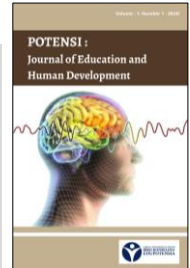


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Career Decision-Making Difficulties Among Eleventh-Grade Students: A Profile Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to describe the profile of career decision-making difficulties among eleventh-grade students based on Gati et al.'s theory. This research employed a quantitative descriptive method involving 107 students selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using the Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) and analyzed using descriptive statistics and gender difference analysis. The findings revealed that most students experienced a moderate level of career decision-making difficulties. The most prominent difficulty was a lack of information regarding career alternatives and the world of work. Furthermore, no significant difference was found between male and female students in terms of career decision-making difficulties. These findings highlight the importance of career guidance and counseling services in improving students' career decision-making abilities.



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Introduction

Adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by various developmental tasks, one of which is preparing for future educational and career choices. At the senior high school level, students are expected to recognize their potential, understand various educational and occupational opportunities, and make career decisions that align with their interests, talents, and abilities. Career decision-making is an essential competency because the decisions made during this period can significantly influence an individual's academic achievement, career development, and future quality of life. However, many students still experience difficulties in making appropriate career decisions, indicating the need for support, particularly through school guidance and counseling services. Career decision-making difficulties refer to the obstacles individuals encounter when choosing a career due to a lack of readiness, insufficient information, or inconsistent information. According to Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996), these difficulties are classified into three major categories: lack of readiness, lack of information, and inconsistent information. These obstacles may cause students to feel uncertain, confused, and hesitant when selecting educational pathways or future occupations. Therefore, understanding students' career decision-making difficulties is essential for developing appropriate career guidance programs that address their specific needs.

Previous studies have shown that career decision-making difficulties remain a common issue among high school students. Gati and Saka (2001) found that insufficient self-knowledge, limited information about educational and occupational alternatives, and inadequate understanding of the career decision-making process are among the primary factors contributing to students' career indecision. Other studies also indicate that students who experience greater career decision-making difficulties tend to struggle in selecting academic majors and career paths that match their abilities and interests. These findings highlight the importance of providing systematic career guidance and counseling services to improve students' career decision-making competence.

Based on a preliminary study conducted at SMA Negeri 29 Garut, many students still experience uncertainty when choosing higher education programs or future occupations. Several students reported limited understanding of their personal potential, insufficient information about higher education and the labor market, and a tendency to rely on others' opinions when making career decisions. These conditions indicate that students continue to face various barriers in the career decision-making process that require appropriate intervention.

Therefore, this study aims to describe the profile of career decision-making difficulties among eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 29 Garut based on the framework proposed by Gati et al. The findings are expected to provide comprehensive information regarding the level and dimensions of students' career decision-making difficulties, which can serve as a basis for designing more effective career guidance and counseling programs. Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of career guidance services in schools and support students in making informed and appropriate career decisions.

Method

Participants

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design involving 107 eleventh-grade students as research participants. The participants consisted of 55 male students and 52 female students. A simple random sampling technique was applied to ensure that every student had an equal opportunity to be selected as a participant. This sampling technique was considered appropriate because the population was relatively homogeneous in terms of educational level and research characteristics.

Measure

Data were collected using the Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) developed by Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996). The questionnaire consisted of 49 items designed to assess students' difficulties in making career decisions. The instrument measures three major dimensions: lack of readiness, lack of information, and inconsistent information. Participants responded to each statement using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Prior to data collection, the instrument was tested for validity and reliability to ensure that it was suitable for measuring career decision-making difficulties among senior high school students.

Procedure

This study was conducted through several stages, including research preparation, instrument administration, data collection, and data analysis. After obtaining permission from the school, the questionnaire was distributed to the selected participants, who completed it during the scheduled data collection session. The collected data were coded and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. Descriptive statistical analyses, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were performed to describe the profile of students' career decision-making difficulties. In addition, an independent sample analysis was conducted to examine whether there were differences in career decision-making difficulties between male and female students.

Results

A total of 107 eleventh-grade students participated in this study, consisting of 55 male and 52 female students. This study aimed to describe the level of career decision-making difficulties experienced by students using the Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ).

Overall Career Decision-Making Difficulties

The findings revealed that most students experienced a moderate level of career decision-making difficulties. Of the 107 respondents, 76 students (71%) were categorized as having moderate difficulty, 23 students (21%) were categorized as high, and only 8 students (8%) were categorized as low. These findings indicate that although most students have begun to develop career plans, they still encounter difficulties in making confident and well-informed career decisions. These findings suggest that although most students have begun thinking about their future educational and occupational plans, they still face considerable obstacles when making career decisions. Many students appear to possess preliminary knowledge about potential career paths but remain uncertain when selecting the most appropriate option. This uncertainty may be associated with limited self-understanding, inadequate knowledge of educational opportunities, insufficient information regarding occupations, and external influences such as family expectations or peer opinions.

Furthermore, the relatively high proportion of students within the moderate category indicates that career decision-making is still a developmental challenge among senior high school students. At this educational stage, students are expected to prepare for higher education or employment; therefore, uncertainty

regarding career decisions may negatively affect their educational planning and future career development. Consequently, career guidance and counseling services should continue to assist students in strengthening their readiness and confidence in making career decisions.

Table 1. Overall Career Decision-Making Difficulties

Category	Frequency	Percentage
High	23	21%
Moderate	76	71%
Low	8	8%
Total	107	100%

Career Decision-Making Difficulties by Dimension

The analysis of career decision-making difficulties was conducted across the three dimensions proposed in the CDDQ model: lack of readiness, lack of information, and inconsistent information. The findings revealed that all three dimensions were categorized as moderate, although each dimension demonstrated different levels of contribution to students' career decision-making difficulties. Among the three dimensions, lack of information obtained the highest average percentage (69%), indicating that inadequate access to career-related information remains the most significant obstacle experienced by students. This finding suggests that many students still have difficulty obtaining comprehensive information regarding university programs, career alternatives, admission requirements, occupational characteristics, and future employment opportunities.

The second highest dimension was inconsistent information (63%). This result indicates that students often receive conflicting information from various sources, including parents, teachers, friends, and social media. Such conflicting information may create confusion and reduce students' confidence when making career-related decisions. As adolescents are frequently exposed to multiple sources of information, distinguishing reliable from unreliable career information becomes increasingly challenging. Meanwhile, the lack of readiness dimension obtained an average score of 61%. Although this dimension showed the lowest percentage among the three, it still reflects that many students experience insufficient psychological readiness before entering the career decision-making process. This may include low motivation, uncertainty regarding personal abilities, and unrealistic expectations about future careers.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that career decision-making difficulties among students are multidimensional. Therefore, career counseling interventions should address not only students' readiness but also provide accurate career information and assist students in evaluating conflicting information critically before making career decisions.

Table 2. Career Decision-Making Difficulties by Dimension

Dimension	Average (%)	Category
Lack of Readiness	61	Moderate
Lack of Information	69	Moderate
Inconsistent Information	63	Moderate

Career Decision-Making Difficulties by Indicator

To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of students' career decision-making difficulties, the study also analyzed ten specific indicators representing the three major dimensions of the CDDQ. The results indicate that students experience varying levels of difficulty across different indicators. The highest percentage (69%) was found in the indicator lack of knowledge about the steps involved in career decision-making. This finding suggests that many students are unfamiliar with systematic procedures for making career decisions. Rather than following a structured decision-making process, many students tend to rely on intuition, external suggestions, or incomplete information. The second highest indicator was lack of self-information (64%), implying that students still experience difficulty recognizing their own interests, talents, abilities, and personal values. Without adequate self-understanding, selecting educational programs or occupations that match their characteristics becomes considerably more difficult. Several indicators, including lack of additional information sources (62%), internal conflict (62%), and dysfunctional beliefs (61%), also demonstrated

relatively high percentages. These findings indicate that students often struggle to identify trustworthy career resources while simultaneously experiencing psychological conflicts and unrealistic expectations regarding future careers.

Conversely, the lowest percentage was found for unreliable information (55%). Although this indicator obtained the lowest score, it still indicates that misinformation continues to influence students' career decision-making processes. Therefore, schools should provide reliable career information and encourage students to evaluate information obtained from various sources critically. Overall, the indicator analysis reveals that career decision-making difficulties extend beyond inadequate career information and include insufficient self-awareness, limited decision-making skills, and psychological barriers. These findings highlight the importance of comprehensive career guidance programs that simultaneously address cognitive, informational, and emotional aspects of career development.

Table 3. Career Decision-Making Difficulties by Indicator

Indicator	(%)
Lack of motivation	60
General indecisiveness	59
Dysfunctional beliefs	61
Lack of knowledge about decision-making steps	69
Lack of self-information	64
Lack of information about alternatives	59
Lack of additional information sources	62
Unreliable information	55
Internal conflict	62
External conflict	60

Career Decision-Making Difficulties by Gender

The comparison between male and female students demonstrated no statistically significant difference in career decision-making difficulties (Sig = 0.254; $p > .05$). Male students obtained a mean score of 156, whereas female students obtained a mean score of 153, indicating that both groups experienced similar levels of career decision-making difficulties. The absence of significant gender differences suggests that career decision-making difficulties are experienced equally by both male and female students. Rather than being influenced by gender, these difficulties appear to be associated with other factors such as career maturity, access to career information, self-confidence, and psychological readiness.

This finding also indicates that educational institutions should provide equal career guidance opportunities for all students regardless of gender. Career counseling programs should focus on enhancing students' self-understanding, improving access to accurate career information, and developing career decision-making competencies instead of designing different interventions based solely on gender. Furthermore, these results imply that career development during late adolescence is influenced more strongly by individual developmental characteristics than demographic variables. Consequently, future interventions should emphasize strengthening career readiness, expanding-occupational knowledge, and improving students' confidence in evaluating career alternatives.

Table 4. Career Decision-Making Difficulties by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Sig.
Male	55	156	24.11	0.254
Female	52	153	27.63	

Discussions

The findings of this study revealed that the majority of eleventh-grade students experienced a moderate level of career decision-making difficulties. This result indicates that although students have begun to consider their future educational and occupational plans, they still face several challenges when making career decisions. At the senior high school level, students are expected to make important decisions regarding higher education and future careers. However, many students may not yet have developed sufficient career maturity, self-understanding, or knowledge of available career opportunities, which may contribute to uncertainty during the decision-making process.

According to Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996), career decision-making difficulties consist of three major categories: lack of readiness, lack of information, and inconsistent information. The findings of the present study suggest that students continue to experience difficulties across these dimensions, particularly in obtaining adequate information about educational opportunities, occupations, and career planning. Students with limited knowledge about themselves and the labor market may experience greater confusion when selecting appropriate educational pathways or occupations. Consequently, career decisions may be postponed or influenced by external factors rather than being based primarily on personal interests and abilities.

The results of this study are consistent with those reported by Gati and Saka (2001), who found that adolescents frequently encounter career indecision because they lack sufficient information about themselves, educational alternatives, and occupations. Similarly, Kulcsár et al. (2020) emphasized that career decision-making difficulties may be influenced by a combination of personal characteristics, environmental conditions, and the availability of career information. Students who receive limited exposure to career exploration activities may demonstrate lower confidence and greater uncertainty when making career choices. Therefore, improving access to accurate and comprehensive career information is important for facilitating better career decision-making among high school students.

Another possible explanation for the moderate level of career decision-making difficulties is the developmental stage of the participants. Adolescence is a critical period for identity formation, during which students are still exploring their interests, values, abilities, and future aspirations. According to Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory (1990), adolescents are generally in the exploration stage, where career preferences are continuously developed through learning experiences and environmental influences. During this stage, uncertainty and hesitation in career decision-making may occur as students gather information and evaluate different career alternatives.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that no significant difference was found between male and female students regarding career decision-making difficulties. This suggests that both groups experienced relatively similar levels of difficulty in making career decisions. The absence of a significant gender difference may indicate that career decision-making difficulties are not necessarily determined by gender alone. Instead, factors such as access to career information, self-knowledge, family support, school environment, and career guidance services may also play an important role. In the current educational context, male and female students may have relatively similar access to educational opportunities and career information, which may contribute to the similar levels of career decision-making difficulties observed in this study.

These findings are also supported by Udayar et al. (2020), whose meta-analysis concluded that career decision-making difficulties are more closely associated with psychological variables, such as career self-efficacy, self-evaluation, and decision-making confidence, than with demographic characteristics such as gender. Therefore, career guidance interventions should focus on strengthening students' career competencies rather than differentiating services based solely on gender.

The findings of this study have important implications for school guidance and counseling services. Since many students still experience moderate levels of career decision-making difficulties, school counselors should consider implementing comprehensive career guidance programs that promote self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning skills. Guidance activities may include career information services, career assessment, group guidance, individual counseling, and workshops introducing students to higher education institutions and occupational opportunities. Such interventions may help enhance students' career decision-making competence and reduce uncertainty regarding their future educational and career choices.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the study was conducted in only one senior high school; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all Indonesian students. Second, the study employed a descriptive quantitative design, which describes the level of career decision-making difficulties without examining causal relationships among variables. Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples from different schools or regions and to investigate additional factors associated with career decision-making difficulties, such as career self-efficacy, parental support, personality, socioeconomic background, and career adaptability. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' career decision-making processes and contribute to the development of more effective career guidance interventions.

Conclusions

This study concludes that the majority of eleventh-grade students experienced a moderate level of career decision-making difficulties. The findings indicate that students still encounter challenges related to career readiness, career information, and the consistency of information when making career decisions. In addition, no significant differences were found between male and female students regarding career decision-making difficulties. These findings emphasize the importance of implementing comprehensive career guidance and counseling programs in schools. Career interventions focusing on self-understanding, career exploration, and access to educational and occupational information may help improve students' ability to make appropriate career decisions. Future studies are recommended to investigate other factors associated with career decision-making difficulties, such as parental support, career self-efficacy, personality, and socioeconomic background, using broader samples and different research designs.

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