

THE EFFECT OF CAREER PLANNING TRAINING ON CAREER EXPLORATION AND SELF-EFFICACY IN CAREER DECISION-MAKING OF GRADE XI STUDENTS OF SMK N 3 PADANG

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Article History

Received: 20 April 2026

Revised: 23 May 2026

Published: 31 May 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of career planning training on career exploration and career decision-making self-efficacy among Grade XI students in the Office Management and Business Services program at SMK N 3 Padang. The study was grounded in the continuing need to strengthen vocational students' readiness to make informed career choices, especially because many students still have limited career information, low confidence, and uncertainty about the transition from school to work or further education. Although previous studies have discussed career guidance and career decision-making, empirical evidence on short, school-based career planning training for students with low career exploration and low career decision-making self-efficacy remains limited. This study employed a quantitative quasi-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest model. The population consisted of 83 students, and seven students who met the criteria of low career exploration and low career decision-making self-efficacy were selected through screening. Data were collected using adapted psychological scales, namely the Career Exploration Scale and the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale, both of which were tested for validity and reliability. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test with SPSS 23. The results showed a significant increase in career exploration ($Z = -2.371$; $p = .018$) and career decision-making self-efficacy ($Z = -2.366$; $p = .018$) after the training. These findings indicate that career planning training can support students in understanding themselves, exploring occupational information, and building confidence to make career decisions. The study contributes to vocational guidance practice by offering evidence that structured career planning activities can be used by guidance and counseling teachers to strengthen students' career readiness.

Keywords: Career Planning Training, Career Exploration, Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy, Vocational Students.

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How to cite: Handalia, W., Surbakti, A., & Indrawan, Y. F. (2026). The Effect of Career Planning Training on Career Exploration and Self-Efficacy In Career Decision-Making of Grade XI Students of SMK N 3 Padang. *NUSRA : Jurnal Penelitian Dan Ilmu Pendidikan*, 7(2), 888–896. <https://doi.org/10.55681/nusra.v7i2.6160>



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INTRODUCTION

Career decision-making is an important developmental task during adolescence because it shapes students' educational pathways, occupational aspirations, and readiness to participate in social and economic life. At the senior high school level, students are expected not only to recognize their interests and abilities, but also to relate those personal resources to realistic career opportunities. This expectation is particularly relevant for vocational high school students because vocational education is designed to prepare graduates for work, entrepreneurship, and further education. Therefore, career guidance at school needs to help students move from general aspirations toward informed and responsible career choices (Pratiwi & Irawati, 2020; Sharf, 2013).

In the Indonesian vocational education context, career readiness remains a serious concern. Data from the Central Statistics Agency in February 2024 showed that the open unemployment rate among vocational high school graduates remained the highest compared with other educational levels, reaching 8.62% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). This situation does not only indicate a labor market issue, but also reflects the importance of strengthening students' career planning, career information literacy, and confidence in choosing future pathways. Students who do not understand the relationship between their competencies, interests, and labor market opportunities may experience confusion in determining whether to work, continue to higher education, or develop entrepreneurship after graduation.

Career exploration is one of the central processes in career development. Stumpf et al. (1983) explain that career exploration

includes self-exploration and environmental exploration. Self-exploration refers to students' efforts to understand their interests, strengths, limitations, values, and career goals. Environmental exploration refers to students' efforts to seek information about occupations, educational pathways, institutions, and competencies required in the world of work. When these two forms of exploration are weak, students tend to rely on vague wishes, family pressure, or popular job images rather than on careful consideration of their own potential and available career opportunities.

Another factor that influences career choice is career decision-making self-efficacy. Bandura's self-efficacy theory emphasizes that individuals are more likely to perform a task when they believe they have the capacity to complete it successfully (Bandura, 1977). In the career domain, career decision-making self-efficacy refers to students' belief that they are able to assess themselves, gather occupational information, set career goals, plan future steps, and solve career-related problems (Taylor & Betz, 1983). Low career decision-making self-efficacy may hinder students from exploring career information, comparing alternatives, and making decisions confidently (Betz & Hackett, 1986; Creed et al., 2006).

Previous research has shown that career planning programs and career guidance can improve students' confidence in making career decisions. Damayanti and Widyowati (2018), for instance, found that career planning training increased career decision-making self-efficacy among vocational school students. Malahayati and Wulandari (2018) also reported that career planning training supported students' career

decision-making self-efficacy and achievement motivation. However, several studies still focus mainly on the outcome of training without sufficiently explaining how training activities help students connect self-understanding, career information, and realistic planning. In addition, studies involving vocational students who have been screened as having low career exploration and low career decision-making self-efficacy remain limited.

Preliminary information obtained from guidance and counseling teachers at SMK N 3 Padang indicated that some Grade XI students in the Office Management and Business Services program had not yet formulated clear career plans. Some students expressed general hopes such as becoming successful or making their parents proud, but they had not connected those hopes with concrete occupational choices, competencies, or educational pathways. This condition shows a gap between students' aspirations and their readiness to make career decisions. Based on this problem, career planning training was selected as an educational intervention to help students understand themselves, explore career information, and develop confidence in making career choices.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on students who were specifically identified through screening as having low career exploration and low career decision-making self-efficacy. The study also connects the training process with two psychological constructs that are important for vocational guidance: career exploration and career decision-making self-efficacy. Therefore, this study aims to determine whether career planning training has an effect on career exploration and career decision-making self-efficacy among Grade

XI students in the Office Management and Business Services program at SMK N 3 Padang.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design (Sugiyono, 2024). This design was used to compare students' career exploration and career decision-making self-efficacy before and after the career planning training. Although the design did not include a control group, it was considered appropriate for a preliminary school-based intervention involving students who required immediate career guidance support.

The population consisted of 83 Grade XI students majoring in Office Management and Business Services at SMK N 3 Padang. Screening was conducted using the career exploration and career decision-making self-efficacy scales. Seven students were selected as research participants because they were categorized as having low levels of both career exploration and career decision-making self-efficacy. The selection of participants was therefore based on the relevance of the intervention to students' actual needs.

Data were collected using two psychological scales. The first instrument was the Career Exploration Scale (CES) developed by Stumpf et al. (1983), adapted from the Indonesian version used by Putri and Salim (2021). This study used two subscales, namely environmental exploration consisting of six items and self-exploration consisting of five items. The response options ranged from Never (1) to Always (5). The second instrument was the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE) developed by Taylor and

Betz (1983), adapted from Damayanti and Widyowati (2018). The scale measured five dimensions: accurate self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, planning for the future, and problem solving. Response options ranged from Not Confident at All (1) to Very Confident (5).

Before being used in the study, both instruments were tested for validity and reliability using SPSS 23.0 for Windows. Validity testing was conducted to ensure that each item measured the intended construct, while reliability testing was conducted to examine the internal consistency of the instrument. The career planning training was conducted over two days, from February 20 to February 21, 2024, in Classroom XI MPLB at SMK N 3 Padang. The training activities included self-assessment, identification of interests and strengths, exploration of occupational information, discussion of career alternatives, preparation of career goals, and formulation of realistic steps to achieve those goals.

The data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test because the number of participants was small and the data were paired between pretest and posttest. The Wilcoxon test was used to determine whether there were significant differences in career exploration and career decision-making self-efficacy before and after career planning training. The significance level used in this study was 0.05.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Preliminary interviews with guidance and counseling teachers showed that several students had difficulty formulating realistic career plans. Some students had not yet

decided whether they would work, continue their education, or pursue other opportunities after graduation. This finding is educationally important because vocational students are expected to develop career maturity before completing school. Without sufficient exploration, students may choose careers based only on temporary interests, family expectations, or limited information.

The screening of 83 students showed that 11 students (13%) were in the low category of career exploration, 60 students (72%) were in the medium category, and 12 students (14%) were in the high category. For career decision-making self-efficacy, 14 students (17%) were in the low category, 52 students (63%) were in the medium category, and 17 students (20%) were in the high category. Seven students who met the low criteria on both variables were selected as research participants.

Table 1. Research Participants Based on Screening Results

No	Student Initials	CES Score	CDMSE Score	Category
1	TMR	24	35	Low
2	SAR	26	32	Low
3	PT	22	32	Low
4	AN	23	36	Low
5	MH	25	35	Low
6	HRD	28	36	Low
7	HF	25	28	Low

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that career planning training had a significant effect on career exploration. The obtained Z value was -2.371 with a significance value of .018. Because the significance value was lower than .05, the difference between the pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant. The mean score of career exploration increased from 24.71 before training to 37.71 after training. This increase shows that students

became more active in recognizing their interests, reflecting on their abilities, and seeking information about possible career pathways after participating in the training.

Table 2. Wilcoxon Test Result for Career Exploration

Indicator	Value
Z	-2.371
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.018

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Career Exploration

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	7	22	28	24.71	1.976
Posttest	7	33	44	37.71	3.773
Valid N (listwise)	7				

The increase in career exploration can be explained through the structure of the training. Students were guided to identify their personal strengths, weaknesses, hobbies, interests, skills, and specific abilities. They were also asked to collect information about occupations related to their field of study, including job tasks, required competencies, and possible career routes. These activities are consistent with Stumpf et al.'s (1983) view that career exploration involves both self-exploration and environmental exploration. Thus, the training did not merely provide information, but also encouraged students to connect personal understanding with career opportunities.

These findings are in line with Damayanti and Widyowati (2018), who found that career planning activities help students gather and analyze career

information. They are also consistent with Jiang et al. (2019), who stated that career exploration is an important process in helping individuals clarify career choices. Compared with previous studies, the present study provides a more specific contribution because the intervention was directed at students who were first identified as having low career exploration. This strengthens the practical argument that career planning training can be used as a targeted guidance service rather than only as a general classroom activity.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test also indicated that career planning training had a significant effect on career decision-making self-efficacy. The obtained Z value was -2.366 with a significance value of .018. The mean score increased from 33.43 before training to 45.14 after training. This result shows that after the training, students had stronger confidence in assessing themselves, gathering career information, selecting goals, planning future steps, and solving possible career problems.

Table 4. Wilcoxon Test Result for Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy

Indicator	Value
Z	-2.366
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.018

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	7	28	36	33.43	2.936
Posttest	7	37	52	45.14	5.178

Valid N (listwise)	7				
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Theoretically, this result supports Bandura’s (1977) concept of self-efficacy. Students’ confidence can increase when they receive meaningful learning experiences, observe possible models of success, receive constructive feedback, and are guided to set achievable goals. In this study, the training gave students opportunities to reflect on previous experiences, recognize personal potential, and formulate career steps that were realistic for their condition. These activities likely strengthened their belief that career decisions are not abstract or unreachable, but can be prepared through gradual and concrete actions.

The findings also support the perspective of Social Cognitive Career Theory, which views career development as a process influenced by self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals (Lent et al., 1994). Students who understand their potential and receive sufficient career information are more likely to form stronger expectations about their future and become more confident in making career decisions. Therefore, the effect of the training should not be understood only as a statistical increase, but also as a change in the way students view themselves as capable subjects in the career planning process.

The results are consistent with Ardiyanti and Alsa (2015), who found that structured career intervention can improve self-efficacy in career decision-making. They also align with Malahayati and Wulandari (2018), who reported that career planning training supports students’ confidence and achievement motivation.

However, this study has a different emphasis because it focuses on vocational students in a specific program of study. In vocational education, career decision-making is closely related to practical competencies, labor market opportunities, and students’ readiness to enter the world of work. Therefore, career planning training should be integrated with school-based career guidance, internship preparation, and information about further education pathways.

Follow-up interviews suggested that students considered several factors in choosing careers, including parental support, personal aspirations, economic considerations, and the desire to work after graduation. These findings indicate that career decisions are not shaped by individual interest alone. They are also influenced by family, socioeconomic background, and students’ perception of opportunities after completing vocational education. This confirms Gushue et al.’s (2006) argument that career exploration and career decision-making self-efficacy are related to broader identity development and contextual experiences.

From an educational perspective, the findings imply that guidance and counseling teachers need to provide career services that are developmental, structured, and reflective. Career guidance should not be limited to providing information about jobs. It should also train students to interpret information, assess their abilities, discuss obstacles, and formulate realistic plans. For school leaders, the results suggest the need to allocate regular career planning sessions, strengthen collaboration with industries and alumni, and provide access to career information that is relevant to students’ field of study.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the number of participants was only seven students because the sample was selected from those who met the low criteria on both variables. Second, the study used a one-group pretest-posttest design, so it did not include a control group for comparison. Third, the effectiveness of the training may have been influenced by the trainer's experience and classroom management. Future studies are therefore recommended to use a pretest-posttest control group design, involve a larger sample, and employ trainers with stronger experience in career guidance interventions.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that career planning training had a significant effect on career exploration and career decision-making self-efficacy among Grade XI students in the Office Management and Business Services program at SMK N 3 Padang. The increase in career exploration indicates that students became more active in understanding themselves and seeking information about career opportunities. The increase in career decision-making self-efficacy shows that students developed stronger confidence in assessing themselves, selecting career goals, making plans, and solving career-related problems.

The main contribution of this study is the evidence that structured career planning training can be used as a targeted guidance and counseling service for vocational students with low career readiness. Practically, guidance and counseling teachers can use similar training to help students connect their interests, competencies, and future career alternatives. At the school level, career planning needs to be strengthened through regular guidance

sessions, collaboration with industry partners, alumni sharing, and career information services that are relevant to each vocational program. At the policy level, vocational schools should be encouraged to include career planning training as part of continuous career guidance so that students are better prepared for work, entrepreneurship, or further education after graduation.

Future research is recommended to involve a larger number of participants and use an experimental design with a control group. Further studies may also compare the effectiveness of career planning training across different vocational programs or educational levels. In addition, the involvement of experienced trainers and longer intervention periods may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how career planning training shapes students' career readiness.

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