International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies (IJPSAT)
ISSN: 2509-0119.

https://ijpsat.org/

Vol. 58 No. 1 July 2026, pp. 317-326

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Career Decision Self-Efficacy among Final-Year University Students: The Moderating Effect of Peer Support

Milazia Putri[1], Hasnida[2], Sri Supriyantini[3]

[1,2,3] Department of Educational and Family Psychology , Faculty of Psychology, University of North Sumatera, Medan, Indonesia

Corresponding Author : Milazia Putri, Milaziaputri5@gmail.com

Abstract : This study aims to examine the effect of emotional intelligence on CDSE and to test the moderating role of peer support among final-year students of university X. A quantitative approach was employed with a sample of 380 respondents selected using convenience sampling. The instruments used were the Career Decision Self-Efficacy–Short Form (CDSE-SF), the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), and the Career-Related Peer Support Scale (CRPSS). Data were analyzed using simple moderation analysis with the PROCESS Macro by Hayes in SPSS. The results showed that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant effect on CDSE. In addition, peer support significantly moderates the relationship, such that the effect of emotional intelligence is stronger among students with higher levels of peer support. These findings highlight the importance of both emotional intelligence and peer support in enhancing students' career decision-making confidence.

Keywords: career decision self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, peer support, final-year students

I. Introduction

Final-year university students are typically in the age range of 18–24 years and are in a transitional phase from education to the workforce. At this stage, they are faced with various career choices, such as pursuing further studies or entering the job market (Brown & Lent, [1]). According to Super [2] , individuals at this stage are in the career exploration phase, which involves activities such as seeking career information, gaining initial work experience, and making early career decisions. However, not all students are able to navigate this stage optimally due to internal barriers such as self-doubt, as well as external factors such as job market competition and lack of social support.

This phenomenon is supported by data indicating that many university graduates are not yet fully prepared to enter the workforce. Data from Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia (BPS) [3] shows that the unemployment rate among university graduates reached 12% in 2023, while another survey found that 45% of students and graduates reported low work readiness (Inak, [4]). Difficulties in career decision-making are often accompanied by feelings of doubt, anxiety, and uncertainty (Sarwandini & Rusmawati, [5]), reflecting low levels of Career Decision Self-Efficacy (CDSE), which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to make career decisions (Betz et al., [6]).

Career Decision Self Efficacy plays a crucial role in career development, as it influences an individual's ability to explore career options, set goals, and make effective career decisions (Gushue et al., [7]). Individuals with high Career Decision Self Efficacy tend to be more confident, resilient in overcoming obstacles, and more adaptable in facing career demands (Creed et al., [8]; Stitt-Gohdes, [9]). However, a preliminary study conducted by the researcher on 100 final-year

students at University X revealed that 51% of them had low levels of Career Decision Self Efficacy, characterized by confusion in determining career paths, lack of self-understanding, and limited information about the job market.

From the perspective of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), Career Decision Sefl Efficacy is influenced by the interaction between personal and environmental factors (Lent et al., [10]). One important personal factor that has received relatively limited attention is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence helps individuals manage emotions, reduce anxiety, and make more rational decisions (Goleman, [11]; Emmerlings & Cherniss, [12]). Previous studies have shown that emotional intelligence is positively associated with Career Decision Self Efficacy, where individuals who are better at understanding and managing emotions tend to have higher confidence in making career decisions (Brown et al., [13]; Jiang, [14]). The researcher's preliminary study also found that 47% of students had low levels of emotional intelligence.

However, the relationship between emotional intelligence and CDSE is not always consistent, suggesting the presence of other factors that may moderate this relationship. In this context, social support—particularly from peers—plays an important role. Peer support includes the provision of information, emotional support, and career-related advice (Zimet et al., [15]; Zhang & Huang, [16]). Among university students, peers have a significant influence due to the high intensity of interactions and their role as sources of information and support (Santrock, [17]).

Research has shown that peer support can enhance individuals' confidence in making career decisions and help reduce anxiety and confusion (Hirschi et al., [18]; Chen, [19]). The researcher's preliminary findings also indicate that 45% of students have moderate levels of peer support, suggesting that some students still experience limited social support. Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence contributes to Career Decision Self-Efficacy (CDSE), and peer support is expected to strengthen this relationship. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of emotional intelligence in Career Decision Self-Efficacy (CDSE) among final-year students, with peer support as a moderating variable. The population in this study were final year students from university X. The number of samples is 380 final year student.

II. Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach that aims to examine the relationship between three variables, namely career decision self efficacy as the dependent variable, emotional intelligence as the independent variable and peer support as the moderator variable. The analysis method used includes simple moderation analysis and testing is carried out using Process Macro by Hayes in SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solution) used if the moderator is expected to have an influence on a particular structural path with relevant theoretical support. The simple moderation effect can be assessed by creating a moderated regression model that explains whether the moderator can weaken or strengthen the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Memon et al., [20])

In the sampling technique in this study, convenience sampling was used, as a data collection technique based on respondents' availability, willingness, and ease of access (Sugiyono, [21]) This means that every final year student from University X who fills out the scale distributed by the researcher via Google Form and meets the research sample criteria can become a research subject. The sample selected from a population serves as a research subject and is seen as a representation of the research population (Yusuf, [22]).

This research instrument has three main scales. Career decision self efficacy scale is a modification of the Career Decision Self Efficacy-Short Form (CDSE-SF) This scale consists of five dimensions, namely accurate self appraisal, gathering occupational, goal selection, making plans for the future, and problem solving (Betz,Klein, and Taylor, [6]). Emotional Intelligence scale is a modification of Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), this scale consists of four dimensions, namely self-emotional appraisal, other's emotion appraisal, use of emotion, regulation of emotion (Wong &

Law, [23]). Peer Support scale is a modified result of the Career Related Peer Support Scale (CRPSS). This scale consists of several dimentions, namely career information and suggestion, emotional support, peer role model (Zhang & Huang, [16]).

To test its validity with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) serves as a method for evaluating the effectiveness of a measured variable or indicator in accurately describing a factor or construct. When assessing construct validity through CFA, Goodness of Fit analysis is performed to ensure the unidimensionality of the measuring instrument by verifying the fulfillment of Goodness of Fit criteria. Furthermore, emphasis is given to the loading factor value, with each item ideally having a value exceeding 0.5 (Ghozali I, [24]) .Furthermore, the reliability test, in testing the reliability of measuring instruments for this study will use the Single Trial Administration technique which results in an estimate of internal consistency reliability. A commonly used measure of internal consistency is the alpha coefficient formula, which can be calculated by giving the scale once to a group of participants. This method was chosen because of its practicality and high level of efficiency (Azwar, [25]). In this study, the reliability test was carried out based on Cronbach's Alpha. The validity and reliability values are presented in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 and then passed the validity and reliability tests based on the recommended value standards.

Table 1.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Test Results of the Career Decision Self Efficacy-Short Form (CDSE-SF)

No	Goodness of Fit Indexes	Cut Off Value	Output	Keterangan
1	P-Value	≥0,05	0,46	Good Fit
2	CMIN/DF	≤ 3,00	1,007	Good Fit
3	GFI	0,80 ≤ GFI < 0,90 (marginal fit) GFI ≥ 0,90 (good fit)	0,85	Marginal Fit
4	TLI	0,90 ≤ TLI < 0,95 (marginal fit) TLI≥ 0,95 (good fit)	,997	Good Fit
5	CFI	0,90 ≤ CFI < 0,95 (marginal fit) CFI ≥ 0,95 (good fit)	,997	Good Fit
6	RMSEA	RMSEA ≤ 0,08	,008	Good Fit

Table 2.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Test Results of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)

No	Goodness of Fit Indexes	Cut Off Value	Output	Keterangan
1	P-Value	≥0,05	0,251	Good Fit
2	CMIN/DF	≤ 3,00	1,107	Good Fit
3	GFI	0,80 ≤ GFI < 0,90 (marginal fit) GFI ≥ 0,90 (good fit)	,903	Good Fit
4	TLI	0,90 ≤ TLI < 0,95 (marginal fit)	,976	Good Fit

		TLI≥ 0,95 (good fit)		
5	CFI	0,90 ≤ CFI < 0,95 (marginal fit) CFI ≥ 0,95 (good fit)	,981	Good Fit
6	RMSEA	RMSEA ≤ 0,08	,033	Good Fit

Table 3.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Test Results of the Career Related Peer Support Scale (CRPSS)

No	Goodness of Fit Indexes	Cut Off Value	Output	Keterangan
1	P-Value	≥0,05	0,274	Good Fit
2	CMIN/DF	≤ 3,00	1,100	Good Fit
3	GFI	0,80 ≤ GFI < 0,90 (marginal fit) GFI ≥ 0,90 (good fit)	,901	Good Fit
4	TLI	0,90 ≤ TLI < 0,95 (marginal fit) TLI≥ 0,95 (good fit)	,975	Good Fit
5	CFI	0,90 ≤ CFI < 0,95 (marginal fit) CFI ≥ 0,95 (good fit)	,981	Good Fit
6	RMSEA	RMSEA ≤ 0,08	,032	Good Fit

III. RESULT

The demographics of the subjects in this study were reviewed based on gender, age and faculty. In gender, the majority of subjects were women, totaling 203 people (53,4%). men amounted to 177 people (46.6%). Based on age categories, the majority of research participants were 21 years old, totaling 96 individuals (25.3%). This was followed by those aged 22 years with 94 individuals (24.7%), and those aged 23 years with 83 individuals (21.9%). Meanwhile, the smallest number of participants was found in the 26-year-old group, totaling 8 individuals (2.1%). When further examined based on gender distribution within each age category, it can be seen that in most age groups, the number of female participants is higher than that of males, particularly at ages 20, 21, 22, and 23. However, in the 24, 25, and 26 age groups, the number of male participants exceeds that of females.The data can be seen in Table 4.

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ISSN: 2509-0119.

https://ijpsat.org/
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Table 4.

Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants Based on Gender and Age

Age	Gender		Total	Percentage (%)
	Men	Women		
20 Years old	12	28	40	10,5
21 Years old	46	50	96	25,3
22 Years old	44	50	94	24,7
23 Years old	35	48	83	21,9
24 Years old	26	22	48	12,6
25 Years old	7	4	11	2,9
26 Years old	7	1	8	2,1
Total	177	203	380	100

The research data described is the data obtained from each scale. Each scale has the same scoring and consists of a value range of 1-6. Table 5 shows the results of descriptive analysis of empirical and hypothetical data for each variable.

Table 5.

Empirical Data and Hypothetical Data of Research Variables

Variabel	Data Empirik				Data Hipotetik			
	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Career Decision Self-Efficacy	22	132	68,33	26,89	22	132	77	18,33
Kecerdasan Emosional	14	84	44,67	17,37	14	84	49	11,66
Dukungan Teman Sebaya	13	78	40,86	16,04	13	78	45,5	10,83

After obtaining the results of descriptive analysis, the next step is to categorize. Categorization is done to determine the level of of career decision self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and peer support among final-year students. Categorization is based on hypothetical data. Categorization criteria are presented in table 6.

Table 6.

Categorization Formula based on Levels

Rumus	Kategori
$X < (\mu - 1.0\ SD)$	Rendah
$(\mu - 1.0\ SD) \leq X < (\mu + 1.0\ SD)$	Sedang
$X \geq (\mu + 1.0\ SD)$	Tinggi

notes: μ = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation

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On the career decision self efficacy scale, there are 22 items with a value range of 1-6. The assumption of the minimum score is 22 and the maximum score is 132. The results of the categorization of career decision self efficacy are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.

Results of Categorization of Career Decision Self Efficacy

Rumus	Kategori	Frekuensi	Persentase (%)
X < 58,6	Rendah	157	41,3
58,6 ≤ X < 95,3	Sedang	142	37,4
X ≥ 95,3	Tinggi	81	21,3
Total		380	100

The results of the categorization of career decision self-efficacy levels show that the majority of students have low career decision self-efficacy, totaling 157 individuals (41.3%). Students with a moderate level amount to 142 individuals (37.4%), while those in the high category total 81 individuals (21.3%).

Emotional intelligence scale consists of 14 items with a score range of 1-6. The minimum score assumed is 14 and the maximum score is 84. The results of the categorization of authoritarian parenting patterns can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8.

Results of Categorization of Emotional Intelligence

Rumus	Kategori	Frekuensi	Persentase (%)
X < 37,3	Rendah	150	39,5
37,3 ≤ X < 60,6	Sedang	140	36,8
X ≥ 60,6	Tinggi	90	23,7
Total		380	100

The results of the categorization of emotional intelligence levels indicate that the majority of students have low emotional intelligence, totaling 150 individuals (39.5%). Students with a moderate level amount to 140 individuals (36.8%), while those in the high category total 90 individuals (23.7%).

Peer support scale consists of 13 items with a score range of 1-6. The minimum score assumed is 13 and the maximum score is 78. The results of the categorization of Peer support can be seen in Table 9.

Table. 9.

Results of Categorization of Peer Support

Rumus	Kategori	Frekuensi	Persentase (%)
X < 34,6	Rendah	152	40
34,6 ≤ X < 56,3	Sedang	144	37,9
X ≥ 56,3	Tinggi	84	22,1
Total		380	100

Finally, the results of the categorization of peer support levels show that the majority of students receive peer support at a low level, totaling 152 individuals (40%). Students with a moderate level of peer support amount to 144 individuals (37.9%), while those in the high category total 84 individuals (22.1%).

Table 10.

Hypothesis Test Results

	Coeff	Se	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
Emotional Intelligence	,7641	,0593	12,8842	,0000	,6475	,8807
Peer Support	,5810	,0642	9,0439	,0000	,4547	,7074
Int_1	,0173	,0032	5,3852	,0000	,0110	,0236

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive and significant role of emotional intelligence on career decision self-efficacy among final-year students at University X

Hypothesis 2: Peer support positively and significantly moderates the role of emotional intelligence on career decision self-efficacy among final-year students at University X.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study found that the first hypothesis, which states that emotional intelligence has a positive role in career decision self-efficacy among final-year students at University X, was accepted. The analysis results indicate a positive and significant effect, meaning that higher emotional intelligence is associated with higher career decision self-efficacy, and vice versa.

Theoretically, career decision self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks related to career decision-making, such as self-assessment, information seeking, goal setting, and career planning (Taylor & Betz,[26]). This concept is rooted in self-efficacy theory proposed by Bandura [27]), which emphasizes the role of affective conditions, including emotions, in shaping individual confidence.

Emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions adaptively (Goleman, [11]), plays an important role in helping individuals regulate negative emotions such as anxiety, doubt, and fear during career decision-making. This enables individuals to think more rationally, evaluate alternatives, and maintain motivation in uncertain situations. In line with Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., [28]), emotional intelligence as a personal factor contributes to shaping self-efficacy through the processing of emotional experiences.

Empirical findings support this relationship. Studies by Ran et al. [29] and Sharma and Devdutt [30] show that emotional intelligence significantly enhances career decision self-efficacy, as individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to be more self-aware, goal-oriented, and confident in making career decisions. Similarly, previous studies indicate that emotional intelligence is associated with stronger confidence in handling career-related tasks and better career exploration (Brown et al.,[13]); Di Fabio et al., [31]; Emmerling & Cherniss, [12]).

The findings of this study are consistent with the empirical data, which show that the majority of students have low emotional intelligence and low career decision self-efficacy. This alignment suggests that limited ability in understanding and managing emotions may hinder students' confidence in making career decisions.

The second hypothesis of this study, which states that peer support moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision self-efficacy among final-year students at University X, was accepted. The analysis results indicate that peer support plays a significant moderating role, strengthening the positive effect of emotional intelligence on career decision self-efficacy. This finding implies that the influence of emotional intelligence becomes stronger when peer support is high and weaker when peer support is low.

This moderating effect can be explained by the role of emotional intelligence in fostering positive mental states, enabling individuals to think more clearly and regulate their emotions effectively. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to develop broader knowledge, skills, adaptive thinking patterns, and social networks, which contribute to more confident and effective career decision-making. Peer support further enhances these positive emotional conditions, leading to greater confidence and effectiveness among individuals with similar levels of emotional intelligence (Azpiazu et al. [32],; Chen, [19]; Hoffnung, [33]; Jiang, [14]; Kurniasih & Salim, [34]; Park et al., [35]).

In addition, peer support also functions as a significant predictor of career decision self-efficacy. It provides emotional reassurance, encouragement, and valuable perspectives that help individuals overcome uncertainty in career choices. Students often perceive peers as more relatable and knowledgeable about career-related issues than family, making peer discussions a primary source of career information. Such interactions expand social networks and strengthen future career perspectives. Consequently, peer support serves as an important source of social learning that enhances students' confidence in evaluating their abilities, selecting career paths, and making appropriate career decisions (Hoffnung, [33]).

Empirical findings further support these results. Higher levels of peer support combined with higher emotional intelligence are associated with higher career decision self-efficacy. Conversely, lower peer support and lower emotional intelligence correspond to lower career decision self-efficacy among final-year students at University X.

V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant role in enhancing career decision self-efficacy among final-year students at University X. Students with higher emotional intelligence tend to have greater confidence in their ability to make appropriate career decisions.

Furthermore, peer support was found to significantly moderate this relationship, strengthening the effect of emotional intelligence on career decision self-efficacy. The presence of high peer support enhances the positive influence of emotional intelligence, while low peer support weakens it.

Overall, these findings highlight the importance of both internal factors (emotional intelligence) and external factors (peer support) in shaping students' confidence in career decision-making. Therefore, efforts to improve career decision self-efficacy should consider not only the development of emotional competencies but also the strengthening of supportive peer environments.

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