

## Career Search Efficacy and Student Life Satisfaction among Vocational School Students: The Mediating Role of Career Decision Self-Efficacy

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### Abstrack

This study investigates the relationship between career search self-efficacy and student life satisfaction among vocational high school students, with career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) as a mediator. Using a quantitative correlational design, 729 students from six vocational schools in Banda Aceh were selected through proportional stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale (CSSES), the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale–Short Form, and the Student Life Satisfaction Scale, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Sobel tests. The results are that career exploration efficacy, personal efficacy, and parental support positively influence CDSE and life satisfaction, whereas interview efficacy shows a negative effect due to anxiety. Mediation analysis confirms that CDSE significantly mediates the link between career search self-efficacy and life satisfaction, especially through self-appraisal and planning. The study extends Social Cognitive Career Theory by integrating cultural factors and highlighting the importance of school-based guidance in strengthening planning skills and family involvement.

**Keywords:** career search self-efficacy, career decision self-efficacy, parental support, student life satisfaction, vocational high school

### Abstrak

Studi ini menyelidiki hubungan antara pencarian karir self-efficacy dan kepuasan hidup siswa di kalangan siswa SMK, dengan career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) sebagai mediator. Dengan menggunakan desain korelasi kuantitatif, 729 siswa dari enam SMK di Banda Aceh dipilih melalui *proportional stratified random sampling*. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan *Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale (CSSES)*, *Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale–Short Form*, dan *Student Life Satisfaction Scale*, dan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan tes Sobel. Hasilnya adalah bahwa kemandirian eksplorasi karir, efikasi pribadi, dan dukungan orang tua berpengaruh positif pada CDSE dan kepuasan hidup, sedangkan kemandirian wawancara menunjukkan efek negatif karena kecemasan. Analisis mediasi menegaskan bahwa CDSE secara signifikan memediasi hubungan antara pencarian karir efikasi diri dan kepuasan hidup, terutama melalui penilaian diri dan perencanaan. Studi ini memperluas Teori Karir Kognitif Sosial dengan mengintegrasikan faktor budaya dan menyoroti pentingnya bimbingan berbasis sekolah dalam memperkuat keterampilan perencanaan dan keterlibatan keluarga.

**Kata kunci:** pencarian karir, efikasi diri, keputusan karir, efikasi diri, dukungan orang tua, kepuasan hidup siswa, sekolah menengah kejuruan

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## INTRODUCTION

The transition from school to the labor market constitutes a critical developmental phase for adolescents, particularly for vocational high school students. At this stage, they are expected to make appropriate career choices, develop employability skills, and adapt to the demands of the workforce. However, many vocational students face significant challenges, including limited access to information, low self-confidence, and external pressures, which often lead to suboptimal career decision-making (Sandra & Mularsih, 2021). Consequently, examining the psychological factors that influence career readiness and the overall well-being of vocational students is essential.

Career Search Self-Efficacy (CSSE) is defined as individuals' belief in their ability to perform job-search related activities, including exploring information, networking, interviewing, self-exploration, and utilizing environmental support (Solberg et al., 1994; Asriyana et al., 2025). Recent studies have reaffirmed and extended this construct, highlighting its role in shaping career adaptability, exploration, and decision-making in diverse cultural contexts (Storme & Celik, 2018; Zikic & Saks, 2009). High levels of career search self-efficacy foster greater confidence in planning for the future, whereas low levels may generate uncertainty and confusion in the process of making career decisions.

On the other hand, success in career exploration is also associated with student life satisfaction, which refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of their overall quality of life (Diener et al., 1985; Eser & Doğan, 2023). Adolescents who have a clear career direction and can make appropriate decisions tend to report higher levels of life satisfaction, as they feel greater control over their future (Zhang et al., 2025). This suggests that effective career exploration not only enhances students' work readiness but also contributes to their psychological well-being and overall life satisfaction.

However, the relationship between career search self-efficacy and student life satisfaction is not always direct. Career decision self-efficacy (CDSE), defined as individuals' belief in their ability to make sound career decisions (Taylor & Betz, 1983), may function as a mediator in this association. Recent studies have provided empirical support for this mediational mechanism. For instance, Pratama & Muttaqin (2024) found that CDSE mediates the relationship between parental career support and vocational identity, while Yiming et al., (2024) demonstrated that life satisfaction and positive affect mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and career adaptation outcomes.

Similarly, Jia & Wang (2024) reported that self-efficacy and life satisfaction jointly mediate the link between social support and career exploration. In line with these findings, Career decision-making self-efficacy mediates the effect of career adaptability on life satisfaction. Collectively, these studies strengthen the argument that the relationship between career search self-efficacy and student life satisfaction may operate indirectly through CDSE (Badwy et al., 2025). Prior studies have demonstrated that CDSE mediates the relationship between career adaptability and vocational identity clarity with life satisfaction (Kvasková et al., 2023). Similarly, research on vocational students in the Greater Bay Area, China, revealed that CDSE significantly contributes to employability by influencing emotional intelligence (Zhou et al., 2023). Thus, CDSE can be regarded as a psychological mechanism that links career search self-efficacy to student life satisfaction.

This framework aligns with Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes that self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and contextual support play a crucial role in shaping individuals' career decisions and behaviors (Lent et al., 1994). In the



Indonesian context, research linking career search self-efficacy, career decision self-efficacy (CDSE), and student life satisfaction remains limited. A study conducted in Jakarta, for example, found that self-efficacy positively influenced career decision-making, but did not examine its relation to life satisfaction (Sandra & Mularsih, 2021).

Although several studies have associated career search efficacy, CDSE, and student life satisfaction, most have primarily focused on students in urban settings with broader access to information and resources (Marcionetti et al., 2025a; Zambelli. Camilla, 2024). Other studies have highlighted that career adaptability and occupational self-efficacy are positively correlated with life satisfaction among vocational students (Marcionetti et al., 2025). In Indonesia, parental and peer support have been shown to influence the efficacy of career search (Gunawan & Puspitasari, 2023), underscoring the importance of social context in career decision-making. However, such studies remain scarce in the Acehnese context. Vocational students in Aceh possess distinctive socio-cultural characteristics, where religiosity and local wisdom play a significant role in education and identity formation (Fatmi & Fauzan, 2022; Nasrah & Siraj, 2023). Local traditions such as *Peusijek* represent an assimilation of cultural and religious values that guide Acehnese society (Ramadhan et al., 2023), while folk tales like *Mentiko Batuah* embody values of honesty, responsibility, and justice as reflections of collective identity (Siti Ara et al., 2025). More recent evidence also demonstrates that religiosity is positively associated with career decision-making ability among Muslim students (Febriyani et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining the relationships among career search efficacy, CDSE, and student life satisfaction among Acehnese vocational students. It further contributes theoretically by expanding SCCT through the integration of cultural and religious factors specific to Aceh. Beyond its theoretical significance, this study also has practical implications, as it provides a foundation for school counselors in Aceh to design culturally and religiously responsive career guidance services.

Based on this rationale, the study focuses on two central research questions: (1) What is the relationship between career search self-efficacy and student life satisfaction among vocational school students? and (2) Does CDSE serve as a mediator in this relationship? In line with these research questions, the study aims to (1) analyze the relationship between career search self-efficacy and student life satisfaction among vocational school students, and (2) examine the mediating role of CDSE in this relationship. The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to career psychology and practical insights for the development of career guidance services in vocational schools.

## METHOD

This study employed a correlational design to examine the relationship between career search self-efficacy and student life satisfaction, and to examine the mediating role of career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) among vocational high school students. A correlational design was selected because it is appropriate for testing relationships among variables without manipulating participants' conditions (John W. Creswell, 2018). The study involved 729 students drawn from six vocational high schools in Banda Aceh, selected using proportional stratified random sampling by major to ensure proportional representation across fields of expertise. This sample size meets the requirements for



multivariate analysis, particularly in mediation testing, as a larger sample yields more stable parameter estimates (Hair et al., 2019).

Three instruments were utilized in this study. First, the Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale (CSSES), developed by the researcher, was adapted from Solberg et al. (1994) and covers four key dimensions: career exploration efficacy, interview efficacy, networking efficacy, and personal exploration efficacy. In this study, the four dimensions were retained as the theoretical foundation, but the items were modified to fit the Acehneso socio-cultural context. An additional dimension, parental support, was also incorporated, considering that family plays a central role in career decision-making in Aceh. Scale development was conducted through a literature review, expert evaluation in guidance and counseling, and a limited field trial. The results indicated adequate construct validity (factor loading > 0.50) and high reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70).

Second, the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale–Short Form (CDSE-SF), developed by Betz et al. (1996), was used to measure students' self-efficacy in career decision-making. This scale comprises five dimensions: self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving. Third, the Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLS) by Diener et al. (1985) was employed to assess students' subjective evaluation of their overall quality of life. This five-item Likert-type scale has been widely validated and shown to demonstrate strong psychometric properties across diverse cultural contexts.

Data collection was conducted directly in schools in collaboration with guidance and counseling teachers. Prior to completing the instruments, students were informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality assurances, and their right to withdraw. Ethical clearance was obtained from the school authorities, and the study was implemented in accordance with research ethics principles, including informed consent from all participants.

Data analysis was carried out in several stages using JASP version 19 (JASP Team, 2023). First, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were conducted to examine initial relationships among variables. Second, mediation testing was conducted using Sobel tests and path analysis to examine the mediating role of career decision self-efficacy in the relationship between career search self-efficacy and student life satisfaction. The use of JASP facilitated robust statistical estimation and provided comprehensive model fit indices, thereby ensuring the reliability of the analytical results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The suitability of the data was first examined using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The results showed a KMO value of 0.856 (> 0.80) and a significant Bartlett's test ( $\chi^2 = 3281.450$ ;  $df = 210$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the data were appropriate for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). These findings suggest that the correlation matrix among items was adequate and suitable for further extraction.



**Table 1.**  
KMO & Bartlett's

Statistik	$\chi^2$	df	Nilai	p
KMO			0.856	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	3281.450	210		< .001

**Table 2.**  
Chi-squared Test

	Value	df	p
Model	243.	115	<.001

Subsequently, the Chi-square model test (Table 2) yielded a value of  $\chi^2 = 243$ ,  $df = 115$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . This result indicates that the initial model significantly deviated from the empirical data, necessitating further exploration of the factor structure via Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

**Table 3.**  
Eigenvalues

	Eigenvalues	Unrotated Solution			Rotated Solution		
		Sumsq. Loadings	Proportion var.	Cumulative	SumSq. Loadings	Porportion var.	Cumulative.
Networking Efficacy	5.083	4.511	0.215	0.215	2.483	0.118	0.118
Career Exploration Efficacy	2.727	2.156	0.103	0.317	2.120	0.101	0.219
Family Support	1.509	0.932	0.044	0.362	1.595	0.076	0.295
Interview Efficacy	1.225	0.676	0.032	0.394	1.308	0.062	0.357
Personal Explorasi Efficacy	1.042	0.478	0.023	0.417	1.247	0.059	0.417

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) yielded five principal factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, namely networking efficacy, career exploration efficacy, family support, interview efficacy, and personal exploration efficacy (Table 3). These findings are consistent with the framework of Solberg et al. (1994), which encompasses four dimensions of career search efficacy, and include family support as a contextual factor in the Acehese cultural setting.



**Table 4.**  
 Factor Loading

	Faktor 1	Faktor 2	Faktor 3	Faktor 4	Faktor 5
NE 59	0.691				
NE 65	0.653				
NE 58	0.588				
NE 64	0.583				
NE 60	0.582				
NE 66	0.575				
CEE 25		0.742			
CEE26		0.626			
CEE 27		0.596			
CEE 20		0.575			
CEE 21		0.446			
CEE 19		0.426			
PEE 86			0.684		
PEE 88			0.661		
PEE 87			0.659		
IE 41				0.757	
IE 40				0.563	
IE 42				0.401	
PEE 73					0.663
PEE 74					0.604
PEE 75					0.578

The factor loading results presented in Table 4 indicate that all items have loadings above 0.40, demonstrating adequate construct validity (Hair & Babin, 2019). Several items with the highest loadings were drawn from the dimensions of networking efficacy (e.g., NE59 = 0.691) and career exploration efficacy (CEE25 = 0.742), thereby supporting the construct's relevance.

**Table 5.**  
 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Career Search Effectiveness Scale

Table of Contents	Value	Criteria	Interpretation
CFI	0.934	> 0.90	Good Fit
TLI	0.923	> 0.90	Good Fit
NNFI	0.923	> 0.90	Good Fit
NFI	0.884	> 0.50	Good Fit
PNFI	0.754	> 0.50	Good Fit
RFI	0.864	> 0.50	Good Fit
IFI	0.953	> 0.90	Good Fit
RNI	0.934	> 0.90	Good Fit
RMSEA	0.045	< 0.08	Good Fit
SRMR	0.042	< 0.08	Good Fit
GFI	0.942	> 0.90	Good Fit
KMO	0.855	> 0.80	Meritorious Sampling Adequacy



Further confirmation was conducted using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) as presented in Table 5. The CFA results indicated good model fit indices: CFI = 0.934, TLI = 0.923, RMSEA = 0.045, SRMR = 0.042, and GFI = 0.942. All values met the criteria for good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999), thus confirming the validity of the five-factor structure. In addition, the discriminant validity test using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Table 6) revealed that the square root of the AVE for each exceeded the correlations among variables, indicating that each construct is distinct and non-overlapping (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Table 6.**  
 Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Faktor	NE	CEE	PEE	IE	PEE
Networking Efficacy ( $\sqrt{0.380} = 0.616$ )	0.616				
Carier Explore Efficacy ( $\sqrt{0.347} = 0.589$ )	0.341	0.589			
Family Support ( $\sqrt{0.500} = 0.707$ )	0.349	0.641	0.707		
Interview Efficacy ( $\sqrt{0.438} = 0.662$ )	0.712	0.313	0.144	0.662	
Personal Explore Efficacy ( $\sqrt{0.400} = 0.632$ )	0.222	0.245	0.566	0.184	0.632

**Table 7.**  
 Reliability Results

Coefficient	Estimate	Std.Error	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Coefficient $\omega$	0.798	0.011	0.776	0.820
Coefficient $\alpha$	0.781	0.014	0.754	0.808

The overall reliability test results indicated that the research instrument demonstrated good internal consistency. The omega coefficient ( $\omega$ ) was 0.798, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.776 to 0.820. Meanwhile, Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was 0.781, with an interval ranging from 0.754 to 0.808. Both values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Joseph F. Hair Jr & Barry J. Babin, 2019), suggesting that the instrument possesses adequate reliability for measuring the intended constructs. The comparison between the two coefficients also revealed consistent results, with  $\omega$  being slightly higher than  $\alpha$ , reinforcing that composite reliability–based calculations tend to be more stable than Cronbach’s alpha alone. Thus, the instrument used in this study is reliable and appropriate for subsequent analyses, including regression and mediation testing.



**Table 8.**  
 Composite Reliability of Each Factor

Konstruk	Coefficient $\omega$	Coefficient $\alpha$
	Estimate	Estimate
Networking Efficacy	0.826	0.805
Career Exploration Efficacy	0.778	0.756
Family Support	0.779	0.760
Interview Efficacy	0.807	0.793
Personal Explorasi Efficacy	0.784	0.767
Goal Selection	0.764	0.744
Occupational Information	0.763	0.744
Problem Solving	0.790	0.773
Planning	0.747	0.731
Self-Appraisal	0.758	0.740
Student Life Satisfaction	0.796	0.781

The construct reliability analysis revealed that all factors exhibited satisfactory internal consistency, with composite reliability ( $\omega$ ) and Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Specifically,  $\omega$  values ranged from 0.747 to 0.826, and  $\alpha$  values ranged from 0.731 to 0.805, confirming that each construct demonstrated acceptable reliability.

Networking Efficacy showed the highest reliability ( $\omega = 0.826$ ;  $\alpha = 0.805$ ), indicating strong coherence among its indicators, whereas Planning presented the lowest reliability ( $\omega = 0.747$ ;  $\alpha = 0.731$ ), yet remained within the acceptable range. Other constructs, such as Career Exploration Efficacy ( $\omega = 0.778$ ;  $\alpha = 0.756$ ), Family Support ( $\omega = 0.779$ ;  $\alpha = 0.760$ ), and Student Life Satisfaction ( $\omega = 0.796$ ;  $\alpha = 0.781$ ), also demonstrated adequate internal consistency.

Overall, these findings confirm that all measurement constructs are reliable and suitable for subsequent analyses (e.g., regression and mediation). The high reliability coefficients further strengthen the instrument's construct validity, indicating that the measurements are both stable and dependable.

**Table 11.**  
 Results of Sobel Test for Indirect Mediation Effects

Indirect Effect	Coef	Z	P	CL 95%	
				LL	UL
CEE - Self-Appraisal – Student Life Satisfaction	0.042	2.85	0.004	-0.196	0.282
IE - Self-Appraisal – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.010	-0.76	0.443	-0.237	0.217
NE - Self-Appraisal – Student Life Satisfaction	0.011	1.51	0.130	-0.158	0.181
PEE - Self-Appraisal – Student Life Satisfaction	0.113	3.76	0.000	-0.266	0.453
DOT - Self-Appraisal – Student Life Satisfaction	0.113	3.64	0.000	-0.266	0.453
CEE – Occupational Information – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.002	-0.29	0.766	-0.172	0.168
IE - Occupational Information – Student Life Satisfaction	0.002	0.29	0.766	-0.161	0.165
NE - Occupational Information – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.000	-0.29	0.769	-0.095	0.093



PEE - Occupational Information – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.006	-0.29	0.765	-0.291	0.279
DOT - Occupational Information – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.006	-0.29	0.765	-0.294	0.281
CEE – Goal Selection – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.000	-0.05	0.957	-0.190	0.189
IE - Goal Selection – Student Life Satisfaction	0.000	0.05	0.957	-0.124	0.124
NE - Goal Selection – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.000	-0.05	0.957	-0.073	0.073
PEE - Goal Selection – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.001	-0.05	0.957	-0.288	0.285
DOT - Goal Selection – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.000	-0.05	0.957	-0.276	0.265
CEE – Planning – Student Life Satisfaction	0.057	3.27	0.001	-0.202	0.317
IE - Planning – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.011	-0.94	0.343	-0.231	0.207
NE - Planning – Student Life Satisfaction	0.020	2.56	0.010	-0.156	0.198
PEE - Planning – Student Life Satisfaction	0.080	3.16	0.001	-0.231	0.392
DOT - Planning – Student Life Satisfaction	0.083	3.43	0.000	-0.221	0.388
CEE – Problem Solving – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.002	-0.53	0.592	-0.136	0.131
IE - Problem Solving – Student Life Satisfaction	0.004	0.54	0.584	-0.172	0.181
NE - Problem Solving – Student Life Satisfaction	0.000	0.08	0.930	-0.048	0.048
PEE - Problem Solving – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.005	-0.54	0.585	-0.203	0.192
DOT - Problem Solving – Student Life Satisfaction	-0.007	-0.55	0.581	-0.235	0.220

The mediation test using the Sobel test (Table 11) revealed several significant indirect mediation paths between dimensions of career efficacy and student life satisfaction. First, along the path from self-appraisal to student life satisfaction, career exploration efficacy (Coef = 0.042,  $Z = 2.85$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ), personal career efficacy (Coef = 0.060,  $Z = 4.12$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and parental support (Coef = 0.113,  $Z = 3.12$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) exerted significant indirect effects. These findings suggest that enhanced self-beliefs, personal career efficacy, and family support play crucial roles in improving life satisfaction by strengthening self-appraisal.

Next, along the planning–student life satisfaction path, the analysis indicated significant mediation effects of personal career efficacy (Coef = 0.080,  $Z = 3.16$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and parental support (Coef = 0.083,  $Z = 3.43$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This underscores that career planning is more effective in enhancing life satisfaction when accompanied by strong confidence in career competence and robust family support.

Conversely, no significant mediation effects were found for the occupational information, goal selection, and problem-solving paths. Most dimensions of career efficacy along these routes did not yield significant indirect contributions to student life satisfaction ( $p > 0.05$ ). These findings indicate that job information, goal selection, and career problem-solving skills are not sufficiently strong mediators in the relationship between career efficacy and student life satisfaction.

Overall, the most consistent and significant mediation paths were through self-appraisal and planning. These two aspects emerged as the main mechanisms explaining how personal career efficacy and parental support enhance student life satisfaction. Thus, strengthening self-reflection, career planning, and family support are key to fostering student well-being in the career context.



## Discussion

This study further emphasizes that career efficacy and parental support are central factors influencing various dimensions of career adaptability and student life satisfaction. The consistent effects of career exploration efficacy, personal career efficacy, and parental support on self-appraisal, occupational information, planning, and problem solving demonstrate that internal and external factors complement one another in shaping students' career readiness. These findings align with Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994), which highlights the interplay between personal factors (self-efficacy), social context (parental support), and learning experiences in guiding career development.

Moreover, the Sobel test results highlight that significant mediation primarily occurs through self-appraisal and planning. This indicates that students' confidence in assessing their own abilities and their capacity for career planning are the key mechanisms linking career efficacy and family support to enhanced student life satisfaction. In other words, students' life satisfaction is more strongly determined by their ability to reflect on personal potential and plan realistic career steps than by other aspects such as occupational information or interviewing skills.

These findings also extend the understanding of Life Design Counseling (Savickas, 2013), in which the aspects of concern (future orientation) and control (self-regulation) appear more dominant than curiosity and confidence. The results are consistent with prior studies (Marcionetti et al., 2025a; Schneider et al., 2019) showing that social support, particularly from family, is a significant predictor of student well-being through career adaptability.

Building on this, in the Acehnese cultural context characterized by strong collectivist and religious orientations, parental support plays a substantial role in determining students' life satisfaction. Family support functions not merely as a background contextual affordance but as a direct predictor of career search efficacy and life satisfaction. This aligns with cross-cultural scholarship, which notes that in collectivist societies, the family plays a central role in career decision-making (Ali & Menke, 2014; Çelik, 2019). Consequently, this study contributes to the culturally grounded career counseling literature by demonstrating the need for contextual adaptation of Western-based theories, such as SCCT, to align with local cultural and religious values.

In the Acehnese cultural context, characterized by strong collectivist and religious orientations, parental support plays a substantial role in determining students' life satisfaction. Within this culture, the family serves as the central social unit, where religious devotion and communal harmony guide decision-making, including those related to education and career. Parental support functions not only as emotional reassurance but also as moral and spiritual guidance, shaping students' sense of purpose and well-being. Consequently, this study contributes to the culturally grounded career counseling literature by demonstrating the need for contextual adaptation of Western-based theories, such as SCCT, to align with local cultural and religious values. Parental involvement through emotional support, guidance, and direct participation significantly enhances students' career decision self-efficacy and psychological well-being (Damas & Kurniawati, 2025). In such contexts, close family relationships grounded in religious values provide students with a sense of security, meaning, and happiness.

This explanation is further supported by evidence that, in collectivist societies such as Indonesia, individual agency is embedded in affirming relationships with parents rather than expressed through independent self-direction (Sawitri et al., 2021). Greater congruence between personal career goals and parental expectations is associated with



higher life satisfaction and well-being, suggesting that psychological fulfillment arises not only from individual achievement but also from meeting familial expectations as a form of moral and cultural alignment. Consequently, parental support serves as a protective factor, fostering self-worth, confidence, and a clear life direction among students.

Furthermore, cultural orientation significantly influences the link between career attitudes and life satisfaction (Hong et al., 2022). In individualistic and urban contexts, life satisfaction tends to be predicted by autonomy, self-expression, and peer relationships. In contrast, in collectivist and religious societies such as Aceh, life satisfaction is more strongly associated with social harmony, filial responsibility, and adherence to family and community values. This contrast highlights the necessity of contextualizing Western-based frameworks such as the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to reflect the lived realities of non-Western, collectivist, and faith-based communities.

The findings are also consistent with local Acehnese wisdom expressed in oral literature such as the *Mentiko Batuah* folktale, which conveys moral values of honesty, responsibility, and respect toward parents and leaders, principles rooted in the Acehnese philosophy of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah* (Siti Ara et al., 2025). These cultural ideals indicate that happiness and well-being are not derived solely from individual success but also from living in accordance with religious teachings, maintaining family harmony, and contributing to one's community.

Taken together, these findings confirm that in the Acehnese context, parental support serves as a key mechanism linking career efficacy and life satisfaction. The integration of internal strengths, such as self-reflection and career planning, with external factors, such as familial guidance and affection, forms the foundation of students' overall well-being and readiness to navigate future life and career challenges.

Finally, the findings are consistent with prior evidence underscoring the importance of integrating career efficacy, careful planning, and family support to enhance student life satisfaction. Parental support consistently emerges as a significant predictor of adolescents' subjective well-being, both directly and through psychological mechanisms such as self-efficacy and future planning (Koçak et al., 2021; Salgado et al., 2021). Other research has also demonstrated that parental support contributes positively to life satisfaction through the mediation of academic efficacy and interpersonal relationships (Xing Li et al., 2025). Moreover, career-related parental support plays a key role in strengthening career adaptability, which in turn enhances students' ability to plan and manage their life direction (Zhang et al., 2025). Thus, improvements in student life satisfaction cannot be separated from the integration of internal factors, such as personal career efficacy and planning, with external factors, such as family support, which serve as essential resources for helping students navigate career development demands.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that career search self-efficacy significantly enhances student life satisfaction among vocational high school students, with career exploration efficacy, personal efficacy, and parental support contributing positively to both career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) and life satisfaction, while interview efficacy shows a negative effect due to interview-related anxiety. CDSE is identified as the key mediating mechanism, particularly through self-appraisal and planning, linking career search self-efficacy to life satisfaction, thus reinforcing the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)



framework and expanding its theoretical scope by incorporating parental support as a culturally relevant dimension in the Acehnese context. The findings emphasize the practical importance of school-based career guidance to improve students' career exploration and planning skills, as well as to strengthen family involvement as a consistent source of career support and well-being. Future research should apply this model in diverse cultural contexts using longitudinal or experimental designs to capture the dynamic relationships among variables and enhance the applicability of career guidance interventions in educational settings.

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