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Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy and Career Preparation Behavior: Evidence from Final-Year Undergraduate Students

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Abstract: Career preparation has become a critical developmental task for final-year undergraduate students, particularly as they transition from higher education to the labor market. However, many students face difficulties in preparing for their careers effectively. In this context, Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) is considered a key psychological resource that may influence students' Career Preparation Behavior (CPB). This study aims to examine the role of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in predicting Career Preparation Behavior among final-year undergraduate students. A quantitative approach was employed with a sample of 394 final-year undergraduate students from various universities in Bandung City. Data were collected using the Indonesian versions of the CDMSE-Ind and CPB questionnaires. Participants were recruited through non-probability snowball sampling. Data analysis was conducted using logistic regression to assess the effect of CDMSE on CPB. The findings reveal that Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy has a significant positive effect on Career Preparation Behavior. Students with higher levels of CDMSE tend to engage more actively in behaviors that support career readiness. This study highlights the importance of self-efficacy in career decision-making as a determinant of career preparation among undergraduate students. This study contributes to the literature by examining a culturally adapted model of CDMSE within Indonesian collectivist context. The findings suggest that higher education institutions should develop structured and targeted career development programs to enhance students' self-efficacy and support their transition into the workforce.

Keywords: *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy, Career Preparation Behavior, Career Readiness, Logistic Regression, Undergraduate Students*

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in preparing students to successfully transition into the workforce (Rahmat, 2019). For final-year undergraduate students, career preparation becomes increasingly important as they approach graduation and face the uncertainties of entering the professional world (Arnett, 2004). During this transitional stage, students often experience instability, uncertainty about their future, and engage in self-exploration to determine suitable career paths (Arnett, 2004; Magolda & King, 2007; Skorikov, 2007).

Career development is a lifelong process that evolves as individuals progress through different life stages (Super, 1953). Specifically, in emerging adulthood (ages 20–24), individuals are expected to explore their career options and begin shaping their professional identities (Santrock, 2024). However, in Indonesia, many graduates

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struggle to find employment after completing their studies. Data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) in 2025 revealed that the unemployment rate among university graduates (D4/S1) reached 6.23%, indicating a significant challenge for fresh graduates to enter the job market. Moreover, a survey highlighted that 91% of university graduates were not adequately prepared to work (Rachmawati, 2012).

One of the major contributing factors to this issue is the lack of proper career planning during university years (Greenbank, Hepworth, & Mercer, 2009). Effective career planning helps students understand their own competencies, interests, opportunities, and constraints, enabling them to set realistic goals and develop strategies to achieve them (Rokhayati et al., 2017). Despite this, studies have shown that a considerable number of final-year students in Bandung lack adequate career planning. For instance, Hami, Hinduan, and Sulastiana (2006) found that 52.8% of final-year students had not engaged in sufficient career exploration or planning.

Career Preparation Behavior (CPB) refers to the concrete actions individuals take to prepare for their future careers, such as self-assessment, skill development, and gathering occupational information (Choi & Kim, 2012). CPB comprises three main components: Self-Understanding Behavior, Vocational Ability Improvement Behavior, and Occupational World Exploration Behavior. Self-Understanding Behavior involves understanding one's psychological characteristics and career-related environment, where final-year students begin to recognize what types of jobs or tasks they prefer and how their parents' expectations or environmental conditions relate to their career. Vocational Ability Improvement Behavior involve participating in volunteer activities or internships related to their career or major, and striving to maintain and achieve good grades to benefit their future career. Occupational World Exploration Behavior involves gathering information and exploring the professional world by researching career prospects and qualifications for spesific jobs related to their chosen major, or by attending job fairs and career seminars. Students with high CPB levels are more likely to be proactive in preparing for their careers, which increases their chances of obtaining employment aligned with their interests and capabilities (Park et al., 2021). Conversely, lower career preparation behavior is associated with greater career decision difficulties and reduced career readiness (Kim & Ra, 2022; Lee et al, 2022; Ra & Kim, 2023)

A significant factor that influences CPB is Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE), which refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to successfully complete tasks related to career decision-making (Taylor & Betz, 1983). CDMSE is conceptually linked to CPB, as those who have confidence in their capacity to make career choices are more prone to participate in spesific actions that enhance career readiness. In particular, the Self-Appraisal dimension allows students to gain insight into their individual strengths, interests and career choices, thus promoting Self-Understanding Behavior. Occupational Information and Planning enhance exploration behavior by boosting students' confidence in obtaining career-related information, investigating job market prospects and developing strategic career plans. Moreover, Goal Selection enhances students' dedication to future career goals, potentially motivating active involvement in activities like internships, training and certification programs. Additionally, Problem solving assists students in managing career-related challenges and adjusting to envolving career situations, enabling them to stay involved in career preparation task despite ambiguity.

In short, CDMSE has been shown to strongly predict career preparation behaviors (Lee, 2013; Novianti & Nu'man, 2020; Park et al., 2017; Sung et al., 2021). Individuals

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with high CDMSE are more likely to actively engage in career exploration, set career goals, and implement structured plans to achieve them (Penn & Lent, 2019; Söner, O., & Yılmaz, O., 2025; Zhang et al., 2025). Moreover, they are better equipped to overcome obstacles and adapt their career plans as necessary (Lent & Hackett, 1987).

Cultural factors also play a crucial role in shaping CDMSE. In Indonesia, a collectivist culture emphasizes social harmony and family expectations, making social support an important component of career decision-making (Hofstede et al., 2010). To reflect this cultural context, Arlinkasari et al. (2016) modified the CDMSE construct by adding a Social Affirmation dimension, which refers to the perceived support from family and significant others in career decisions. This addition makes the concept of CDMSE more relevant and comprehensive for Indonesian students. Within collectivist culture such as Indonesia, the Social Affirmation dimension may play a particulary important role in strengthening students' career preparation behaviors. Career decisions are often socially embedded, therefore students who perceived support, validation, and appproval from significant other, such as parents, peers, lecturers, and mentors, can enhance students' motivation and confidence in pursuing career-related activities. Recent studies have demostrated that social support positively contributes to CDMSE, career adaptability and career-related behavior by reinforcing individuals' confidence in managing career tasks and overcoming career-related uncertainty (Wang et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024; Agoes Salim et al., 2023). These findings support the argument that social affirmation fuctions not merely as external encouragement, but also as an important psychological resource that strngthens studets' readiness to prepare for their future careers.

Although previous study have established that CDMSE is associated with career-related outcomes. Several important gaps remain. First, most prior study have been conducted in Western or East Asian contexts, limiting the understanding of how CDMSE operates within collectivist culture such as Indonesia, where family expectations and social affirmation strongly influence career-decision making. Given the rising importance of career preparation in enhancing graduate employability, there is a pressing need to investigate this relationship more deeply in the Indonesian context. Second, previous Indonesian studies have primarily focused on career maturity or career adaptability rather than directly examining Career Preparation Behavior (CPB) as a concrete behavioral outcome. Third, limited research has incorporated culturally adapted dimensions of CDMSE, particullary the Social Affirmation dimension proposed by Arlinkasari et al. (2016), into predictive models of career preparation. Therefore this study contributes to the literature by examining the predictive role of culturally adapted CDMSE on CPB among Indonesian final-year undergraduate students within a collectivist sociocultural context. By doing so, this research hopes to provide a culturally sensitive understanding of career preparation processes and offer valuable insights for educational institutions in designing targeted career development programs. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically to the field of educational and organizational psychology and practically to initiatives that support students in their transition to the workforce.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the predictive role of Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) on Career Preparation Behavior (CPB) among final-year undergraduate students. The participants were final-

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year undergraduate students, aged between 20 and 24 years, studying at universities in Bandung, Indonesia. Participants were recruited using non-probability sampling with a snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling was selected because the target population consisted final-year undergraduate students from multiple universities, making it difficult to obtain a comprehensive sampling frame. This approach enabled efficient access to participants through peer referral networks, particulary among students actively engaged in academic transition and career preparation activities. Nevertheless, the researchers acknowledge that snowball sampling may increase the risk of selection bias, as participants are more likely to recruit individuals with similar social or academic characteristics. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted with caution regrading generalizability beyond the sampled population. The minimum required sample size was determined using Cochran's formula for unknown populations, resulting in a target of at least 385 respondents.

The research procedure began by distributing an online survey via Google Forms, which included an informed consent statement outlining the study's objectives, participants' rights, and assurances of confidentiality. Demographic data collected included age, gender, current semester, academic major, and engagement in activities related to career preparation such as internships, volunteer work, certifications, and organizational involvement, along with the relevance of these activities to their intended career paths.

The study employed two main instruments. The first instrument was the Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSES), originally developed by Taylor and Betz (1983) and revised by Betz, Klein, and Taylor (1996), which measures an individual's confidence in performing tasks related to career decision-making. The Indonesian version adapted by Arlinkasari et al. (2016) consists of 23 items covering six dimensions: Self-Appraisal (e.g., "I believe I can accurately assess my strengths and weaknesses"), Occupational Information (e.g., "I am confident in my ability to gather information about careers"), Goal Selection, Planning, Problem Solving, and Social Affirmation. Responses were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly not confident) to 4 (strongly confident), with higher scores indicating greater self-efficacy. The psychometric evaluation showed satisfactory validity with corrected item-total correlations ranging from $r = 0.158$ to $r = 0.566$, and good reliability with Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.851$.

The second instrument was the Career Preparation Behavior (CPB) scale developed by Choi and Kim (2012), which consists of 24 valid items (after adaptation) measuring three behavioral factors: Self-Understanding Behavior, Vocational Ability Improvement Behavior, and Occupational World Exploration Behavior. Example items include "I have explored my personal strengths and weaknesses related to my future career" and "I have participated in training or certification programs relevant to my desired career." Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger engagement in career preparation behaviors. The adapted Indonesian version demonstrated valid item-total correlations ($r = 0.235$ to $r = 0.593$) and high reliability with Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.873$.

Ethical considerations were strictly followed; participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences. Their responses were kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

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Data analysis was conducted using binary logistic regression to examine the role of CDMSE in predicting CPB, which was categorized into high and low groups based on hypothetical norms. The hypothetical mean and standard deviation were calculated from the theoretical score range of the instrument. Participants whose total scores exceeded the hypothetical mean were categorized as having high CPB, whereas participants scoring below the hypothetical mean were categorized as having low CPB. This categorization approach was employed to facilitated binary logistic regression analysis. Logistic regression is suitable for analyzing relationships where the dependent variable is categorical (Ghozali, 2018). Analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27, with statistical significance set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Model fit was assessed using Overall Model Fit and Goodness of Fit tests, and effect sizes were interpreted using Nagelkerke R Square, Wald coefficients, and Odds Ratios to determine the strength and direction of the relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 394 final-year undergraduate students from various universities in Bandung, aged 20–24 years, participated in this study. The demographic characteristics of respondents are summarized in Table 1. The majority were 21 years old (44.16%), female (60.91%), and most students came from Social and Humanities majors (54.13%).

Table 1. Demographic of participants (N = 394)

Category	Total	Percentage
Age		
20	39	9.90%
21	174	44.16%
22	126	31.98%
23	41	10.41%
24	14	3.55%
Gender		
Male	154	39.09%
Female	240	60.91%
Congruence of Ideals with Parents' Expectations		
Yes	361	91.62%
No	33	8.38%
Efforts Made to Achieve Goals		
0 activities	7	1.8%
1 activity	129	32.7%
2 activities	137	34.8%
3 activities	73	18.5%
4 activities	48	12.2%
Appropriateness of Activities with Goals		
Yes (1)	355	90.10%
No (0)	39	9.90%

Regarding career preparation behavior, 96.45% of participants (n = 380) were categorized as having high Career Preparation Behavior (CPB), while 3.55% (n = 14) had low CPB.

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Table 2. Distribution of Career Preparation Behavior

Career Preparation Behavior Category	n	Percentage
Low	14	3.55%
High	380	96.45%

Assumption Tests

The goodness-of-fit test using the Hosmer-Lemeshow test indicated that the logistic regression model fit the data well (χ^2 = 3.128, df = 8, p = .926), suggesting no significant discrepancy between observed and predicted values.

Table 3. Goodness-of-Fit Test (Hosmer-Lemeshow)

Test	Chi-Square	df	p-value
Hosmer - Lemeshow	3.128	8	.926

The Nagelkerke R^2 value was 0.612, indicating that Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) and covariates accounted for 61.2% of the variance in CPB.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination

-2 Log Likelihood	Cox & Snell R^2	Nagelkerke R^2
51.403	.162	.612

Hypothesis Test

The omnibus test of model coefficients was significant (χ^2 = 69.538, df = 4, p < .001), indicating that the predictors as a set significantly improved the model fit over the null model.

Table 5. Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients

Test	χ^2	df	p-value
Step	69.538	4	.000
Block	69.538	4	.000
Model	69.538	4	.000

The regression coefficients and odds ratios are presented in Table 6. The CDMSE variable showed a significant positive contribution to CPB (B = .224, SE = .049, Wald = 21.010, p < .001, Exp(B) = 1.252). This indicates that every one-units increase in CDMSE, the odds of demonstrating high CPB increase by approximately 25.2%. Meanwhile, covariates such as alignment with parental expectations, number of efforts toward career goals, and alignment of activities with career goals were not significant predictors.

Table 6. Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting CPB

Predictor	B	SE	Wald	df	p-value	Exp(B)
CDMSE	.224	.049	21.010	1	.000	1.252
Kesesuaian dengan lingkungan/ orang tua	1.042	1.087	.919	1	.338	2.836
Banyaknya usaha	1.062	.595	3.184	1	.074	2.891
Kesesuaian kegiatan dengan usaha	-.087	1.060	.007	1	.934	.916
Constant	-18.177	4.346	17.495	1	.000	.000

Overall, these results support the hypothesis that CDMSE significantly predicts CPB among final-year undergraduate students in Bandung. This finding is consistent with

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prior studies emphasizing the important role of self-efficacy in shaping proactive career behaviors (Lee, 2013; Choi & Kim, 2012; Zhang et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2023).

This study highlights the significant role of Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) in predicting Career Preparation Behavior (CPB) among final-year undergraduate students in Bandung. The finding that CDMSE positively predicts CPB aligns with Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes that self-efficacy is a crucial driver in shaping individuals' career-related behaviors (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Students with higher CDMSE are more likely to engage in concrete and strategic actions such as exploring career information, setting goals, and improving vocational skills (Gushue et al., 2006).

This pattern also clarifies why CDMSE matters in practical terms. Self-appraisal and occupational-information beliefs are directly tied to the first steps of career preparation, while planning and problem-solving support persistence when students encounter uncertainty. The social affirmation component is especially relevant in Indonesia because career decisions are not made in a social vacuum; family approval and significant others can either strengthen or weaken confidence.

Compared with prior studies, the present findings do more than confirm a simple positive association. They extend earlier work on career maturity and career readiness by showing that the culturally adapted CDMSE construct still matters when CPB is treated as a concrete behavioral outcome, not just as a broad attitude measure (Lee, 2013; Choi & Kim, 2012; Park et al., 2017; Sung et al., 2021). Previous studies support this conclusion, showing that individuals with strong CDMSE are more confident in navigating complex career decisions and are more persistent in preparing for their chosen paths (Lee, 2013; Choi & Kim, 2012). The strong predictive power of CDMSE found in this study (accounting for 61.2% of variance in CPB) underscores its central role, echoing findings by Luzzo et al. (1999), who identified self-efficacy as a critical component in career readiness and transition success.

Interestingly, the study found that external factors such as the alignment of career aspirations with parental expectations or the number of preparatory activities undertaken did not significantly influence CPB when CDMSE was considered. This suggests that merely engaging in numerous activities without strong self-belief does not effectively translate into meaningful career preparation (Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012). In other words, busy is not the same as prepared. A student can join many activities and still lack the confidence or direction needed to turn those activities into meaningful career steps.

This also helps explain the Indonesian context: collectivist pressure may encourage activity, but without internal confidence those actions may remain fragmented. In collectivist societies like Indonesia, students' career-related activities are often shaped by family expectations and social norms, which may lead them to engage in such activities without necessarily developing an internally driven, coherent career strategy. (Jasmon et al., 2020; Rahayu et al., 2024; Sawitri et al., 2014). Without a strong internal conviction, these external efforts may lack focus and fail to improve actual career readiness.

Compared to studies conducted in more individualistic cultural settings, the present findings suggest that self-efficacy may play a particularly central role in contexts where external expectations and social pressures are highly salient. In collectivist environments, students may participate in career-related activities due to parental

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expectations or social conformity rather than instrinsic career agency. Consequently, CDMSE becomes important because it reflects not merely participation in career preparation activities, but the individual's internal confidence and intentionality in navigating career decisions. This may explain why external variables in the current study did not significantly predict CPB once CDMSE was included in the model.

This finding provides an important implication: higher education institutions should prioritize strengthening students' self-efficacy in career decision-making rather than solely encouraging participation in various extracurricular activities. Interventions such as personalized career counseling, mentorship, and targeted workshops that focus on building decision-making confidence are essential to enhance effective career preparation (Gushue & Whitson, 2006; Fort, Jacquet, & Leroy, 2011). It means that career service ini higher education institutions should not stop at providing internships or generic workshops. Decision-confidence training, career counseling, structured reflection, and guided planning are more likely to build genuine preparation.

A strength of this study lies in its large sample size (n = 394), representing a diverse range of majors and universities and the use of validated and culturally adapted instruments, including the Indonesian version of the CDMSE scale with its Social Affirmation dimension, provides robust measurement aligned with local cultural values. That said, the snowball method limit how far the findings can be generalized. Another limitations of this study involves the unequal distribution between high and low CPB categories may have affected the stability of the logistic regression estimates. Future studies are encouraged to employ more balanced samples or alternative analytical approach that retain the continuous nature of CPB score.

In conclusion, this study confirms that CDMSE is a key psychological factor shaping final-year students' career preparation behaviors. It offers evidence that a culturally adapted self-efficacy measure can capture a central ingredient of how Indonesian students move from career thinking to career action. By strengthening students' confidence in their career decision-making abilities, educational institutions can significantly enhance their graduates' readiness to enter and succeed in the workforce.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data analysis this study concludes that Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) plays a significant and positive role in predicting Career Preparation Behavior (CPB) among final-year undergraduate students in Bandung. Students with higher CDMSE are more likely to engage in proactive and strategic career preparation activities, including self-assessment, vocational skill improvement, and exploration of the occupational world. This indicates that internal confidence in career decision-making is a critical foundation for fostering effective career preparation behaviors. By strengthening CDMSE, students can be better equipped to navigate the transition from university to the professional world with greater readiness and clarity.

These findings offer important contribution. Theoretically, this study extends the application of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) within a collectivist cultural context by demostrating that CDMSE remains a significant predictor of CPB among Indonesian undergraduate students. Futhermore, the findings support the relevance of incorporating culturally sensitive dimensions, such as Social Affirmation, into the conceptualization of CDMSE in non-Western settings.

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Practically, for higher education institutions and career centers, it is recommended not only to provide workshops and internships but also to develop programs specifically designed to enhance students' self-efficacy in making career decisions. Activities such as personalized coaching, career decision-making simulations, and individual consultation sessions can be effective strategies. For students, it is suggested to focus on building self-awareness and confidence in their ability to make informed career choices, rather than merely participating in a wide range of activities. Practical steps could include engaging in career assessments, seeking guidance from mentors or professional coaches, and developing personalized career plans that align with their strengths and values.

Future research should examine additional variables such as career adaptability, future orientation, perceived social support, and career barriers, and should consider longitudinal or mixed-method designs to capture how career confidence develops over time.

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