

Career Maturity of Southwest Aceh State High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Career maturity has been positioned as an important indicator in assessing students' readiness to plan and make career decisions realistically. In this study, the picture of the level of career maturity of students has been analyzed through a descriptive quantitative approach. A total of 1,255 students from SMAN 2, SMAN 5, and SMAN 8 have been made into the population, and 302 students have been selected as samples using simple random sampling techniques. The instrument used is a career maturity scale with 35 statement items, which has been adapted from Savickas and Porfeli (2011). Based on the results of the analysis, it was found that 54% of students were categorized as having high career maturity, 27% moderate, 18% very high, and 1% low. When viewed from its aspects, attention to career has been shown to be high by 41% of students, curiosity by 46%, confidence by 43%, and consulting is in the very high category by 43% of students. Thus, it can be concluded that most students have shown good career readiness. The ability to choose a job, seek information, make decisions, and accept advice from others has been successfully shown as a form of maturity in their career.

Keywords: *Career Maturity, Career Readiness, High School Students, Career Decision-Making*

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INTRODUCTION

Career maturity has been defined as a condition in which the readiness and ability to make appropriate career decisions has been possessed by the individual, including in terms of making a choice between continuing education to a higher level or directly entering the world of work (Angelina et al., 2020). At this stage, it is expected that the understanding of personal interests, talents, and values has been well established by the student, so that the various career options available can be carefully analyzed and evaluated (A. Sari et al., 2023). Career maturity has also been recognized as an essential aspect of the individual development process, especially for high school students who are in an important transition period to adult life, both in the context of higher education and the world of work (Sugiarto, 2024). Therefore, career maturity needs to continue to be developed through the mentoring process, providing adequate career information, and strengthening self-awareness, so that career decisions taken can be made independently, rationally, and in accordance with the potential and long-term goals of each student (S. M. Sari et al., 2025).

Awareness of various things needed in the career decision-making process, including in determining the choice of major, has been considered an important part of career maturity (Putri, 2013). This awareness is shown through behaviors that reflect students' readiness to plan their career future gradually and in a targeted manner (Khirunisah, 2024). At the high school level, career maturity has been defined as an ability that needs to be mastered by students in completing career development tasks in accordance with their age stages and psychological development (Lesmana, 2022). In addition, career maturity is also characterized by the ability to search and use information related to career choices, as well as by the insights that have been formed about the world of work and the demands that come with it. Thus, career maturity is seen as the result of the process of forming attitudes, knowledge, and skills

that are influenced by education, social environment, and experience gained during school.

Career maturity has been understood as a condition that is characterized not only by an individual's readiness in determining the direction of a profession, but also by the level of knowledge and skills required to enable informed career decision-making. By Levinson (Milah & Sudirman, 2022), career maturity has been described as the ability that a person must possess to be able to make appropriate career decisions, which is based on a thorough understanding of the conditions and factors that influence those decisions. In addition, career maturity has also been linked to the level of consistency and relevance of career choices taken within a certain period of time. Thus, career maturity has been considered the result of a process of formation and development influenced by life experiences, educational processes, and self-understanding that continues to be built over time.

Problems that often arise due to career immaturity are difficulty in choosing between working or continuing their studies, still not sure of their abilities, not being able to relate their talents and interests, not having the willingness to seek information about careers, not having a goal after graduation, obeying the demands of their parents, following friends in determining their career, and there are no characteristics that show students have matured in the career field (Ghassani et al., 2020).

Based on data from BPS, (2023) August 2023 TPT was 5.32 percent. Using these indicators, it can be concluded that out of every 100 people classified in the labor force, about 5 people have been categorized as unemployed. This condition shows that not all available labor has been absorbed by the job market. Thus, some of the productive age population is still not given appropriate job opportunities, which indicates that employment problems still need further attention and handling from various related parties. TPT decreased by 0.54 percentage points compared to August 2022. Meanwhile, according to BPS Aceh In February 2022, there were around 150,176 Open Unemployed (PT) people in Aceh Province or 5.97 percent of the total workforce in Aceh Province who were not absorbed in the job market. Of this number of unemployed, high school graduates are the second highest at 8.57%.

Various previous studies have also shown that students' career maturity is influenced by various internal and external factors. Research by Rahmawati and Prasetyo (2022) found that *self-efficacy* has a significant role in increasing the career maturity of high school students, where confidence in one's ability contributes to the courage to make career decisions. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Handayani et al. (2021) shows that parental support and the social environment have a positive effect on the development of adolescent career orientation. In addition, research by Wulandari (2020) revealed that career guidance services in schools can significantly help students recognize their interests and potential in determining career choices. Another finding from Kusuma and Lestari (2023) shows that the use of digital media as a source of career information is able to increase students' awareness of job opportunities and the direction of further education. In line with that, research by Fitriani (2024) emphasizes that perception factors in the world of work and motivation for achievement are closely related to the level of career maturity of students. Based on the results of these studies, it can be concluded that career maturity is the result of a complex learning process, which is influenced by psychological, social, educational, and information technology developments.

Based on this background, the purpose of this study is directed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the conditions of career maturity possessed by students at State High Schools in the Southwest Aceh region. Confusion in planning a career after graduating from school has been widely expressed by students, where the inability to recognize one's potential optimally is still often felt. In addition, the mismatch between the major that has been taken during the school period and the desired major when continuing to college has also been widely reported. Lack of understanding on how to determine a study program that suits your interests and abilities, as well as limited information related to the world of work, are also mentioned as factors that hinder the career decision-making process. Through initial observations that have been carried out by researchers at the end of 2023 at three Southwest Aceh State High Schools, it has been found that there are indications that most students have not been able to establish their career choices clearly and steadily.

METHOD

Descriptive quantitative as an approach uses figures and statistics in the process of data collection and analysis to provide an objective picture of the phenomenon being studied. The data collected is processed quantitatively using research instruments, so that the results can be measured and analyzed appropriately. The type of research used is descriptive, which aims to understand certain variables or circumstances without conducting hypothesis testing. The subjects were students of SMAN 2, 5, and 8 Southwest Aceh.

The sampling technique in this study has been applied using a *probability sampling* approach through the *simple random sampling* method. Through this method, an equal opportunity has been given to each member of the population to be selected as part of the research sample. Sample selection is done randomly, so that the potential for bias in the selection process can be minimized. With the use of this technique, a fair and proportional representation of the population to the sample has been sought, so that the level of reliability and validity of the research results can be maximally improved. The research population includes public high school students in Southwest Aceh, with three schools as research locations in SMAN 2, 5 and 8. Based on the Slovin formula with an error rate of 5%, 302 students were determined as a proportionally distributed sample: 192 students from SMA Negeri 2, 80 students from SMA Negeri 5, and 30 students from SMA Negeri 8. This study uses a career maturity scale instrument adapted from Savickas and Porfeli (2011), covering four aspects: attention, curiosity, confidence, and consultation. Modified Likert scale data. The instrument has been tested for validity and reliability, with a Cronbach Alpha value of 1.025, indicating a high level of reliability.

Data collection in a study is seen as a very important stage, because through this process relevant and needed data can be obtained according to pre-set criteria. In its implementation, data collection techniques must be selected and applied carefully so that the accuracy and suitability of the data with the research objectives can be ensured. Thus, the accuracy of the research results can be improved and the validity of the findings can be guaranteed, as the data has been collected based on procedures that have been systematically designed and standardized. The questions asked have been accompanied by a choice of answers to make it easier for respondents. This questionnaire was distributed directly in the classroom to a predetermined sample and used a modified Likert scale to measure the Career Maturity Scale, which aims to explore information related to the respondents' experience and knowledge (Aedi, 2010).

Descriptive statistical data analysis. The data is grouped based on variables and types of respondents, then presented for ease of interpretation. The percentage results of the respondents' answers were analyzed and interpreted based on the Koentjaraningrat criteria. The study distinguishes between empirical data for comparisons of individuals within groups, and hypothetical data for comparisons between groups.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Career Maturity of Southwest Aceh State High School Students

This study involved 302 students from three schools in Southwest Aceh, namely SMA Negeri 2, SMA Negeri 5, and SMA Negeri 8. Based on gender, the majority of respondents were female as many as 193 students (64%), while men amounted to 109 students (36%).

Table 1. Categorization of Career Maturity of Southwest Aceh State High School Students

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percent
Very Low	$X < 61,25$	0	0%
Low	$61.25 < X \leq 78.75$	4	1%
Keep	$78.75 < X \leq 96.25$	81	27%
Tall	$96.25 < X \leq 113.75$	164	54%
Very High	$X > 113.75$	53	18%
Total		302	100%

Based on Table 1, the distribution of career maturity of students of SMA Negeri Aceh Barat Barat South, according to the Koentjaraningrat categorization norm, shows that the majority of students (54%) are in the high category, while 27% are in the medium category, 18% are in the very high category, and 1% are in the low category, without any students in the very low category. This indicates that in general, students of Southwest Aceh State High School have reached a high level of career maturity. Thus, they demonstrate good understanding and readiness in career decision-making, future planning, and the ability to overcome challenges and obstacles related to their careers.

Results of Students' Career Maturity Overview Based on Aspects

Attention Aspect

The frequency and number of scores of students who answered based on categorization can be seen in Table 2. The following:

Table 2. Categorization of Career Maturity Based on Attention Aspects

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percent
Very Low	$X < 17,50$	0	0%
Low	$17.50 < X \leq 22.50$	8	3%
Keep	$22.50 < X \leq 27.50$	46	15%
Tall	$27.50 < X \leq 32.50$	124	41%
Very High	$X > 32,50$	124	41%
Total		302	100%

Based on table 2, the distribution of students' career maturity in the attention aspect shows that almost half of the students (41%) are in the very high and high categories according to the Koentjaraningrat categorization norms. A small percentage of students were in the medium (15%) and low (3%) categories, while none of the students were in the very low (0%) category. These results indicate that Southwest Aceh State High School students generally have a high level of attention to career planning. They show a keen interest in understanding career options, seeking relevant information, and planning steps to achieve their career goals seriously.

Curiosity

The frequency and number of scores of students who answered based on categorization can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. Categorization of Career Maturity Based on Curiosity Aspects

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percent
Very Low	$X < 15,75$	2	1%
Low	$15.75 < X \leq 20.25$	17	6%
Keep	$20.25 < X \leq 24.75$	108	36%
Tall	$24.75 < X \leq 29.25$	139	46%
Very High	$X > 29,25$	36	12%
Total		302	100%

Based on table 3, the categorization analysis showed that the curiosity aspect in Southwest Aceh State High School students was dominated by the high category, with 139 students (46%), followed by the medium category as many as 108 students (36%), the very high category as many as 36 students (12%), and the low category as many as 17 students (6%), while no students were in the very low category (0%). These results illustrate that the majority of students have a good level of curiosity towards career development, demonstrated through an interest in seeking information, exploring various career options, and a desire to actively and deeply understand career opportunities.

Confidence Aspect

The frequency and number of scores of students who answered based on categorization can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. Categorization of Career Maturity Based on Confidence Aspects

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percent
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Career Maturity of Southwest Aceh State High School Students

Very Low	$X < 15,75$	2	1%
Low	$15.75 < X \leq 20.25$	29	10%
Keep	$20.25 < X \leq 24.75$	107	35%
Tall	$24.75 < X \leq 29.25$	130	43%
Very High	$X > 29,25$	34	11%
Total		302	100%

Based on table 4, the confidence aspect of SMA Negeri Aceh Barat Daya shows that 43% of students are in the high category, 35% in the medium category, 11% in the very high category, 10% in the low category, and 1% in the very low category, according to the Koentjaraningrat categorization norms. The majority of students show a good level of confidence, with dominance in the high category. This reflects strong self-confidence in facing various challenges, both academic and non-academic. This high confidence plays an important role in preparing students to face various future situations more optimistically and effectively.

Consulting Aspects

The frequency and number of scores of students who answered based on categorization can be seen in the following table:

Table 5. Categorization of Career Maturity Based on Consulting Aspects

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percent
Very Low	$X < 12,25$	0	0%
Low	$12.25 < X \leq 15.75$	10	3%
Keep	$15.75 < X \leq 19.25$	46	15%
Tall	$19.25 < X \leq 22.75$	117	39%
Very High	$X > 22,75$	129	43%
Total		302	100%

Based on the categorization analysis on the consultation aspect according to Koentjaraningrat norms, the majority of students at SMA Negeri Aceh Barat Daya were in the very high category (43%), followed by the high category (39%), the medium category (15%), and the low category (3%), with no students in the very low category (0%). These results show that most students tend to consult optimally, both for academic and non-academic guidance. This tendency reflects students' ability to utilize consultation as a strategic step to make more effective decisions in the face of various challenges.

Discussion

A good understanding of one's potential has been considered one of the main traits possessed by students with a high level of career maturity. The planning of strategic steps towards the achievement of career goals has also been carried out by the students, and the readiness to face the various challenges that may be faced in the world of work after graduation has been demonstrated. A student's career maturity has been defined as the level of readiness they have to make the right decisions regarding career choices, as well as the ability to develop and manage sustainable career paths in the future. Thus, the development of career maturity needs to continue to be pursued so that the process of adapting students to the dynamics of the world of work can be facilitated more effectively.

Career maturity has been defined by Savickas (in Riady, 2014) as a condition of readiness possessed by individuals in choosing a career path and in making decisions in accordance with personal desires, personality tendencies, and career development stages that are being undertaken. This understanding emphasizes that the right career decision-making is determined not only by rational factors, but also by the suitability between career choices and individual character and developmental phases. In addition, by Super (in Suherman, 2013), career maturity has been described as an individual's readiness in making the right career choice. In his view, greater emphasis has been placed on the readiness that needs to be possessed at a certain age in each stage of career development. Thus, career maturity is seen as a psychological process that must be shaped, nurtured, and developed, in order for individuals to be able to optimally navigate career choices throughout their life span.

The results of the research at SMA Negeri Aceh Barat Daya show that having career maturity most of the participants are identified with a good category. As many as 54% of students are in the high category, reflecting a clear understanding of career options and planning strategic steps to achieve them. As many as 27% of students are in the medium category, which indicates the need for exploration and further information for mature career decision-making. In addition, 18% of students are in the very high category, indicating a significant level of career maturity in choosing as well as understanding the career goals and steps required. In contrast, the low 1% indicated a lack of attention to career planning, while none of the students were in the very low category.

According to Swanson and Fouad (2014), career maturity is influenced by psychological factors such as achievement orientation and the ability to manage stress in decision-making (Swanson & Fouad, 2014). They emphasize the importance of debriefing skills assessing career choices, planning goals, and overcoming career challenges. School-based interventions, such as career identity exploration and development programs, are a strategic step to increase students' career maturity. This research emphasizes the need for a holistic approach in supporting students' readiness to face the world of work.

The researcher also analyzed how the picture of career maturity in Southwest Aceh State High School students consists of the following aspects:

Attention Aspect

In the attention aspect, 41% of students were in the very high and high category, reflecting a significant level of attention to career development through active involvement and focus in future planning. As many as 15% of students are in the medium category, which shows considerable attention to careers, although it still requires an increase in engagement. In contrast, 3% of students were in the low category, indicating a lack of attention to career planning, while none of the students were in the very low category, indicating that all students had some level of attention to aspects of their career.

According to Lent (2020), mindfulness includes the ability to focus on a single task while adapting to dynamic environmental conditions (Lent & Brown, 2020). In the context of education and career, the ability to alternate between a deep focus on a specific task and dividing attention on relevant information becomes crucial. This theory is relevant to understanding the importance of developing students' abilities in balancing their focus to deal with complex career planning challenges.

Curiosity aspect

None of the students were found to be in the very low category (0%), which indicates that a minimum level of curiosity about the career planning aspect was possessed by all respondents. As many as 12% of students have been classified in the very high category, which means that an active and in-depth search for career information has been undertaken by a small portion of the population. Meanwhile, as many as 6% of students have been classified in the low category, which suggests that interest in exploring information regarding options and career paths is still rarely shown by the group. The general aspect of curiosity shows that 46% of students have been placed in the high category, which reflects that the drive to find out and understand the various career possibilities has been shown quite strongly. On the other hand, as many as 36% of students have been identified as being in the medium category, which indicates that although the level of curiosity has been possessed, exploration and further information search still need to be improved in order for career planning to be carried out more optimally.

Curiosity, according to Von Stumm et al. (2011), is a positive psychological trait that plays an important role in individual success, including in career (Fussell et al., 2011). The drive to learn and grow, the ability to face challenges, and the pursuit of new opportunities are significant contributions of curiosity to career achievement. Thus, these results confirm that varying levels of curiosity among students play an important role in shaping their readiness to plan and manage career development.

Confidence aspect

In the aspect of confidence, as many as 43% of students are in the high category, showing good confidence in making career decisions and confidence in their abilities. 35% are in the medium category, reflecting sufficient confidence but still in need of further development. A small percentage of students, 10%, are in the low category, indicating a limitation in confidence regarding career choices. In addition, 11% of students were in the very high category, indicating a very strong level of confidence in career planning, while 1% were in the very low category, indicating a significant lack of confidence in career planning.

Confidence plays an important role in career planning and satisfaction. According to Xin (2020), individuals with high levels of confidence tend to be more effective in managing their career choices, have a more mature career plan, and feel more satisfied with the decisions they make (Xin et al., 2020). In addition, confidence encourages broader career exploration and increases the readiness of individuals to face challenges in the world of work, thus becoming an essential component in a student's career development.

Consulting aspects

In the aspect of consulting, the results showed that 43% of students were in the very high category, indicating that they actively sought advice or information related to career planning from others. As many as 39% of students are in the high category, reflecting a strong tendency to discuss with various parties to gain deeper insight into career options. None of the students were found to be in the very low category, which could mean that a level of consultation in career planning has been demonstrated by all students. On the other hand, as many as 15% of students were recorded in the medium category, which indicates that consultation in career planning is only carried out occasionally by this group. In addition, about 3% of students are classified in the low category, which means that career consulting efforts are rarely undertaken by them in the process of planning their professional future.

According to Haenggli & Hirschi (2023), the concept of flexible careers is becoming increasingly relevant in an ever-changing world (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2023). This theory emphasizes the importance of flexibility in career planning, where individuals not only follow one fixed career path, but also have the ability to adapt to the dynamics of the world of work and explore a wide range of open and more diverse career opportunities. This is in line with research findings that show the important role of consultation for future change and opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research on the career maturity of students at SMA Negeri Aceh Barat D'ia, it can be concluded that most students have shown a fairly good level of career maturity, with a clear understanding of their career options as well as a mature plan to achieve career goals. Based on the data that has been collected, most students are found to be in the category of high to very high career maturity, which shows that the readiness in planning and managing career paths has been possessed by the majority of respondents. However, there are still a number of students who fall into the medium to low category, which can be interpreted that they are still in the search stage or experience obstacles in formulating future career plans in a clear and structured manner. In particular, aspects that play an important role in the maturity of students' careers include attention, curiosity, confidence, and consultation. Most students show high attention, curiosity, confidence and consultation towards their career development. Guidance and counseling teachers are advised to be more intensive in providing targeted assistance to increase the career maturity of students, with more structured monitoring of aspects such as attention, curiosity, confidence, and consultation. The limitations of this work, such as the location of the research and the influence of external factors on the maturity of students' careers, are suggested to be carefully considered in future research. Further, it is recommended to use a wider scope by involving more heterogeneous samples. Additional variables—such as family involvement, psychological influences, economic background, and students' career motivations—also need to be examined in order to gain a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the factors that affect career

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