

Gender analysis of career self efficacy in university students

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Abstract: Career self-efficacy plays a crucial role in shaping career-related behaviors, such as academic performance, major selection, and career transitions. However, research on career self-efficacy as a distinct variable in Indonesia remains limited. This study examines gender differences in career self-efficacy among final-semester students at a university in Jakarta. Using a comparative quantitative approach, data were collected from 370 university students through a quota sampling technique. The findings indicate a significant difference between male and female students, with men exhibiting higher career self-efficacy scores. Additionally, most respondents demonstrated high career self-efficacy, suggesting confidence in completing career-related tasks and transitioning into the workforce. However, female students, despite overall high self-efficacy, reported lower confidence in technical and leadership-oriented tasks. These findings highlight the importance of gender-responsive career counseling and skill development programs to address self-efficacy disparities. This study contributes to the understanding of career self-efficacy in Indonesia and underscores the need for more comprehensive career interventions.

Keywords: Career Self-efficacy; Gender; University Students

Introduction

University students entering higher education often have various aspirations, one of which is to improve their future prospects. Generally, discussions about the future focus on selecting an appropriate job or career, a decision influenced by individual characteristics and preferences. According to Sari and Munawaroh (2021), a career is a fundamental aspect of a person's life, as it enables individuals to understand themselves, explore the professional world, and plan a future that aligns with their aspirations. Furthermore, career development requires individuals to take responsibility for their decisions to create a meaningful and fulfilling life (Juliyanti & Azizah, 2021). Career-related decision-making is particularly critical during early adulthood, as this phase marks a significant transition into professional and personal independence (Park et al., 2018)

Many university students continue to struggle with career decision-making due to self-doubt. While students recognize the importance of career selection, not all feel adequately prepared for this critical transition. This lack of preparedness is particularly evident among recent graduates from undergraduate programs. Graduates often experience anxiety when facing the demands of the workforce, fearing they may contribute to the growing number of educated yet unemployed individuals (Isnaini & Lestari, 2015). This anxiety is further exacerbated by the high unemployment rate in Indonesia, which reached 9.77 million people in August 2020 (cnnindonesia.com, 2020). Compared to the previous year, unemployment increased by 2.67 million, a rise largely attributed to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the era of globalization, intense competition necessitates continuous skill development, and the wide range of career options available further complicates the decision-making process.

Scholars examining career development often reference Bandura's social learning theory as a valuable framework (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993). A central concept in this theory is self-efficacy, which Bandura (1997), defines as an individual's belief in their ability to complete a task or achieve a goal. The strength of self-efficacy determines whether a person initiates a behavior, the effort they invest in achieving their goals, and their persistence in

overcoming challenges. In the context of career decision-making, this concept is referred to as career self-efficacy. Individuals with high career self-efficacy are more likely to take proactive steps toward their career goals, exert effort in preparing for and entering a profession, and persist in the face of obstacles (Lent & Hackett, 1987). Career self-efficacy is also associated with academic persistence and success, as students with higher self-efficacy expectations tend to achieve better academic outcomes (Betz & Hackett, 1981; DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; Lent & Hackett, 1987). This highlights the critical role of career selection in shaping students' futures, particularly for university graduates.

University graduates, especially prospective graduates, must be adequately prepared for the workforce and the career selection process. A prospective graduate is typically defined as a final-year student nearing the completion of their higher education. These students are often in their fourth year or have entered the seventh or eighth semester of their studies (Permatasari, 2019). To assess job readiness among prospective graduates, a survey was conducted, including open interviews with 14 male and female students from various faculties at private university in Jakarta. The preliminary findings revealed that only four of the 14 students reported feeling prepared to enter the workforce in their chosen field, while the remaining 10 students expressed uncertainty due to perceived skill gaps and a lack of experience, which hindered their understanding of the job market.

All male students interviewed, viewed a career as an essential and obligatory part of their lives. They emphasized the importance of careful career planning and expressed the belief that a successful career contributes to a structured life. Additionally, they highlighted that men, as future heads of households, are expected to provide financial stability, making a career integral to their social status and responsibility. In contrast, most female students considered a career a personal choice rather than a necessity. They noted that while having a career provides financial independence, it also limits the time available for family life. Female students identified several factors that differentiate their career paths from those of men, particularly in terms of perceived competencies and responsibilities. Some female respondents expressed the belief that men possess greater potential and are naturally more suited to completing certain tasks. Furthermore, women who pursue careers often face additional considerations, particularly when balancing work and family responsibilities.

These findings indicate that not all university graduates are fully prepared to enter the workforce upon graduation. The results also suggest that career self-efficacy varies among individuals and is influenced by multiple factors, including gender. Gender, along with age and personal abilities, is an external factor affecting career self-efficacy (Yu & Jen, 2021). As a psychological factor, gender plays a role in shaping career self-efficacy due to its sociocultural and psychological implications (Situmorang & Salim, 2021). In Indonesia, where a collectivist culture prevails, individuals are expected to conform to societal norms, including those related to gender roles (Jatmika, 2018). Thus, gender significantly influences various aspects of an individual's life, including career development.

In sociology, gender refers to a set of characteristics associated with an individual's sex and their corresponding social roles or identity within society (Maksum, 2013). While some perspectives emphasize biological factors in shaping male and female behavior, others highlight the influence of social and cognitive factors. Culturally and socially, gender has long played a role in defining the division of labor between men and women. However, this division has not always adhered to principles of equity, as both men and women possess equal rights as human beings. In reality, men are often assigned a greater share of responsibilities than women, and gender inequality persists in various aspects of social and professional life. Consequently, gender differences may also contribute to variations in students' career self-efficacy.

Research on career self-efficacy has been predominantly conducted in the United States and Korea, with studies by Betz and Hackett (2006) and Park et al. (2018) providing key

insights. In Indonesia, research on self-efficacy in career contexts has primarily focused on general self-efficacy rather than explicitly examining career self-efficacy. Studies conducted by Dewi et al. (2020), Utomo (2019), and Febriyansi et al. (2020) have explored self-efficacy but have not directly addressed career self-efficacy. At the time of this study, only one research paper was identified that specifically investigated career self-efficacy: a study by Pandang et al. (2022) titled *Gender Analysis of Student Career Self-Efficacy and Implications in Career Guidance Services at State Vocational Schools*, which measured career self-efficacy among male and female students in vocational schools in Makassar City.

Despite the growing interest in career self-efficacy, research on the role of gender in this domain has produced inconsistent findings. For example, Lent and Hackett (1987) found significant differences in career self-efficacy between men and women, with these differences affecting occupational preferences and career decision-making. Gender differences in career self-efficacy were particularly evident in the classification of traditional and nontraditional jobs, as well as in gendered perceptions of professional roles. In contrast, Hartman and Barber (2019) found no statistically significant differences in career self-efficacy or work engagement between men and women. However, their study revealed that men generally exhibited higher career aspirations than women. Given these discrepancies, this study aims to analyze the influence of gender on career self-efficacy among university graduates.

This study aims to analyze the influence of gender on career self-efficacy among university graduates in Indonesia, addressing the ongoing debate regarding gender differences in career confidence, preparedness, and decision-making. By examining how gender impacts students' ability to navigate career challenges, this research contributes to the broader discussion on career development within a collectivist society. Grounded in Bandura's social learning theory, particularly the concept of self-efficacy, this study explores how cognitive, social, and environmental factors shape individuals' career beliefs and behaviors. Given the inconsistent findings in previous studies (Hartman & Barber, 2019; Lent & Hackett, 1987), this research expands the theoretical understanding of career self-efficacy by situating it within Indonesia's sociocultural framework. Furthermore, it fills a research gap by providing empirical evidence on the career self-efficacy of university graduates, a topic that remains underexplored in the Indonesian context compared to Western and East Asian countries.

Method

The research was conducted during the 2022/2023 academic year using a quantitative approach with a comparative research design to explore gender differences in career self-efficacy. A quota sampling technique was used to select an equal number of male (n=185) and female (n=185) final-year students (N=370), aged 20-25 years. Data collection took place over two months through an online questionnaire. The study used the Career Self-Efficacy Scale by Betz and Hackett (2006), based on Taylor and Betz's (1983) framework, which assesses self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving. The Indonesian adaptation by Muthi'ah (2021) was used, consisting of 23 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with an internal consistency score of 0.839. Once data collection was complete, descriptive and comparative statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 27, allowing for a structured evaluation of gender-based differences in career self-efficacy.

Results and Discussion

The data that has been collected is analyzed by calculating the average of each domain. The description of the research results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of career self-efficacy data results

	N	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	SD
Career Self-Efficacy	370	67,00	114,00	90,6054	9,28185

Based on the results of the assumption test, it can be seen that all test results on career self-efficacy, both male and female group data using Kolmogorov Smirnov and Shapiro Wilk have a significance number of > 0.05 , which is 0.079; 0.077; 0.133; and 0.340. A significance number of > 0.05 indicates that the data is normally distributed. Based on the results of the homogeneity test that has been carried out, a mean value of 0.095 is obtained. A significance score of > 0.05 indicates that the data is homogeneous. Therefore, the assumptions requirement for parametric analysis have been met.

Table 2. Career self-efficacy categorizations

Career Self-Efficacy	Range	Frequency	%
Low	$\leq 53,67$	0	0
Moderate	$53,67 < X < 84,33$	85	23
High	$> 84,33$	285	77

Table 3. Career self-efficacy categorization based on gender

		High	Moderate	Low
Gender	Male	160	25	0
	Female	125	60	0

According to the results of the research subject categorization test (see Table 2), most participants have high career self-efficacy (77%), and no participants fall into the low career self-efficacy category. In terms of gender, there is more male than female in high category. Meanwhile, in moderate category, male is less than female.

Table 3. Mean and standar deviation based on gender

Career Self Efficacy	Mean	SD
Female	87,373	8,2341
Male	93,838	9,16312

Following the descriptive data analysis, male students have a higher score of career self-efficacy than female students (see. Table 3). The score differences between the genders are 6,465. Further analysis has been done using a comparative analysis. In the comparison test based on gender, the analysis performed was an Independent T-test with the assumption that the data were normally distributed and homogenous. The comparative test results showed a significant difference in career self-efficacy based on gender (see. Table 4).

Table 4. Comparative analysis of career self-efficacy based on gender

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Career Self-Efficacy	7,138	368	0,000

Table 5. Mean and comparative analysis based on gender

Aspects	Mean		Sig. (2-tailed)
	Male	Female	
Self Appraisal	25,0649	23,3189	0,000
Occupational Information	16,1243	15,0703	0,000
Goal Setting	15,7514	14,7297	0,000
Planning	16,1946	15,0865	0,000
Problem Solving	20,7027	18,1676	0,000

Further analysis on career self-efficacy aspects (see. Tabel 5), showed that there is a significant difference in self appraisal, occupational information, goal setting, planning and problem solving between male and female student, with higher score for all aspects for male than female students.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that 77% of students exhibit high career self-efficacy, demonstrating strong confidence in their ability to navigate and complete career-related tasks. This level of self-efficacy fosters positive career exploration, particularly during the transition from student to professional life. A high level of career self-efficacy enhances decision-making, equipping students with the readiness to compete in the workforce post-graduation. These results align with Dharma and Akmal (2019), who suggest that increasing self-efficacy reduces career-related anxiety. Meanwhile, 23% of students exhibit moderate career self-efficacy, indicating that while they possess a fair degree of confidence, further development is necessary to achieve their career aspirations. Career self-efficacy is influenced by several factors, including personal experiences, vicarious experiences, psychological and emotional states, and social persuasion. Personal experience, in particular, plays a crucial role, as students who frequently engage in problem-solving tasks develop greater confidence in their abilities. This finding is consistent with Iriastuti (2022), who emphasizes that habitual engagement in problem-solving enhances an individual's ability to navigate challenges, reinforcing the connection between experience and self-efficacy.

This study also identified significant gender differences in career self-efficacy, with male students ($M = 93.838$, $SD = 9.16$) exhibiting significantly higher self-efficacy than female students ($M = 87.373$, $SD = 8.23$) ($t = 7.138$, $p < 0.001$). These findings support Bandura's theory, as cited in Abdullah (2019), which posits that career self-efficacy is shaped by both internal factors (such as gender, age, and self-perceived ability) and external factors (including cultural norms, economic conditions, task difficulty, family background, and societal rewards). Despite similarities in overall self-efficacy levels between men and women (Hartman & Barber, 2019), career self-efficacy often differ, with men tending to have higher career ambitions. Similarly, Soysa and Wilcomb (2015) suggest that in certain cultural contexts, individuals with traditionally male gender roles tend to exhibit higher career self-efficacy than those with female roles, often overestimating their performance while women underestimate

theirs. Additionally, men typically report greater expectations of career success and prioritize financial rewards more than women. However, while the overall career self-efficacy of men is often reported as higher, research indicates that gender-specific strengths exist in different career-related competencies. Women tend to report higher self-efficacy in interpersonal skills, organizational abilities, and gathering career-related information—skills aligned with careers requiring strong communication and relational abilities (Nasiyati et al., 2022). In contrast, men often exhibit greater confidence in technical or leadership-oriented tasks, which may influence their aspirations for roles in traditionally male-dominated fields (Amoah et al., 2020). This aligns with the findings of this study, where male students scored significantly higher across all aspects of career self-efficacy, including self-appraisal, occupational information, goal setting, career planning, and problem-solving ($p < 0.001$ for all aspects).

This discrepancy may stem from societal expectations, gender norms, and workplace structures that influence how self-efficacy translates into ambition (Chaudhary et al., 2012). Gender stereotypes further reinforce these differences, as women are more likely to pursue careers in female-dominated fields due to perceived barriers in male-dominated industries (Hartman & Barber, 2019). Similarly, gender-specific patterns emerge in career decision-making; women exhibit higher self-efficacy in career planning, problem-solving, and self-assessment, whereas men rely more on external validation, such as parental encouragement, to reinforce their career decision-making confidence (Nasiyati et al., 2022). These findings highlight that gender differences in career self-efficacy are not merely a matter of confidence levels but are shaped by societal reinforcement of traditional gender roles and individual career-related strengths.

Additionally, this study contradicts findings from Cahyawulan and Fazny (2022), who reported higher career self-efficacy scores among female students, and Sinring et al. (2022), who found that self-appraisal played a more influential role in female career self-efficacy, whereas goal setting was more critical for males. The disparities between these studies may be attributed to differences in sample characteristics. For example, Cahyawulan and Fazny focused on overseas students, Sinring et al. examined Generation Z, while this study targeted final-year students preparing for workforce entry. At this stage of education, students are expected to demonstrate greater independence in decision-making, particularly concerning their career paths, aligning with the developmental tasks outlined by Santrock (2019). These findings emphasize the importance of considering contextual and cultural factors when examining gender differences in career self-efficacy, as these variables significantly shape students' career decision-making processes.

While men and women exhibit similar overall levels of career self-efficacy, gender-specific variations emerge in different career-related competencies and aspirations. Men generally demonstrate higher self-efficacy in leadership and technical fields, whereas women excel in interpersonal and organizational abilities. These differences influence career aspirations, decision-making processes, and career pathways. Given the role of cultural and societal expectations in shaping career self-efficacy, it is essential to implement gender-sensitive career counseling programs and workforce development initiatives that promote equitable career opportunities for all students.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study highlights how gender influences career self-efficacy among university graduates. Male students showed higher confidence in leadership and technical skills, while female students excelled in interpersonal, organizational, and information-gathering abilities. This suggests that cultural and developmental factors play a key role in shaping confidence levels. The study also found that men tend to have higher career ambitions, likely due to societal reinforcement of traditional gender roles. Given these insights, universities and career

counseling centers should offer gender-responsive career programs, mentorship opportunities, and leadership training to help all students feel equally prepared for the workforce. Employers and policymakers should also work toward creating inclusive workplaces where career opportunities are not limited by gender expectations. Future research should examine how career self-efficacy develops over time, particularly through longitudinal studies that track students from university to employment.

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