

# Exploration of The Influence of Soft Skills on Career Efficacy of SMK Students

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## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengukur pengaruh keterampilan soft skill peserta didik SMK terhadap karir efikasi mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif korelasional menggunakan analisis mediasi pada aplikasi statistik JASP. Sampel pada penelitian ini terdiri dari 200 peserta didik menggunakan Teknik purposive sampling sebanyak 200 siswa generasi Z yang merupakan siswa SMK dipilih sebagai responden melalui beberapa karakteristik: 1) mewakili bidang keilmuan/jurusan sekolah tertentu; 2) sekolah yang di tentukan tersebar di seluruh wilayah Sulawesi selatan; 3) sekolah bertaraf pada Standar Kompetensi Kerja Nasional Indonesia. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan kuesioner angket yang diadaptasi menggunakan uji Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Hasil temuan mengindikasikan bahwa terdapat pengaruh signifikan antara soft skill peserta didik terhadap keputusan karir mereka. Peserta didik yang memiliki atau mengasah keterampilan soft skill nya akan lebih mudah mengarahkan dirinya terhadap keputusan karir dengan percaya diri. Keterampilan soft skill juga akan membantu peserta didik SMK untuk berprestasi lebih gemilang di bangku sekolah untuk mempersiapkan karir masa depan. Penelitian ini memberikan kesimpulan bahwa apabila keterampilan soft skill siswa SMK di asah sejak masa persekolahan maka akan mempengaruhi efikasi diri karir.

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to measure the influence of vocational students' soft skills on their career efficacy. This study uses a correlational quantitative method using mediation analysis on the JASP statistical application. The sample in this study consisted of 200 students using purposive sampling technique as many as 200 generation Z students who are vocational students were selected as respondents through several characteristics: 1) representing certain scientific fields / school majors; 2) the specified schools are spread throughout the South Sulawesi region; 3) the school is standardized on the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards. The data collection technique used a questionnaire adapted using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) test. The findings indicate that there is a significant influence between learners' soft skills on their career decisions. Learners who have or hone their soft skills will more easily direct themselves towards career decisions with confidence. Soft skills will also help vocational students to achieve more brilliantly in school to prepare for future careers. This study provides a conclusion that if the soft skills of vocational students are honed since the school period, it will affect career self-efficacy.

## INTRODUCTION

The developmental period of adolescence, vocational high school students (SMK) cannot be separated from the demands of developmental tasks. One of them is the developmental task in terms of career, starting from planning to future career decisions (Laila et al., 2019). The world of work, so that most students work directly for certain companies. However, the data shows that there are still many unemployed SMK students and even more than high school students (SMA), and even still a major contributor to unemployment in Indonesia, this can be seen from the results of data from BPS in 2022, the number of SMK graduates reached 10.38% of the total number of working members who were unemployed (Ismoyo & Wahjudi, 2023). The number of unemployed SMK students is caused by a lack of personal skills or soft skills (Novianty et al., 2023). This is a big challenge for vocational students, especially in the current era, the increasing demands in entering the world of work are not only based on academic abilities (hard skills) (Aprianto et al., 2022). This shows the importance of personal skills (soft skills) as a form of student readiness for the world of work. Soft skills of vocational students are an abstract thing that can only be seen from behavior patterns such as collaboration, communication, creativity, honesty, discipline, responsibility, self-confidence and others, which are owned by a student and can be applied in the world of work (Wijayanti & Setiawati, 2023).

The influence of soft skills on success is also higher at 80% compared to hard skills (intellectual abilities) which only support 20% (Wijayanti & Setiawati, 2023). Therefore, it is very important for vocational students to develop soft skills, so that they can achieve the career planning that has been determined. In addition, the thing that affects career failure is hesitation in making decisions. However, currently there are still many students who are hesitant, indecisive or not confident in making career decisions, as a result many students feel that they are majoring in the wrong direction (Atmaja, 2021; Maretawati et al., 2023). This is further strengthened by the results of research (Apriansyah et al., 2018). Shows that many grade XII students experience confusion in making career decisions. Whereas vocational students should have confidence in making decisions regarding their future careers so that the decisions that have been made are in accordance with their talents and interests (Murisal et al., 2022). Hence, students are able to achieve success in the learning process and also in their future careers. In addition, it can also help in improving their skills according to their field because it is related to their interests so that students do not feel pressured and are able to develop maximum skills and can also be responsible for their ability to become a quality person and can also compete towards the world of work (Umam, 2021). With confidence in making career decisions, it is also clearer about the direction of his career or future goals after graduation.

This is related to soft skills, where one of the important soft skills possessed by students is self-confidence, namely belief in one's self-worth (Saputri et al., 2020). A student should have self-confidence as one of the developmental tasks also owned in a career, especially career decisions. This is because one of the determining factors for career decision making is internal factors, namely self-confidence (Maslikhah et al., 2022). Confidence in making career decisions is called career efficacy. Through the ability of career efficacy students can determine the career steps to be taken, prevent doubts in making decisions so that students really choose decisions according to themselves not just following friends or following the wishes of parents. This career efficacy can also be associated with beliefs about decisions including in terms of knowledge about how difficult the decision is and how to adjust talents of interest and readiness to face all obstacles (Agnia & Dasalinda, 2022).

Based on the background of the explanation above, it can be concluded that the biggest determinant of student career success is having soft skills, which support career decision making. In addition, making the right career decisions must be supported by one of the soft skills, namely self-confidence or self-efficacy. Self-efficacy forms a career belief so that it is with confidence in a career or career efficacy. Although there have been many studies on soft skills with careers and also self-efficacy towards careers. However, it has not examined how the relationship between the two on students' careers, therefore this study will examine in more detail how soft skills affect career efficacy.

**METHOD**

This study uses a correlational quantitative approach method to examine the relationship or influence between soft skills variables (Personal, Social, and Methodology) of students on their career efficacy. The research variables include external and internal factors including soft skills, career efficacy These variables are the main variables that are carefully examined in this study.

The population in this study took 201 active learners in the 2022/2023 school year of SMK in South Sulawesi. The technique used in determining the sample uses simple random sampling technique by taking several determining characteristics: 1) The specified schools are spread throughout the southern Sulawesi region covering provincial districts; 2) Schools that apply specific scientific references in accordance with the Indonesian National Work Competition Standards (SKKNI) for several majors including (energy and mining, information technology, manufacturing technology and engineering, agribusiness and agritechology, maritime, business and management, tourism, health and social workers and arts & creative economy).

This study uses 2 (two) instruments including adapting the first questionnaire, namely soft-skills put forward (Succi & Wieandt, 2019) divided into three (3) aspects: Personal, Social and Methodological which consists of 20 statement items related to self-skills, personal indicators consist of 6 statement items, social indicators with a total of 9 statement items, and methodological indicators consist of 5 statement items. The results of the questionnaire validity test are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) test of the Soft Skill Scale

Instrument	N	Reliability Test			Validity Test			
		Cronbach's	McDonald's	RMSEA	GFI	CMIN/DF	CFI	TLI
Soft Skill	201	0.931	0.932	0.077	0.987	2.200/464*	0.990	0.989
Personal		0.746						
Social		0.865						
Metdological		0.669						

McDonald > 0,60 (Reliable). Cronbach alfa > 0.60 (Reliable). RMSEA ≤ 0,08 (Accepted Model). GFI (Goodness of Fit) = 0 (poor fit)- 1,0 (perfect fit). CMIN/DF ≤ 2,0 (Accepted Model). CFI ≥ 0,95 (Accepted Model). TLI ≥ 0,95 (Very Good Fit). \*p <0.001

The second research instrument used is adapting the career efficacy questionnaire, namely Career Decision Self Efficacy (CDSE) designed to measure students' career preparation and self-management which consists of five (5) aspects, namely self-aparasial, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem solving developed by (Betz & Taylor, 2012) consisting of 32 statement items related to one's career readiness, decision and maturity. The career efficacy scale indicators, namely self aparasial, consist of 5 items, occupational information indicators consist of 8 statement items, goal selection indicators consist of 10 statement items, planning indicators consist of 4 statement items, and problem solving indicators consist of 4 statement items. The results of the adaptation test that have been analyzed are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) test of the Career Effycacy Scale

Instrument	N	Reliability Test			Validity Test			
		Cronbach's	McDonald's	RMSEA	GFI	CMIN/DF	CFI	TLI
Career Efficacy	201	0.950	0.950	0.088	0.983	1.987/20*	0.987	0.986

McDonald > 0,60 (Reliable). Cronbach alfa > 0.60 (Reliable). RMSEA ≤ 0,08 (Accepted Model). GFI (Goodness of Fit) = 0 (poor fit)- 1,0 (perfect fit). CMIN/DF ≤ 2,0 (Accepted Model). CFI ≥ 0,95 (Accepted Model). TLI ≥ 0,95 (Very Good Fit). \*p <0.001

The questionnaire used in the soft skills and career efficacy aspects uses a likert scale. Several statement items are arranged with respondents' answers weighted by the overall item. This study uses a scale range of 1-7 (the more you choose the number 7, the more you agree).

The data analysis technique aims to test accurately and reliably a measuring instrument through expert validator tests and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the JASP statistical data processing application to test the construct has been valid and reliable. Path analysis is a data analysis technique which is part of regression correlation analysis to determine hypothesis testing on intervening variables. Researchers use path analysis techniques to determine the amount of direct and indirect influence between each X variable, namely personal (X1), social (X3) and methodology (X2) skills variables as moderating variables on career efficacy (Y) as the dependent variable. Data analysis using JASP statistical data processing tools with mediation analysis so as to produce data analysis results consisting of direct effects, indirect effects, and total effects seen from significance values <0.05 and the magnitude of the effect measured from the estimated value and p.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Result**

The purpose of this study is to test the hypothesis between the direct and indirect effects of soft skills (personal, social, and methodology) of vocational students on career decisions at school. Questionnaire data was distributed to samples for 3 months throughout the province of South Sulawesi which had gone through validity and reliability tests.

Based on the data that has been analyzed using path coefficients in the JASP statistical application, it can be seen the magnitude of the direct, indirect, and total effects of the relationship between variables. The results of the path analysis in this study are as follows:

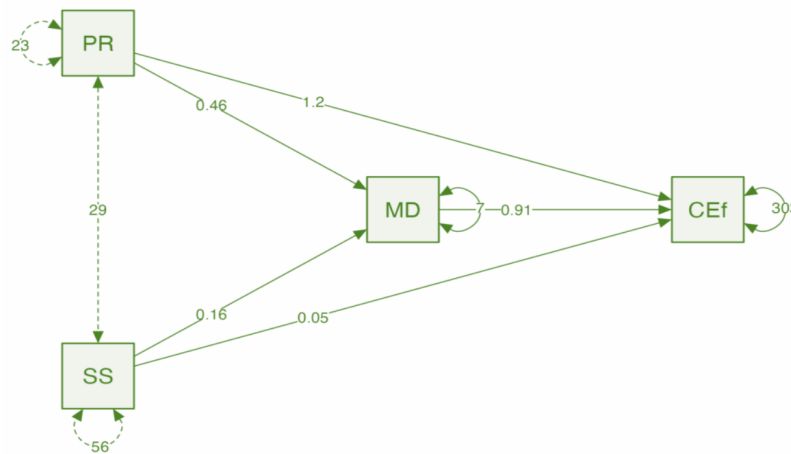


Figure 1. Path Model with Significant Coefficients

- Information:  
 PR : Personal (X1)  
 MD : Metodologi (X2)  
 SS : Sosial (X3)  
 CeF : Career Efficacy (Y)

Table 3. Direct Effect Test Results with Mediation Analysis

	Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
MD → C Efficacy	0.911	0.465	1.961	0.050	6.865×10 <sup>-4</sup>	1.822
PR → C Efficacy	1.235	0.480	2.574	0.010	0.295	2.176
SS → C Efficacy	0.053	0.287	0.184	0.854	-0.510	0.616

Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator.

In the direct effects table above, the methodology on career efficacy has a significance value (sig.) of 0.050 where the p value is <0.05. This shows that there is a direct influence between the methodology on career efficacy with a large influence of 91% seen from the standard estimate value of 0.911. For personal aspects of career efficacy, the significance value (sig.) is 0.010 where p < 0.05. This shows that there is a direct personal influence on career efficacy with a large influence through a standard estimate of 1,235. Social skills on career efficacy with a significance value (sig.) is 0.854 where p < 0.05. This shows that there is no direct influence of social skills on the career efficacy of vocational students.

Table 4. Indirect Effect Test Results with Mediation Analysis

	Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
PR → MD → C Efficacy	0.419	0.222	1.890	0.059	-0.016	0.854
SS → MD → C Efficacy	0.149	0.085	1.750	0.080	-0.018	0.315

Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator.

In the table above, there is an indirect effect or indirect effects above that personal on career efficacy through methodology has a significance value (sig.) is 0.059 where p > 0.05. This shows that there is no personal influence on career efficacy through methodology. For the social aspect of career efficacy, the significance value (sig.) is 0.080 where p > 0.05. This shows that there is no social influence on career efficacy through methodology.

**Discussion**

**1. Direct and Indirect Effects of Personal on Career Efficacy**

Based on the results of the analysis using path coefficients, it shows that there is a direct influence of personal on career efficacy, with a significance value (sig.) of 0.050 where the p value is <0.05. as for the amount of direct influence between methodology on career efficacy with a large influence of 91% seen from the standard estimate value of 0.911. so it can be concluded that personal affects the career efficacy of vocational high school students in South Sulawesi. This is in line with the results of research conducted by (Fatmawati et al., 2023) which states that there is a significant relationship between soft skills or personality and students' self-efficacy in their careers, so that students who have personal suitability in careers, namely abilities in accordance with their talents and interests, will find it easier to develop soft skills within themselves. So that it has the ability to face risks and can be responsible for achieving its career. In this case, it is related to confidence and then affects his confidence in his career. the higher the personal ability, the confidence in the career will also increase with an influence level of 91%. In addition, the results of indirect effects above that personal to career efficacy through methodology have a significance value (sig.) is 0.059 where p > 0.05. This shows that there is no personal influence on career efficacy through methodology. This shows that bringing between personal or soft skills through methodology has no influence on the career efficacy of vocational students in

South Sulawesi. With the results showing no indirect effect on career efficacy, it means that career efficacy is not able to mediate the influence between personal and methodology.

## **2. Direct and Indirect Influence of Social on Career Efficacy**

Based on the results of data analysis of social skills on career efficacy by showing the significance value (sig.) is 0.854 where  $p < 0.05$ . so it is concluded that there is no direct influence of social skills on the career efficacy of vocational students. So that the change in social skills will not affect students' career efficacy. This is in line with the results of research by Muzdalifah, M. (2018) which shows the absence of the influence of social skills on self-efficacy. while the indirect effect of social aspects on career efficacy based on the results of the analysis shows a significance value (sig.) is 0.080 where  $p > 0.05$ , which means that there is no social influence on career efficacy through methodology. This shows that both directly and indirectly, social skills have no influence on students' career efficacy. Social skills are personal abilities that are used in interacting with other people or socially. So that social skills will lead more to personal students than to career decisions. but in this case social skills will have an effect on students' career processes such as fostering self-confidence, this was also revealed by (Martono et al., 2021) from the results of his research, it shows that there is a relationship between social skills and self-confidence.

## **3. Direct and Indirect Effects of Personal and Social on Career Efficacy through Methodology**

The results of the presentation of data analysis of this study regarding the influence of personal and social skills on career efficacy both directly and indirectly show that directly only personal skills have an effect on student career efficacy. While indirectly does not affect, as well as social skills, neither directly nor indirectly has a significant effect on the career efficacy of vocational high school students in South Sulawesi. The results of this study also concluded that the most influential thing in students' careers is personal skills or soft skills related to personality such as self-efficacy, problem solving, decision making, career plan preparation. the results of this study are in line with the results of research conducted previously by (Setiawati & Mayasari, 2021) with the results showing 80% of career success is influenced by soft skills or personal skills. Therefore, the higher the personal skills or soft skills of students, the higher their career efficacy will be, so the development of soft skills is very important for vocational students to support them in achieving a successful career.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Vocational high school (SMK) students are students who are prepared for the world of work after school. This is in accordance with their developmental tasks which require them to have career efficacy or career beliefs, starting from planning to career decisions towards a successful career. A successful career is not only supported by academic abilities but also personal abilities or soft skills. Based on the results of data analysis, the research shows that soft skills have a direct influence on career efficacy with a significance value (sig.) of 0.050 where the p value is  $< 0.05$  with a large influence of 91% seen from the standard estimate value of 0.911. The indirect effect is not significant, as well as social skills both directly and indirectly have no significant effect. Therefore, it is concluded that personal values or soft skills have a direct effect on the career efficacy of vocational students, so it is very important to develop students' soft skills early on, especially at school and not only focus on their academic grades.

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