEB UI research team (2025) examined the mediating role of job crafting and subjective well-being on Gen Z workers' innovative performance in startup companies, finding that job crafting plays a full and complementary mediating role.

However, job crafting approaches assume the existence of an organization as a stable workplace—an assumption that becomes problematic when applied to Indonesia's creative sector. In this sector, a "job" is no longer a clearly bounded entity. Many Gen Z creative workers operate as independent content creators, affiliates, freelance designers, or digital marketers not tied to a single organization. They do not possess a "job" in the traditional sense; instead, they must craft their own career trajectories from scratch.

This theoretical gap becomes even more evident when considering the findings of Abdullah, Afiatin, Himam, and Helmi (2018) on the multiple loops career crafting model. Career construction in the boundaryless workplace era is a recurring learning process characterized by uniqueness, continuous self-development, global and digital perspectives, collaboration, and flexibility. However, this model was built on the experiences of Generation Y (millennials), who differ from Generation Z in their relationship with technology and work expectations.

Research by Murphy, O'Sullivan, and O'Donohoe (2025) on Gen Z creative workers in Ireland found an interesting shift in motivation: young workers now prioritize well-being and work-life balance over simply "being creative." This finding challenges the dominant assumption in creative industries literature that always places passion and creative calling as primary motivators (McRobbie, 2016; Banks, 2017). However, that

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study was conducted in a European context with a social protection system fundamentally different from Indonesia's.

At the global level, Yazid (2026) examined Generation Z creative workers in Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta, focusing on algorithmic exposure and identity work. That study found that creative autonomy is increasingly mediated by algorithmic visibility metrics, creating a paradox of entrepreneurial dependence. However, that research focused more on platform-work relations than on the proactive strategies developed by workers themselves.

This study addresses several gaps: (1) Theoretical gap: The dominance of job crafting perspectives assuming stable organizational existence is irrelevant to the reality of portfolio work and boundaryless careers in the creative sector. (2) Contextual gap: Minimal research on Generation Z's career construction strategies in Indonesia's creative sector, which has unique characteristics (large informal economy, weak social protection, dominance of digital economy platforms). (3) Generational gap: Existing career crafting models built from previous generations (Y/millennials) have not captured the distinctiveness of Generation Z in responding to uncertainty.

The urgency of this research is twofold: theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research is needed to extend Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005) and Job Crafting Theory (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) into the context of boundaryless careers experienced by Generation Z in the creative sector of developing countries. In practice, the findings are expected to inform labor policies that are more responsive to the realities of non-standard work, as well as to contribute to the development of higher education curricula that prepare students for portfolio careers.

Based on the above, this study aims to identify and analyze the career-crafting strategies developed by Generation Z in Indonesia's creative sector to address career uncertainty, explain the psychosocial mechanisms underlying these strategies, and build a conceptual model of Generation Z career crafting grounded in Indonesia's socio-cultural reality.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative, multiple-case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen to deeply understand the meaning-making processes and adaptive strategies developed by subjects facing career uncertainty—processes and strategies that are not quantifiable (Yin, 2018). Case study research is appropriate when research questions focus on "how" and "why" within complex real-life contexts.

The multiple-case study design was selected because it allows for literal and theoretical replication across cases, thereby enhancing the external validity of the findings (Yin, 2018). This study involved three case types based on the type of work in the creative sector: (1) platform-dependent creators (content creators, affiliates, influencers), (2) portfolio freelancers (freelance designers, freelance writers, video editors), and (3) creative micro-entrepreneurs (founders of micro-scale creative businesses). This typology enables identification of cross-case versus case-specific strategies.

The research was conducted in three metropolitan cities that serve as centers of Indonesia's creative ecosystem: Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta. The selection was based on: (a) the highest concentration of creative sector workers, (b) the presence of active creative communities and collectives, and (c) accessibility for longitudinal data collection.

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A total of 24 participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (a) aged 18–27 years (Generation Z range), (b) working in the creative sector for at least the past 12 months, (c) holding non-permanent work status (freelance, project contract, self-employed) or portfolio workers, (d) deriving primary income from the creative sector, and (e) willing to participate in in-depth interviews and digital observation. The number of participants was determined based on data saturation principles (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), which were achieved at the 22nd participant, with two additional participants for confirmation.

Participant composition: 8 platform-dependent creators (5 female, 3 male; monthly income range IDR 2–15 million), 8 portfolio freelancers (4 female, 4 male; income range IDR 3–12 million), and 8 creative micro-entrepreneurs (5 male, 3 female; income range IDR 5–25 million).

Data collection techniques employed three complementary methods: (1) Semi-Structured Interviews: Interviews lasted 90–120 minutes per participant, conducted in a hybrid manner (face-to-face and online) using an interview guide developed from adapted career adaptability (Savickas, 2005) and job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) frameworks. Interviews were recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim. (2) Digital Observation: Participants were asked to walk through their digital activities related to career management (social media platforms, freelance marketplaces, digital portfolios). This observation enabled researchers to examine how career-crafting strategies were implemented within digital interfaces. (3) Documentation: Participants were asked to provide supporting documents such as portfolios, work contracts, screenshots of client communications, and income records for the past three months.

Data analysis used reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) conducted in six phases: (1) data familiarization, (2) systematic coding, (3) generating initial themes, (4) reviewing and developing themes, (5) refining, defining, and naming themes, and (6) report writing. The coding process was assisted using NVivo 14 software.

To enhance trustworthiness, this study applied the following strategies: prolonged engagement (sustained interaction with participants over three months), triangulation (cross-checking across methods and case types), member checking (confirming preliminary findings with participants), and peer debriefing (discussing findings with senior research colleagues).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Data analysis yielded three main themes of career crafting strategies developed by Generation Z in the creative sector: (1) Portfolio Polymorphism, (2) Communal Buffering, and (3) Existential Pivoting. These three themes are not mutually exclusive—a participant may use a combination of strategies—but exhibit different dominant patterns across case types.

Portfolio Polymorphism: Diversification as an Existential Strategy

The first identified strategy is portfolio polymorphism, defined as the practice of diversifying across platforms and income sources that is not merely technical-economic but also existential. The term "polymorphism" captures the ability to shape-shift according to algorithmic and market demands without losing the core of creative identity.

A content creator with 200,000 followers on TikTok (Rina, 22 years old, Jakarta) explained her strategy: "I used to focus intensely on TikTok because the algorithm was crazy—you could go viral overnight. However, after the algorithm changed last March, my

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reach dropped 70 percent in two weeks. I panicked and cried all night. Now I have accounts everywhere: TikTok for quick content, Instagram for personal branding, YouTube for long-form content, even LinkedIn for corporate clients. I have also started offering content consulting services for MSMEs. So if one platform dies, I still have three others." (Interview, September 15, 2025)

Rina's portfolio polymorphism strategy reflects what Yazid (2026) termed algorithmic exposure—vulnerability to unpredictable algorithmic changes. However, unlike Yazid's findings, which emphasized passivity, this study's participants demonstrated greater agency: they are not merely exposed to algorithms but actively "play" with them through diversification.

The same pattern was found among portfolio freelancers. A freelance graphic designer (Andre, 24 years old, Bandung) revealed: "I used to accept orders only from freelance platforms like Fastwork and Sribulancer. However, the platform commissions are quite large, and price competition is very tight—Indians can offer logo design for IDR 50,000! Now I am building my personal brand on Instagram and LinkedIn, getting direct clients from referrals. I am also starting to learn UI/UX because the demand is higher than for general graphic design. The key is not to rely on just one source of income." (Interview, September 20, 2025)

Andre performed upskilling as a survival strategy, but with a different motivation. Not merely to enhance employability, but explicitly to create "multiple doors" as a response to uncertainty. This indicates a shift from linear career development to circular career diversification (Murphy et al., 2025; O'Brien & Kerrigan, 2020).

Quantitative data from participants' income documentation support this finding. On average, participants had 3.7 different income sources (median=4, range=2–7), with the largest income source contributing no more than 45 percent of total income. This pattern suggests that portfolio polymorphism is not merely an additional strategy but a core survival mechanism.

Notably, this strategy did not develop in a vacuum. Participants reported learning from collective experience—sharing information about algorithm changes, promising new platforms, or trending project types through online communities. A content creator from Yogyakarta (Dewi, 23 years old) explained: "We have a WhatsApp group specifically for creators—from about 30 people, now it is over 200. Every time there is an algorithm update, someone immediately shares it. If there is a new platform distributing creator incentives, that also goes viral in the group. Sometimes we collaborate too, like I appear in their content and vice versa, to boost each other's reach." (Interview, September 25, 2025)

Communal Buffering: Collectivity as Risk Mitigation

The second strategy, communal buffering, involves the formation and use of collectives to mitigate collective risk. Unlike portfolio polymorphism, which is individual, communal buffering explicitly involves others in collaborative networks that go beyond mere "professional networking."

A founder of a micro creative studio in Bandung (Bima, 26 years old) recounted: "I have a small animation studio, only 5 people, including myself. When projects are quiet, we can 'loan' people to a friend's studio that's flooded with orders. Alternatively, conversely, if we get a big project, we invite freelancers from the community. We also have a tender information-sharing system. The point is not to be sectorally selfish. If we hide things from each other, we all die." (Interview, September 18, 2025)

Bima's communal buffering model recalls Threadgold's (2019) findings on DIY culture, in which young people create alternative economies grounded in solidarity rather than competition. However, unlike the ideologically driven punk scene discussed by Threadgold,

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the communal buffering in this study is more pragmatic—oriented toward survival rather than cultural resistance.

Forms of communal buffering varied across case types. For platform-dependent creators, it manifested as mutual shout-outs, content duets, and engagement pods (groups that mutually like/comment to manipulate algorithms). For portfolio freelancers, it took the form of project-based collaboration and referral networks. For creative micro-entrepreneurs, it involved resource pooling (sharing equipment, workspace, even labor).

A freelance illustrator from Jakarta (Sarah, 25 years old) shared her experience: "Last year I got a big project from a ministry—designing 50 illustrations for a children's book. The deadline was only one month, and it was impossible to do alone. I invited three fellow illustrators and divided the tasks among them. The client paid me, and I distributed the payment to my friends. Sure, I did not get the full fee, but we all got work.

Furthermore, the good relationship with the client was maintained. This year, the same client ordered another 75 illustrations." (Interview, September 22, 2025)

Sarah enacted what Abdullah et al. (2018) called collaboration in their multiple-loop career-crafting model. However, while Abdullah's model positions collaboration as one dimension, this study's findings show that collaboration is not merely a dimension but a structural mechanism that transforms the logic of competition into coopetition (cooperative competition).

Digital observation data showed that communal buffering occurs not only in physical spaces but also in digital spaces. Participants were members of an average of 5.2 professional groups/communities on WhatsApp, Telegram, or Discord, with active participation (at least one message per day) in 2.4 groups. These groups functioned as: (a) early warning systems for market changes, (b) resource sharing for job opportunities, (c) emotional support for managing stress and anxiety, and (d) skill exchange for collective learning.

The emotional support function of communal buffering became particularly important given the high levels of anxiety among creative workers. A content creator (Tari, 21 years old, Jakarta) admitted: "Honestly, being a creator is really stressful. Income is uncertain, netizens' comments can be cruel, and the algorithm is frustrating. I once wanted to quit entirely. However, in the community group, I shared my feelings, and many of them encouraged me. They said, 'You are not alone; we all experience that.' That support is what keeps me going." (Interview, September 28, 2025)

This finding reinforces Murphy et al.'s (2025) argument that well-being has become a career motivator equal to, or even surpassing, creativity. However, this study shows that well-being among Indonesian creative workers is not merely individual but also collective—achieved through a sense of belonging to a mutually supportive community.

Existential Pivoting: Value Reorientation from Passion to Well-Being

The third strategy is existential pivoting, defined as a fundamental shift in career value orientation—from pursuing passion and creative calling toward prioritizing well-being, life balance, and psychological sustainability. The term "pivoting" describes a deliberate yet non-radical change in direction—not leaving the creative sector, but transforming one's relationship with creative work itself.

A freelance writer and manuscript editor (Lia, 26 years old, Yogyakarta) described her pivoting process: "I used to be very idealistic. I only wanted to write short stories and novels—that was my soul is calling. However, living in Yogyakarta on a meager income from writing short stories was unrealistic. I was stressed, could not sleep, and my hair fell out. Eventually, I took on 'dirty' work I used to avoid: writing SEO articles, copywriting for beauty products, editing people's theses. Now I have three steady copywriting clients, a stable

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income, and I can actually write short stories in my free time without financial pressure. I have made peace with the reality that passion does not have to be full-time." (Interview, October 1, 2025)

Lia's shift aligns with Murphy et al.'s (2025) finding that young creative workers in Ireland consider mental well-being at least as important as creativity. However, the Indonesian context adds a different nuance. In Ireland, with its relatively strong welfare state, this shift is more psychological. In Indonesia, this shift is about survival—well-being is unattainable without basic financial stability.

Existential pivoting also manifested as a shift from a career-achievement orientation toward work-life balance. A freelance UI/UX designer (Rizki, 24 years old, Bandung) explained: "I used to take every project that came my way, working overtime every day, even weekends. I thought that was the price of success. However, after falling ill for two weeks and losing all income, I realized that was unsustainable. Now I am more selective about which projects I take on. I reject clients with unclear revisions or inhumane deadlines. My income may have dropped 20 percent, but I am happier, healthier, and have time for family and friends." (Interview, September 19, 2025)

Rizki engaged in what the literature terms boundary management—setting boundaries between work and personal life. Notably, these boundaries are not merely temporal (working hours) but also values-based (type of projects, type of clients, work ethics). This indicates that existential pivoting involves a deep renegotiation of professional identity.

Documentation data showed that existential pivoting is not merely an attitude change but manifests in concrete decisions: (a) rejection of projects with unrealistic turnaround times (78 percent of participants reported refusing projects for this reason in the past six months), (b) reduction in working hours (average from 54 hours/week to 42 hours/week), (c) increased time allocation for non-work activities (exercise, non-professional hobbies, family time), and (d) willingness to accept lower income for less stressful work (67 percent of participants).

The most interesting phenomenon was the shift from a "career as calling" narrative to a "career as instrument" narrative. A content creator (Nanda, 23 years old, Jakarta) expressed: "I used to really want to become a famous TikTok celebrity—tens of millions of followers, expensive endorsements, able to buy my parents a house. Now? I have made peace with it. I still make content, but not desperately. I have also opened content management services for brands and sell digital products (templates, presets, ebooks). So being a content creator is one of many things I do, not everything. I am not giving up, but I also do not want my career to determine my self-worth." (Interview, September 26, 2025)

Nanda demonstrated what Threadgold (2019) called a DIY career—creating one's own career outside conventional paths. However, unlike Threadgold's subjects who ideologically rejected bullshit jobs, Nanda is more pragmatic: she does not reject certain jobs for ideological reasons. However, she diversifies her professional identity to reduce psychological dependence on a single source of self-legitimation.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings: Career Crafting as Proactive Withdrawal

This study's findings reveal an interesting paradox: the career crafting strategies of Generation Z in the creative sector are not efforts to "go deeper" into existing structures (job crafting), but rather to "strategically withdraw" to create autonomy outside those structures. We term this phenomenon proactive withdrawal—a concept that has not yet been extensively discussed in the career literature.

Proactive withdrawal differs from quiet quitting (performing work according to job

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descriptions without additional initiative) and from turnover (leaving an organization). Proactive withdrawal is a strategy in which individuals consciously and proactively reduce their psychological and financial dependence on a single source of work while simultaneously building alternative sources for self-legitimation and livelihood.

The three identified strategies—portfolio polymorphism, communal buffering, and existential pivoting—are manifestations of proactive withdrawal at the individual, relational, and values-based levels.

Comparison with Previous Theories and Research

Extension of Career Construction Theory. Savickas (2005), in Career Construction Theory, emphasized the importance of career adaptability as a psychosocial resource for managing work transitions. Career adaptability has four dimensions: concern (care for the future), control (control over the future), curiosity (curiosity about possibilities), and confidence (confidence in one's abilities). This study's findings show that Generation Z in the creative sector actualizes their career adaptability in different ways.

Rather than using curiosity to explore opportunities within a single career path (as Savickas assumes), participants used curiosity to explore multiple parallel paths simultaneously. Concern is not merely about future planning but about preparedness for multiple futures—including worst-case scenarios such as algorithm changes or loss of a primary client. Control is not merely about mastery over career choices but about de-risking through diversification. Confidence is not merely about believing in one's ability to face challenges, but about resilience against failure in one line while other lines continue operating. Thus, this study extends Career Construction Theory by demonstrating that in contexts of extreme uncertainty, career adaptability is no longer linear but multidimensional and simultaneous.

Critique of Job Crafting Theory. Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001) define job crafting as changes employees make to task boundaries (task crafting), relational boundaries (relational crafting), and cognitive boundaries (cognitive crafting) within their jobs. A fundamental assumption of this theory is the existence of a clearly bounded "job."

This study's findings show that this assumption does not hold for most Generation Z creative workers in Indonesia. They do not possess a "job" in the traditional sense to be crafted. Instead, they engage in career crafting—constructing careers from scratch without reference to pre-existing job descriptions. This is not merely a terminological difference but a fundamental difference in the ontology of work. This study thus rejects the direct application of Job Crafting Theory to the context of boundaryless careers and proposes a paradigm shift toward Career Crafting Theory.

Confirmation and Nuancing of International Findings. The existential pivoting finding confirms Murphy et al.'s (2025) results that well-being has become a primary motivator for Generation Z creative workers. However, this study provides important contextual nuance: in Indonesia, the shift toward well-being cannot be separated from harsher economic realities. Well-being for Indonesian participants was more about survival—not merely psychological thriving or flourishing as in the European context. They prioritize well-being due to the absence of formal safety nets, not because of psychological luxury.

The communal buffering finding confirms Yazid's (2026) findings on the importance of communities for platform workers in Indonesia. However, while Yazid's research focused on identity work in relation to algorithms, this study shows that communities function not only for identity construction but also as economic mechanisms—resource pooling, risk sharing, and informal collective bargaining. This enriches our understanding of collective functions outside formal labor unions.

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A Contradictory Phenomenon: Between Flexibility and Exploitation. This study's findings reveal an apparently contradictory phenomenon: participants claim to enjoy flexibility and autonomy as creative workers, yet simultaneously report high levels of anxiety and uncertainty. How can this paradox be explained?

We argue that the flexibility enjoyed by participants is forced—rather than chosen—because they desired a digital nomad lifestyle, not because they sought it. As one participant stated: "It is not that I chose to be a freelancer, but there are no permanent job openings that match my skills" (Andre, interview, September 20, 2025). This phenomenon is referred to in the literature as precarious flexibility—flexibility unaccompanied by social protection and income certainty (Standing, 2011). Generation Z in Indonesia's creative sector is trapped in what Kalleberg (2009) calls precarious work—uncertain, unstable, and unprotected employment. They "choose" flexibility because the alternative is unemployment.

However, this study also found agency amid precarity. Participants did not passively accept precarious conditions. They actively developed career crafting strategies to reduce precarity—even if they could not eliminate it. This is an important finding that distinguishes this study from the precarious work literature, which tends to emphasize passivity.

Addressing the Research Objectives

Objective 1: Identification of career crafting strategies. This study has identified three main strategies: portfolio polymorphism (diversification across platforms/income sources), communal buffering formation of collectives for risk mitigation), and existential pivoting (value reorientation from passion to well-being).

Objective 2: Underlying psychosocial mechanisms. Different psychosocial mechanisms underpin the three strategies. Portfolio polymorphism is driven by algorithmic vigilance (continuous awareness of algorithmic and market changes) and by opportunity scanning (scanning for opportunities across platforms). Communal buffering is driven by collective efficacy (the belief that the group can overcome shared challenges) and social capital mobilization (utilizing networks to access resources). Existential pivoting is driven by cognitive reframing (changing the meaning of success and professional identity) and value re-prioritization (shifting priorities from external achievement to internal well-being).

Objective 3: Conceptual model of Generation Z career crafting. Based on the findings, we propose the Proactive Withdrawal Model of Career Crafting, consisting of three interrelated layers of strategy: (a) Individual layer (Portfolio Polymorphism): Diversification of income sources and professional identities to reduce dependence on a single entity/platform; (b) Relational layer (Communal Buffering): Formation and utilization of collaborative networks to share risks and resources; (c) Values layer (Existential Pivoting): Reorientation of success meaning from external achievement to internal well-being. These three layers are nested—the values layer (meaning) underlies the relational and individual layers, while the individual layer is the concrete manifestation of the other two layers.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the multiple case study design emphasizes depth over statistical generalization. Although efforts were made to select representative cases, these findings cannot be generalized to the entire population of Generation Z creative workers in Indonesia without further testing through quantitative research. Second, the participants' age range (18–27 years) indicates they are in the early stages of their careers. It remains unknown whether the career-crafting strategies identified are developmental—potentially changing with age and experience—or persistent generational characteristics. Longitudinal research is needed to answer this question. Third, this study focused on only

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three types of work within the creative sector. Other sub-sectors such as performing arts, architecture, or game development may exhibit different dynamics.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that Generation Z in Indonesia's creative sector develops three career-crafting strategies in the face of career uncertainty: portfolio polymorphism (cross-platform/income-source diversification), communal buffering (formation of collectives for risk mitigation), and existential pivoting (value reorientation from passion to well-being). These three strategies are manifestations of proactive withdrawal—strategically withdrawing from dependence on a single work structure to create autonomy and resilience.

The uniqueness of these findings lies in revealing that Generation Z's career-crafting strategies are not merely adaptive but also redefinitive—they do not simply adjust to uncertainty but fundamentally redefine what a successful career means. From an orientation toward external achievement (position, income, recognition), they shift toward an orientation toward internal sustainability (balance, mental health, subjective meaning).

This study extends Career Construction Theory by showing that career adaptability in an era of uncertainty is no longer linear but multidimensional and simultaneous. This study also critiques the direct application of Job Crafting Theory to the boundaryless career context and proposes a shift toward a more relevant Career Crafting Theory.

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