

CAREER DECISION-MAKING SELF-EFFICACY AMONG DIPLOMA III VOCATIONAL STUDENTS: A GENDER DIFFERENCE ANALYSIS AT PADANG STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Career decision-making self-efficacy is an important factor for vocational students because confidence in making career decisions can influence career readiness and the transition from education to the workforce. This study aimed to examine gender differences in career decision-making self-efficacy among final-year Diploma III students at Universitas Negeri Padang. A quantitative comparative design was employed involving 150 students (61 males and 89 females) selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Melfi et al. (2024) and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed a significant gender difference in career decision-making self-efficacy, with male students reporting higher levels of confidence in making career decisions than female students. These results indicate that gender is associated with variations in career decision-making confidence among final-year vocational students. Practically, the findings highlight the need for career guidance programs that strengthen career confidence and decision-making skills, particularly for students who may experience lower levels of career self-efficacy.

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INTRODUCTION

Final-year students are at a developmental stage that requires them to prepare for the transition from higher education to employment. During this period, they face not only academic demands but also the responsibility of making important career decisions that will influence their future professional lives (Dharma & Akmal, 2019). According to Santrock (2021), emerging adulthood is characterized by identity exploration, during which individuals evaluate educational and occupational alternatives while making long-term life decisions. Consequently, confidence

in making appropriate career decisions becomes an essential psychological resource for successful school-to-work transitions.

One of the key psychological constructs underlying this process is career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE), which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks related to career decision-making. Derived from Bandura (1977) self-efficacy theory and adapted to the career context by Taylor & Betz (1983), CDMSE encompasses confidence in self-appraisal, occupational information seeking, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving. Individuals with higher CDMSE tend to make career decisions more confidently and effectively than those with lower levels of self-efficacy.

Previous studies consistently demonstrate that CDMSE is an important predictor of positive career development outcomes. Meta-analytic evidence shows that students with higher career decision-making self-efficacy exhibit greater career adaptability, career readiness, and more effective career decision-making ((Choi et al., 2012); Stead et al., 2022)). Furthermore, individuals with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to actively explore career opportunities, evaluate alternatives, and persist in achieving career goals ((Kim and Park, 2017); (Xu, 2024)). These findings indicate that strengthening students' confidence in making career decisions is essential for facilitating successful transitions into the workforce.

Among the factors associated with CDMSE, gender has received considerable attention. Research suggests that differences in socialization, access to career-related experiences, and societal expectations may influence how males and females develop confidence in their career decision-making abilities (Sultana & Mahmud, 2020). Meta-analytic findings by Huang (2021) indicate that males generally report slightly higher self-efficacy than females in several academic and career contexts. Similarly, recent studies by Arumi *et al.* (2025) and Yanli and Gunawan (2025) found significant gender differences in career decision-making self-efficacy, particularly regarding career information seeking and goal setting.

Despite these findings, the existing literature presents several limitations. Most previous studies have examined career decision-making self-efficacy among general university students or focused primarily on its relationship with variables such as career adaptability, career exploration, and social support (Choi et al., 2012; (Stead et al., 2022; Wulandari & Fikry, 2023)). Comparatively little attention has been given to Diploma III vocational students, whose educational characteristics differ substantially from those of undergraduate students. Vocational education emphasizes practical competencies and prepares graduates for immediate entry into the labor market (Utomo, 2021), requiring students to make career decisions within a relatively short period after graduation. Consequently, the factors influencing their confidence in career decision-making may differ from those reported in studies involving students in general academic programs.

Furthermore, although several studies have reported gender differences in CDMSE, empirical evidence remains inconsistent across educational contexts, and limited research has specifically examined these differences among Indonesian Diploma III students. Considering the unique characteristics of vocational education and the rapidly changing labor market, understanding whether male and female vocational students differ in their career decision-making self-efficacy is important for developing career guidance programs that address the specific needs of this population.

Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on examining gender differences in career decision-making self-efficacy among final-year Diploma III vocational students at Universitas Negeri Padang, a population that has received limited attention in previous research. By focusing on vocational students who are approaching the transition to employment, this study extends previous findings beyond general university populations and provides empirical evidence that may inform the development of more gender-responsive career guidance and counseling services. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze differences in career decision-making self-efficacy based on gender among final-year Diploma III students at Universitas Negeri Padang.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a comparative research design to examine gender differences in career decision-making self-efficacy among final-year Diploma III students at Universitas Negeri Padang. A quantitative comparative design was selected because the study aimed to compare the mean scores of career decision-making self-efficacy between two independent groups, namely male and female students, using statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2015).

The population of this study consisted of all final-year Diploma III students at Universitas Negeri Padang in the 2025/2026 academic year, totaling 150 students distributed across the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Faculty of Psychology and Health, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Faculty of Engineering, and the Vocational School. The sample comprised 150 students selected using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation from each faculty. This sampling technique was considered appropriate because the population consisted of several academic strata with different numbers of students. The sample size was determined based on proportionate stratified random sampling, which was considered adequate to represent the study population and provide sufficient statistical power for comparative analysis.

The respondents consisted of 61 male students (40.7%) and 89 female students (59.3%), aged between 20 and 23 years. All participants were final-year Diploma III students who had completed most academic requirements and were preparing to enter the workforce after graduation.

Career decision-making self-efficacy was measured using the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Melfi *et al.* (2024), which was constructed based on the theoretical framework of (Taylor & Betz, 1983). The instrument consists of 22 item statements covering five dimensions: self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem solving. Responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater career decision-making self-efficacy. The instrument was selected because it was specifically developed for Indonesian university students and is therefore appropriate for measuring career decision-making self-efficacy in the present study.

Prior to data collection, the psychometric properties of the instrument were examined. Item validity was evaluated using corrected item-total correlation analysis, and all items met the acceptable criterion ($r > 0.30$), indicating satisfactory construct validity. Furthermore, internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The instrument demonstrated good reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.842, exceeding the recommended minimum value of 0.70 (Azwar, 2017), indicating that the instrument was reliable for measuring career decision-making self-efficacy.

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 20. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondent characteristics and describe the level of career decision-making self-efficacy. Before hypothesis testing, the assumptions for parametric analysis were examined. Data normality was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, while homogeneity of variance between groups was assessed using Levene's Test. The results indicated that the data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$) and that the variances were homogeneous ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the assumptions for parametric analysis were satisfied. Therefore, the Independent Sample t-test was conducted to examine differences in career decision-making self-efficacy between male and female students at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ (Siregar, 2013).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Subject selection for this study employed the proportionate stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation of the research population. This technique was chosen because the population comprises multiple strata; consequently, sampling was conducted randomly while maintaining appropriate proportions for each stratum (Sugiyono, 2015). The strata in this study were defined by faculty: the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality (FPP), the Faculty of Psychology and Health (FPK), the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FMIPA), the Faculty of Engineering (FT), and the Vocational School. Thus, each faculty was allocated a proportional opportunity based on the number of students within its respective stratum in the research population. Following data collection and analysis of respondent demographics, the resulting distribution of respondent characteristics encompassed the various faculties and included both male and female students.

Next, **Table 1:** Respondent Characteristics:

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	61	40,7 %
Female	89	59,3 %
Age		
20 Year	5	3,3 %
21 Year	43	28,7 %
22 Year	71	47,3 %
23 Year	31	20,7 %
Year of Entry		
2021	30	20 %
2022	71	47,3 %
2023	49	32,7 %
Faculty		
FPP	22	14,7 %
FPK	16	10,7 %
FMIPA	8	5,3 %
FT	51	34 %
Vocation	53	35,3 %
Total	150	100 %

Source : (Peneliti, 2026)

A total of 150 final-year Diploma III students participated in this study, consisting of 61 male students (40.7%) and 89 female students (59.3%). Most respondents were 22 years old and represented five academic units offering Diploma III programs at Universitas Negeri Padang. The proportional distribution of respondents across faculties indicates that the sample adequately represents the target population.

Next, the distribution of the career decision-making self-efficacy data categorization is presented in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2. Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Data Categorization

Guidelines	Score	Categorization	F	%
$X < M - 1SD$	$X < 51$	Rendah	7	4,7 %
$M - 1SD \leq X < M + 1SD$	$51 \leq X < 81$	Sedang	27	18 %
$M + 1SD \leq X$	$X \geq 81$	Tinggi	116	77,3 %
Total			150	100 %

Source: (Peneliti, 2026)

The descriptive analysis showed that career decision-making self-efficacy among final-year Diploma III students was generally high. As presented in Table 2, 77.3% of respondents were classified in the high category, while only 18.0% and 4.7% were categorized as moderate and low, respectively. These findings indicate that most students possess strong confidence in their ability to perform career decision-making tasks, including evaluating personal abilities, gathering career information, setting career goals, planning career pathways, and solving career-related problems. This finding suggests that the majority of respondents are psychologically prepared to make career decisions before entering the workforce.

Next, the results of the Group Statistics test are presented in Table 3 as follows:

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing

		Group Statistics			
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CDMSE	Male	61	88.84	12.711	1.627
	Female	89	83.80	15.455	1.638

Source : (Peneliti, 2026)

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 3 indicate that male students obtained a higher mean score ($M = 88.84$) than female students ($M = 83.80$). Although variability in scores was greater among female students, the observed mean difference suggests that male students tended to report stronger confidence in performing career decision-making tasks. Next, the results of the Independent Sample t-Test are presented in the following table:

Table 4. Independent Samples Test

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
										Lower Upper
CDMSE	Equal variances assumed	3.804	.053	2.104	148	.037	5.038	2.395	.306	9.770
	Equal variances not assumed			2.182	143.054	.031	5.038	2.309	.474	9.603

Source: (Peneliti, 2026)

The Independent Sample t-test results presented in Table 4 confirmed that the difference between male and female students was statistically significant ($t = 2.104$, $p = .037$). Since the significance value was below the 0.05

threshold, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that career decision-making self-efficacy differs according to gender among final-year Diploma III students at Universitas Negeri Padang.

These findings suggest that gender remains an important factor associated with students' confidence in making career decisions. Specifically, male students demonstrated higher levels of career decision-making self-efficacy than female students, indicating differences in perceived capability when evaluating career options, seeking occupational information, establishing career goals, and planning future careers (Pham et al., 2024).

The present study found a significant gender difference in career decision-making self-efficacy among final-year Diploma III students at Universitas Negeri Padang. Male students demonstrated higher career decision-making self-efficacy than female students, indicating that they were more confident in evaluating career alternatives, obtaining occupational information, setting career goals, planning career pathways, and solving career-related problems. These findings suggest that gender remains an important factor influencing students' confidence during the transition from higher education to employment.

The findings can be explained through Bandura (1977) Social Cognitive Theory, which states that self-efficacy develops through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological or emotional states. Individuals who experience greater success, receive stronger encouragement, and are exposed to more positive career experiences tend to develop stronger beliefs in their own capabilities. In the context of career development, career decision-making self-efficacy reflects students' confidence in completing various career-related tasks, including self-assessment, career exploration, goal setting, planning, and problem solving (Taylor & Betz, 1983). Therefore, differences in learning experiences and social environments may contribute to variations in students' confidence when making career decisions.

The higher level of career decision-making self-efficacy among male students may also be interpreted within the Indonesian sociocultural context. In many Indonesian families, men are still frequently expected to become the primary economic providers after graduation. Such expectations may encourage male students to prepare for employment earlier, actively seek career information, and develop greater confidence in making career decisions. In contrast, female students may experience more complex expectations related to balancing future careers with family responsibilities, which may influence their confidence when making important career decisions (Tonbul & Ozdemir, 2025). This interpretation is consistent with Hackett & Betz (1981) who argued that gender-role socialization contributes to differences in career self-efficacy through variations in learning experiences, social support, and occupational opportunities.

The vocational education context may further explain the observed differences. Diploma III programs emphasize practical competence and direct preparation for employment, requiring students to make career decisions within a relatively short period before graduation (Utomo, 2021). Students who gain more practical experience through laboratory activities, industrial practice, or internships are likely to develop stronger confidence in their ability to enter the workforce. Male students, particularly in vocational programs that are traditionally dominated by men, may receive broader opportunities to engage in technical tasks and workplace experiences that strengthen their career decision-making self-efficacy. Although internship experience was not specifically examined in this study, it is likely to represent one of the mastery experiences that strengthen self-efficacy as proposed by (Bandura, 1977).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research reporting gender differences in career decision-making self-efficacy. Arumi *et al.* (2025) found that male students demonstrated higher confidence in making career decisions than female students, while Yanli & Gunawan (2025) reported similar differences, particularly in career information seeking and career goal setting. Likewise, Cahyawulan & Fazny (2022) found that male university students in Indonesia generally exhibit higher career self-efficacy than female students. Missalam et.al, (2023) also identified different profiles of career self-efficacy based on gender among Indonesian university students, whereas Setyorini & Nofrizza (2024) similarly reported that male students tended to display higher levels of self-efficacy than female students. Rather than merely confirming these previous findings, the present study extends the existing literature by demonstrating that similar gender differences are also evident among final-year Diploma III vocational students, a population that has received relatively limited attention in previous research.

However, gender alone cannot fully explain career decision-making self-efficacy. Previous studies suggest that students' confidence in making career decisions is shaped by multiple interacting factors. Cristian & Gunawan (2024) demonstrated that career decision-making self-efficacy among Indonesian students is influenced by academic experiences, exposure to the workplace, and practical learning opportunities. Similarly, Lubis (2025) explained that students with higher self-efficacy are generally more capable of processing career information and making appropriate career decisions. Rahmi (2019) further reported that students with stronger career decision-making self-efficacy tend to make more mature career choices, while Ningrum & Ariati (2013) identified self-efficacy as an important predictor of career decision-making among final-year university students. These findings indicate that internship experiences, family support, academic environments, access to career information, and opportunities for career exploration may also contribute to the development of career decision-making self-efficacy. Consequently, the gender differences observed in this study should be understood as the result of interactions between gender and broader educational and social experiences rather than gender alone.

The findings also have important implications for career guidance services in higher education, particularly within vocational education. Because female students demonstrated relatively lower career decision-making self-efficacy, universities should design career guidance programs that specifically strengthen students' confidence in making career decisions. Career counseling services should not only provide career information but also facilitate career exploration, individual career planning, mentoring by alumni and industry practitioners, internship reflection activities, career decision-making workshops, and opportunities to develop practical workplace competencies (Yates & Hirsh, 2024). Ardiyanti & Alsa (2015) demonstrated that psychological interventions and career planning training effectively improve career decision-making self-efficacy, suggesting that universities can actively enhance students' confidence through structured career development programs. Such interventions are expected to better prepare vocational students for the transition from higher education to the labor market.

Overall, the present findings reinforce the importance of career decision-making self-efficacy as a key psychological factor in vocational students' career development. While the results support previous empirical evidence, this study provides additional insight by demonstrating that gender differences in career decision-making self-efficacy also occur among final-year Diploma III students who are preparing for immediate employment. Therefore, career guidance services in vocational higher education should adopt more comprehensive and gender-responsive approaches that consider students' educational experiences, social support, and career development needs.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that career decision-making self-efficacy differs according to gender among final-year Diploma III students at Universitas Negeri Padang. Male students demonstrated higher confidence in performing career decision-making tasks than female students. These findings indicate that gender remains an important factor associated with students' confidence in evaluating career options, seeking occupational information, setting career goals, and planning future careers during the transition from higher education to employment. The results also highlight the importance of strengthening career decision-making self-efficacy among vocational students to better prepare them for the increasingly competitive labor market.

The findings have practical implications for higher education institutions, particularly vocational education providers. Universities are encouraged to develop comprehensive and gender-responsive career guidance services by providing career counseling, career exploration activities, internship reflection programs, mentoring from alumni and industry practitioners, and career planning workshops. Such initiatives are expected to strengthen students' confidence in making career decisions and facilitate a smoother transition from higher education to the workplace.

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted at only one university, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other higher education institutions or different educational contexts. Second, this study examined gender differences only and did not include other variables that may influence career decision-making

self-efficacy, such as internship experience, family support, academic environment, career adaptability, career exploration, or social support.

Therefore, future research is recommended to involve participants from multiple universities or different vocational education institutions to improve the generalizability of the findings. Further studies are also encouraged to examine additional variables related to career decision-making self-efficacy, including career adaptability, career exploration, social support, internship experience, and other psychosocial factors. Such investigations are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing career decision-making self-efficacy among vocational students and contribute to the development of more effective career guidance interventions.

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