

Students' career decision-making self-efficacy as a basis for comprehensive guidance and counselling services

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ABSTRACT

Vocational High Schools are expected to equip students with the ability to make appropriate and confident career decisions. However, in practice, many Vocational High School students experience confusion and low self-confidence when determining their future careers, which has contributed to the high unemployment rate among vocational High School graduates. This study aims to describe the level of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) among Vocational High School students as a foundation for the development of comprehensive guidance and counselling services. This research employed a descriptive quantitative approach. The instrument used was the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale based on the theory proposed by Betz and Taylor, encompassing five dimensions: self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, making plans for the future, and problem-solving. The results indicated that 16% of students were classified as having high CDMSE, 70% moderate, and 16% low. These findings suggest the need to optimise comprehensive guidance and counselling services through its four core components basic services, responsive services, individual planning, and system support in order to strengthen students' confidence in making independent and realistic career decisions. This study is expected to serve as a reference for school counsellors in designing more systematic and sustainable career guidance programmes in vocational high schools.

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1. Introduction

Rapid economic growth requires the education system in Indonesia to produce graduates who are not only competent but also well prepared to meet the demands of the labour market. One of the key challenges faced is preparing a workforce that aligns with the needs of industry (Damayanti & Widyowati, 2018). Law Number 20 of 2003, Article 13, stipulates that Vocational High Schools constitute a form of formal education specifically designed to equip students with employability skills. This mandate is further reinforced by Government Regulation No. 7 of 2010, which states that Vocational High Schools aim to produce graduates who are ready to enter the workforce (Isnain & Nurwidawati, 2018). However, empirical evidence indicates that many Vocational High School students still lack confidence in their career choices. Juwitaningrum (2013) reported that confusion in determining career direction remains a common issue among vocational high school students. This condition is reflected in data from the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) in 2024, which show that the Open Unemployment Rate among Vocational High Schools graduates reached 9.01%, the highest compared to other educational levels. Career choice is one of the most critical decisions in an individual's life, as it involves a complex interaction of

internal and external factors that shape one's life trajectory (Damayanti & Widyowati, 2018). According to Melianasari (2022), the process of career decision-making constitutes an essential developmental task during adolescence. This developmental task encompasses several aspects, including self-acceptance, the development of emotional independence, the formation of self-concept, and the development of self-confidence and self-regulation (Agustriyana & Suwanto, 2017).

Permadi (2016) asserted that many students experience uncertainty and a lack of self-confidence when making decisions about whether to pursue further education or enter the workforce. One factor contributing to this condition is low self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their capability to cope with specific situations (Rusdyanto, 2015). Self-efficacy also plays a crucial role in determining the extent to which individuals persist in the face of challenges and how such persistence influences their future behaviour (Umam, 2021). This condition poses a significant challenge for individuals' future career development, thereby necessitating comprehensive and sustainable guidance and counselling interventions to ensure that individuals are adequately equipped to make independent and confident decisions (Wijaya et al., 2025). Integrated career interventions embedded within the school context can strengthen students' capacity to make more mature and adaptive career decisions amid the dynamics of the global labour market. Such interventions include career information services, self-exploration activities, and assessment programmes that assist students in developing a more comprehensive understanding of their personal potential (Nafsih et al., 2025). Comprehensive guidance and counselling services provided by school counsellors therefore constitute an essential component in addressing students' developmental needs (Karina & Salim, 2024).

In the context of career decision-making, this form of self-efficacy is referred to as Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE), which denotes an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks related to career decision-making (Laily & Naqiyah, 2025). CDMSE plays a critical role in shaping students' confidence when making career choices that align with their interests and personal potential (Dharma & Akmal, 2019). However, empirical evidence indicates that many vocational high school students continue to experience confusion regarding their future career paths due to limited confidence in their own abilities (Aminah et al., 2021). According to Betz et al. (1996), CDMSE refers to the degree of an individual's confidence in their expectations of themselves or in their capability to perform specific tasks and essential behaviours that enable them to successfully link these tasks to career goals. Research by Park et al. (2018) demonstrated that students with high levels of CDMSE tend to make more effective and successful career decisions, whereas students who experience high levels of anxiety regarding career choices are more vulnerable to encountering decision-making barriers. Furthermore, Sharma and Nasa (2014) noted that enhanced self-efficacy enables students to regulate, implement, and complete career-related tasks more optimally and with greater confidence. This alignment fosters psychologically conducive conditions that encourage deeper self-exploration, enabling students to identify their interests, values, and personal potential more realistically, as well as to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the demands and opportunities associated with various educational and vocational pathways (Nurhilda et al., 2025). Based on this background, the present study aims to examine the level of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) among vocational high school students as a foundation for school counsellors in designing and optimising comprehensive guidance and counselling services to enhance the quality of students' career decision-making.

2. Method

This study employed a survey research design utilising descriptive statistical analysis, with the mean score as the primary analytical reference. A quantitative approach was adopted to obtain an empirical overview of students' levels of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE), which subsequently served as a basis for planning comprehensive guidance and counselling services. The respondents of this study were students of Vocational High School Negeri 2 Baleendah. The research sample consisted of 80 students, comprising 46 male and 34 female participants. The sampling technique applied was convenience sampling, whereby participation was based on students' willingness to complete the research instrument. The instrument utilised in this study was the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale, consisting of 25 items developed based on the theoretical framework proposed by Betz et al. (1996) and measured using a Likert-type rating scale. The scale assessed five dimensions of CDMSE: self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal

selection, planning for the future, and problem-solving. CDMSE levels were categorised into low, moderate, and high classifications. Reliability testing indicated satisfactory measurement properties, with a person reliability index of 0.89, an item reliability index of 0.82, and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.91. Data were analysed using Winsteps software version 3.73, based on the Rasch Measurement Model.

3. Results and Discussion

This study was conducted to examine the profile of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) among Grade XI students of Vocational High School 2 Baleendah, as a foundation for the development of comprehensive guidance and counselling services, particularly in the area of career guidance. The CDMSE construct examined in this study comprised five dimensions, namely self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, career planning, and problem-solving. Based on the results obtained from the administration of the research instrument to students, the overall tendency of students' Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy can be described as follows, as presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Profile of career decision-making self-efficacy

No	Category	Criteria	Responden	Percentage
1	Low	$X < 66$	11	14%
2	Moderate	$66 \leq X < 85$	56	70%
3	High	$X \geq 85$	13	16%
Total			80	100%

Based on Table 1, the profile of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) among the 80 respondents indicates that 11 students (14%) were classified as having a low level of CDMSE, 56 students (70%) fell into the moderate category, and 13 students (16%) were categorised as having a high level of CDMSE. These findings are further illustrated in Figure 1.

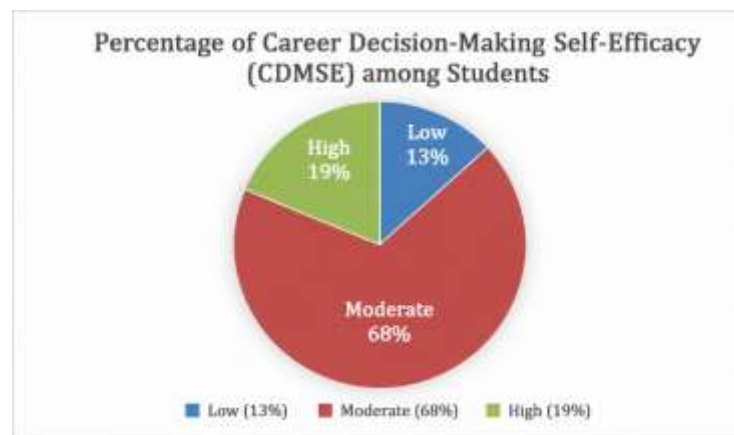


Fig. 1. Profile of Students' Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy

In addition, the data analysis yielded findings regarding the distribution of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) across each of its dimensions. A more detailed profile of these findings is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Profile of career decision-making self-efficacy based on self-appraisal

No	Category	Criteria	Responden	Percentage
1	Low	$X < 13$	7	9%
2	Moderate	$13 \leq X < 18$	56	70%
3	High	$X \geq 18$	17	21%
Total			80	100%

Based on Table 2, the profile of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in the self-appraisal dimension among the 80 research participants indicates that the majority of students were classified in the moderate category, comprising 56 students (70%). Meanwhile, 7 students (9%) were categorised as having a low level, and 17 students (21%) were classified as having a high level of self-appraisal-related CDMSE. The profile of students' Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in the gathering occupational information dimension is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Profile of career decision-making self-efficacy based on the information-gathering dimension

No	Category	Criteria	Responden	Percentage
1	Low	$X < 12$	6	7%
2	Moderate	$12 \leq X < 18$	63	79%
3	High	$X \geq 18$	11	14%
Total			80	100%

Based on Table 3, the profile of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in the information-gathering dimension among the 80 research participants indicates that the majority of students were classified in the moderate category, comprising 63 students (79%). In contrast, 6 students (7%) were categorised as having a low level, while 11 students (14%) were classified as having a high level of information-gathering-related CDMSE. The findings for the goal selection dimension are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Profile of career decision-making self-efficacy based on the goal selection Dimension

No	Category	Criteria	Responden	Percentage
1	Low	$X < 13$	8	10%
2	Moderate	$13 \leq X < 17$	55	69%
3	High	$X \geq 17$	17	21%
Total			80	100%

Based on Table 4, the profile of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in the goal selection dimension among the 80 research participants shows that the majority of students were classified in the moderate category, comprising 55 students (69%). Meanwhile, 8 students (10%) were categorised as having a low level, and 17 students (21%) were classified as having a high level of goal-selection-related CDMSE. The profile of students' Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in the career planning dimension is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Profile of career decision-making self-efficacy based on the career planning dimension

No	Category	Criteria	Responden	Percentage
1	Low	$X < 12$	6	4%
2	Moderate	$12 \leq X < 17$	61	76%
3	High	$X \geq 17$	17	20%
Total			80	100%

Based on Table 5, the profile of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in the career planning dimension among the 80 research participants indicates that the majority of students were classified in the moderate category, comprising 61 students (76%). In contrast, 3 students (4%) were categorised as having a low level, while 16 students (20%) were classified as having a high level of career-planning-related CDMSE. The profile of students' Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in the problem-solving dimension is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Profile of career decision-making self-efficacy based on the problem-solving dimension

No	Category	Criteria	Responden	Percentage
1	Low	$X < 13$	7	9%
2	Moderate	$13 \leq X < 17$	56	70%
3	High	$X \geq 17$	17	21%
Total			80	100%

Based on Table 6, the profile of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in the problem-solving dimension among the 80 research participants indicates that the majority of students were classified in the moderate category, comprising 54 students (67%). Meanwhile, 8 students (10%) were categorised as having a low level, and 18 students (23%) were classified as having a high level of problem-solving-related CDMSE.

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of respondents were classified within the moderate level of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE), comprising 56 students (70%). This result suggests that, in general, students possess a reasonably adequate level of self-efficacy, reflected in their belief in their ability to make career-related decisions. However, being positioned within the moderate category also implies a degree of vulnerability, as students may be at risk of experiencing a decline in CDMSE towards the lower category. Consequently, sustained reinforcement through comprehensive guidance and counselling services is required to prevent stagnation or regression in students' career decision-making confidence. In addition, the presence of 11 students (14%) in the low CDMSE category highlights the need for responsive guidance and counselling interventions. Students within this category tend to lack confidence in making career decisions, indicating insufficient belief in their own capabilities (Melianasari, 2022). Arjanggih (2020) emphasised that career indecision plays a substantial role in career choice processes, as uncertainty often emerges from students' limited access to relevant information and unresolved internal conflicts regarding career alternatives. Such conditions may hinder students' ability to engage in effective career exploration and planning. Conversely, 13 students (16%) were categorised as having a high level of CDMSE. Students within this group are generally able to fulfil their career developmental tasks effectively and demonstrate persistence in addressing challenges and difficulties related to career choice and planning (Susantoputri et al., 2013). High CDMSE enables students to approach career-related tasks with confidence, resilience, and a proactive orientation towards goal attainment. These findings underscore the urgency of implementing a structured and career-planning-oriented Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling model. Such a model should not merely focus on resolving individual problems but also prioritise the systematic development of students' career readiness through integrated processes of assessment, intervention, and continuous monitoring (Aryani et al., 2025). Comprehensive guidance and counselling services play a crucial role in supporting students' personal, social, academic, and career development (Apriliana et al., 2025). When designed in a planned, structured, and sustainable manner, these services have the potential to enhance students' career maturity, strengthen career decision-making competencies, and provide clearer direction regarding future educational and occupational goals (Fadillah & Reskiana, 2025).

Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) varies across individuals, with higher levels of CDMSE being associated with greater career adaptability. Individuals who possess a high level of CDMSE tend to apply this confidence when making career-related decisions and prior to entering the workforce. In contrast, individuals with low CDMSE often experience difficulties in selecting an appropriate career, primarily due to perceptions that available career options do not align with their abilities. Consequently, such individuals may also encounter challenges in adapting to the workplace, as they perceive their job roles as incongruent with their personal interests and expectations (Laily & Naqiyah, 2025). CDMSE is influenced by a range of internal and external factors, including the availability of career-related information, family environment, socio-economic status, and cultural background (Creed et al., 2006). Betz and Luzzo (1996) conceptualised CDMSE as an individual's belief in their expectations or capabilities to perform tasks and behaviours that enable successful attainment of career goals. In this regard, CDMSE plays a significant role in determining the degree of career indecision experienced by an individual (Repi & Kurniawati, 2022). Excessive negative thinking may adversely affect an individual's capacity to cope with specific situations. When such maladaptive cognitions persist, individuals may experience stagnation in

personal development and encounter difficulties in resolving problems effectively. Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) therefore serves as an important psychological construct for assessing an individual's level of career maturity in establishing and committing to career choices (Purnama & Ernawati, 2019). Furthermore, Laily and Naqiyah (2025) emphasised that CDMSE not only influences individuals' career decisions but also exerts a positive effect on their ability to complete tasks and adapt to various demands. This underscores the critical role of CDMSE in supporting both career development and broader personal adjustment processes.

Self-appraisal constitutes an initial and fundamental step in validating personal strengths when confronting various challenges. This dimension functions as a basis for introspection and self-improvement, enabling students to develop a clearer understanding of their aspirations and personal capacities. In this context, excessive negative thinking may adversely affect an individual's ability to cope with specific situations. When such maladaptive cognitions persist, individuals may experience difficulties in personal growth and problem resolution (Laily & Naqiyah, 2025). The information-gathering dimension requires students to actively and independently explore relevant career-related information and engage in continuous learning. The rapid advancement of technology has significantly facilitated access to information, particularly through digital platforms and social media, which allow students to obtain career-related information efficiently with minimal time and effort (Aqilla et al., 2025). The primary purpose of information gathering is to enhance students' self-confidence by equipping them with adequate and supportive information, thereby strengthening their readiness for career decision-making (Laily & Naqiyah, 2025). The goal selection dimension reflects students' ability to determine and commit to specific career objectives with a sense of responsibility, perseverance, and strong self-belief. Career goals are formulated based on prior self-assessment processes, and when students possess a clear and accurate understanding of themselves, they are better able to organise and map out achievable goals across various life domains (Laily & Naqiyah, 2025; Lutfiwati, 2020). Career planning represents a critical stage in the career decision-making process, as it involves the ability to design, select, and organise strategic pathways towards desired career outcomes. This dimension includes evaluating potential opportunities and preparing multiple plans, including both primary and alternative options, to anticipate possible obstacles or failures in achieving the initial plan (Laily & Naqiyah, 2025). The presence of alternative plans serves to reduce discouragement and fosters resilience, enabling students to remain adaptive and persistent in pursuing their career goals (Pambudi et al., 2019). Finally, the problem-solving dimension encompasses students' capacity to confront and manage future challenges as a form of personal resilience. Successfully addressing various obstacles indicates an individual's effectiveness in problem-solving, as challenges function as tests of one's commitment and perseverance towards planned career choices (Laily & Naqiyah, 2025). Collectively, these dimensions highlight the multidimensional nature of CDMSE and underscore the importance of comprehensive interventions that support students across all aspects of career decision-making.

A comprehensive analysis of guidance and counselling services demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating individual counselling, group guidance, and career information services. Individual counselling facilitates self-exploration, goal setting, and the development of personalised action plans. Group services support the enhancement of social skills, collaboration, and peer-to-peer reflection. Meanwhile, the provision of career information through structured modules and digital platforms offers high accessibility, enabling students to review career opportunities at any time. The success of such comprehensive services is highly dependent on the quality of initial assessments, teachers' competence in interpreting assessment results, and the availability of resources that support career services, including information media, learning modules, and access to the world of industry and employment (Aryani et al., 2025). The role of guidance and counselling teachers is therefore highly strategic in strengthening students' career planning, and holistic mentoring is able to equip students with more mature readiness to navigate transitions to higher education or the labour market (Fadillah & Reskiana, 2025). Through a comprehensive approach oriented towards holistic individual development, guidance and counselling services are expected to minimise the risk of mismatched academic majors, enhance students' learning satisfaction and engagement, and support long-term academic achievement and career success (Nurhilda et al., 2025).

This reinforces the view that comprehensive guidance and counselling services should be implemented holistically through four core components. First, basic services aim to enhance students' self-appraisal and career information gathering. Second, responsive services assist students

in addressing anxiety and uncertainty related to career decision making. Third, individual planning facilitates students in setting clear goals and developing structured career plans. Finally, system support strengthens a conducive environment through collaboration with parents and the world of industry, thereby supporting the attainment of students' expected career outcomes. The findings of this study may serve as a foundation for guidance and counselling teachers in designing and implementing comprehensive guidance and counselling programmes oriented towards strengthening students' Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy. Such programmes are expected to improve the quality of career decision making among vocational high school students and to prepare them to enter the workforce with greater maturity, readiness, and confidence.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy of vocational high school students still demonstrates varying levels of confidence in making career-related decisions. This condition indicates that a proportion of students have not yet developed optimal readiness and self-confidence in determining their career direction after graduating from vocational education. The results of this study highlight the importance of implementing Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling services to enhance students' Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy. Through the four core components of comprehensive guidance and counselling namely basic services, responsive services, individual planning, and system support career guidance can be delivered in a more focused, structured, continuous, and developmentally appropriate manner. Accordingly, the findings of this study may serve as a basis for the planning and development of career guidance and counselling programmes in vocational high schools, particularly in efforts to strengthen students' confidence in making independent, realistic, and responsible career decisions.

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