

# The Role of Future Work Self Towards Career Search Efficacy Among Undergraduate Students

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## Abstract

In adolescence and adulthood, individuals have the developmental task of finding the right career. Individuals can explore their career goals through their experiences, interests, talents, and skill development. This ability leads to career search efficacy. Bandung is a city with policies and access to information that is easy to reach by various parties. This makes the scope of a person to find a field of work wider. Based on these phenomena, researchers are interested in seeing the role of career search efficacy on future work self in undergraduate students in Bandung. Future work self is a promising concept for understanding how young people view and plan their careers in the contemporary workplace. The participants of this study were 101 students in Bandung city which were obtained through accidental sampling. This study utilized the Career Search Efficacy Scale and the Future Work Self measurement tool. The data analysis technique used was simple linear regression. The results showed that future work self does not significantly influence undergraduate students' career search efficacy in Bandung.

## Keywords

Bandung; Career Search Efficacy; Future Work Self; Students

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to (Brown & Lent, 2013), in addition to meeting a person's primary needs, various other reasons make each need to do a job. Work is seen as a way to gain a sense of pride, contribute to the family and community, achieve self-growth, show one's identity to society, and create structure in life. The definition of a career is a series or collection of work done in a person's life (Brown & Lent, 2013). A career is not only seen as a place of income but also a way to find one's identity within the scope of society. A career can be a way to actualize yourself personally. This makes individuals need to prepare and develop themselves from an early age. A process that is carried out throughout a person's life, starting from childhood and continuing into adulthood, which is described in career behavior or what we can term as career development (Brown & Lent, 2013).

The journey of personal career development is a complex and multifaceted process wherein individuals navigate distinct stages, each marked by unique tasks and challenges. This developmental trajectory is particularly emphasized by (Papalia et al., 2007), another layer to this journey highlighting the pivotal role of a career in an individual's life. According to Super, a career is not a static component but a dynamic entity that evolves alongside one's developmental journey (Super, 1980).



Significant career development can be seen when a person chooses what they will learn while studying in college or getting status as a student. Students are at the stage where they are starting to think about their future careers and the right strategies to achieve them (Chong & Leong, 2017). Students are directed to make commitments in life, both related to romance and career issues. It is this demand that makes a person need to create a stable identity and help direct and maintain the commitments he has decided on (Schwartz et al., 2005).

According to (Super et al., 1996), the initial stage of this journey, known as the growth stage, spans from birth to around 14 or 15 years. During this phase, individuals embark on a profound path of self-discovery, developing capacities, interests, attitudes, and needs that contribute to forming their self-concept. Individuals in this early stage formulate their career goals, often driven by an idealized image of their future selves. It is a time of innocence and curiosity, where the world is full of possibilities, and individuals begin to shape their aspirations.

As the developmental trajectory unfolds, the exploration stage takes center stage between the ages of 15 and 24. This phase is characterized by active seeking, where individuals explore diverse interests, discover talents, and initiate the intricate process of making choices aligned with their work-related objectives. However, it also introduces a period marked by hesitancy, particularly when confronted with decisions that wield substantial influence over long-term career trajectories. For example, a *Semua Murid Semua Guru* (SMSG) survey in Indonesia sheds light on the pervasive uncertainty gripping students in this crucial phase. The findings indicate that a staggering 90% of students experience doubts when selecting their intended college majors, and an alarming 87% feel they have chosen the wrong major (Napitupulu, 2018). This delicate balance between exploration and uncertainty shapes the nuanced landscape of personal and professional development during this significant phase (Super et al., 1996).

Undergraduate students are in a phase of change from students to workers or job seekers. So, it takes abilities and skills from within students to adjust to these changes (Sagita et al., 2020). This is because it is not an uncommon gap in recruiters' expectations of the job readiness of prospective employees, which often becomes a benchmark for prospective employees' acceptance (Priksat et al., 2019). Some of these gaps include knowledge, skills, soft skills, and hard skills (Priyono & Nankervis, 2019). Conversely, the mobility of the workforce has increased over the past decade, meaning that individuals must now expect to change jobs during their working lives. These transitions involve psychological processes and the learning of skills (Saks, 2005; Van Hooft et al., 2021). It seems important to identify the variables and processes that ensure successful transitions, and situations like this often make students doubt the ability to carry out job search activities, choose the right career, and prepare the skills needed to find the expected dream career and company. One of these variables, which is regularly mentioned in the literature, is Career Search Efficacy.

In career development theory, undergraduate students are in the career exploration stage. The stage aims to develop a clear and stable vocational self-concept reflecting a person's preferences for employment and ability levels, aligning education and work choices with vocational self-concept, which is the result of a broad career exploration process and the formation of vocational identity as well as self-preparation to get a position or role by the vocational identity that has been determined. In this exploration stage, individuals are expected to gather information about themselves and work through internships, educational curricula, extracurricular experiences, and other activities to orient themselves in job selection and implement themselves in job roles (Arnett, 2004 in Brown & Lent, 2013). Based on (Arnett, 2014), students or emerging adults are in the stage of conducting a targeted exploration of self-identity to find out how to prepare for a career in adulthood.

This emerging adulthood is to form the foundation of the career that he has set. Therefore, individuals are beginning to explore different job options and educational pathways that will help prepare students for work. Students also begin to explore career identities, such as interests, career

opportunities in the future, and so on. Exploring this career is also an opportunity for him to get to know himself more deeply, related to his interests and abilities.

This stage of career exploration needs to be done to help increase his confidence in the career he will have. Individuals will also be more confident about their ability to conduct various career search activities or efficacy (Solberg, Good, Nord, et al., 1994). Career search efficacy is the degree of confidence that a person will be able to display their abilities in a variety of career exploration activities, including their assessment of their ability to explore personal values and interests to relate effectively to various professionals in their field of interest, and so on (Solberg et al., 1995). Career self-efficacy is also important for having career-related self-efficacy (Betz, 1992), career-relevant behaviors (Betz & Hackett, 1986), and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (Betz et al., 1996).

According to (Solberg et al., 1995), Career Search Efficacy refers to an individual's ability to confidently perform various career exploration and job-hunting activities (Solberg, Good, & Nord, 1994). Defined career search self-efficacy as an individual's efficacy expectations regarding their ability to perform important career search and selection activities. Career search efficacy is categorized into three key aspects (Solberg et al., 1995): personal, career, and job exploration. Personal exploration delves into an individual's ability to assess interests in a job and its relationship to individual abilities and goals. Recognizing one's interests and talents is crucial during this stage, acting as a compass guiding individuals toward careers that align with their inherent characteristics.

Career exploration, the second aspect, involves active behavior in seeking information, conducting interviews, and engaging in activities such as internships or freelance work to gain insights into specific careers (Blustein et al., 1995). Career exploration is a process where individuals seek information and make decisions about themselves, as well as education and career options related to their study area. In the job exploration stage, individuals strive to prepare themselves in the job search, such as preparing to participate in the selection and interview process and start looking for potential companies that can provide jobs and are also considered capable of providing career opportunities or a good future for individuals. During this exploration stage, individuals actively prepare for their forthcoming job search, meticulously identifying companies that align with their interests and possess a commendable career reputation while simultaneously preparing themselves for the rigorous selection processes.

Undergraduate students are in the midst of a continued transition (Schlossberg, 1981). High levels of career search self-efficacy can help illuminate understanding of the transition process about careers and perhaps assist undergraduates in coping, particularly as seniors enter the world of work. When individuals face challenges in building their career self-efficacy, they need a strong inner drive to help them focus on their future and what they want to achieve. Additionally, they must have a vision of themselves and recognize their situation (Gunawan et al., 2023). This is where Future Work Self might play a role in them. This conceptualization, proposed by (Higgins, 1998) and (Ibarra, 1999), plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' career outlook and guiding their decisions. According to (Markus & Nurius, 1986), the future work self represents an individual's envisioned self. Future work self also has current work-related outputs such as job performance (Lin et al., 2016) and creativity (Yang et al., 2019). A vivid and compelling future work self is a powerful source of motivation, guiding individuals to clarify their goals, develop strategies to achieve them, and persistently strive toward realizing their aspirations.

The influence of future work self on goal-setting and motivation can be comprehended through three perspectives. First, self-regulation theory posits that recognizing the disparity between one's current self and the ideal future self motivates individuals to try to bridge the gap (Higgins, 1987). By identifying these differences, individuals can establish career goals grounded in their values and priorities, thus setting a trajectory for their professional journey. Second, the impact of the future work self is closely tied to the cognitive processes of forward-thinking individuals (Guan et al., 2014). The future work self empowers individuals to proactively develop skills, gain insights into future careers,

and actively seek feedback by comparing their present skills with the evolving requirements of their envisioned careers.

Furthermore, the future work self fosters a sense of exploration and adaptability in defining oneself (Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra, H., Constance, B.D., & Cedex, 2005). This element of self-concept is flexible and open to adaptation, encouraging individuals to aspire beyond conventional expectations. The distinction the future work self draws between the present and potential futures drives individuals to strive for their ideal future in alignment with their values rather than conforming to external expectations.

Thus, when individuals have formed a clear picture of their Future Work Self, they will strive to determine the steps they need to take to achieve their desired career. They can also identify the areas for self-development, such as knowledge and experience, that they need to enhance to bridge the gap between their real and ideal selves. In other words, they will be motivated to engage in personal exploration to recognize and develop their abilities, explore various information and experiences related to their desired career, and identify the companies that align with their values and aspirations. The researcher assumes that their Career Search Efficacy will also improve through these actions.

While existing research, such as that by (Solberg et al., 1995), has not directly linked future work self to career search efficacy, studies by (Guan et al., 2014). The role of future work self in job search self-efficacy has demonstrated a positive correlation. The research indicates that future work self plays a significant and positive role in job search self-efficacy, particularly among graduates with high levels of career adaptability. Building on these insights, the present study aims to address the gap by investigating how future work self can enhance career search efficacy, seeking to contribute valuable insights that can inform and enhance existing career guidance strategies and support systems for individuals navigating crucial stages of career development.

This comprehensive exploration underscores the interplay between personal development, career evolution, and the psychological constructs that shape individuals' decision-making processes. Based on the elaboration of the findings from studies in the field of education and career, the researcher assumes that future work self has a positive and significant relationship with career search efficacy. By having a career search efficacy, individuals are predicted to have good future work self. Indirectly, this can reduce the unemployment rate, especially caused by undergraduate unemployment who have not completed the career exploration stage. It is hoped that the researchers, with the characteristics of the sample of undergraduate students, the results of the research will be more representative. This research offers insights that can inform educators, career counselors, and policymakers in developing more effective support systems for those navigating the intricate landscape of personal and professional growth. It provides a foundation for understanding individuals' challenges at different journey stages. It offers insights that can inform educators, career counselors, and policymakers in developing more effective support systems for those navigating the intricate landscape of personal and professional growth.

## 2. METHODS

The research methodology employed in this study adopts a quantitative paradigm that uses Future Work Self and Career Search Efficacy Scale measuring instruments that intend to examine the role of future work self towards career search efficacy of undergraduate students, specifically utilizing a causal perspective to systematically explore the influence of one variable on another, as outlined by (Kumar, 2014). Our approach in this study centers on applying simple linear regression to examine the predictive role of Future Work Self toward Career Search Efficacy in undergraduate students in Bandung. The population of this study was all students in the city of Bandung, using accidental sampling as the chosen

sampling technique. One hundred-one individuals actively participated as respondents in this study, contributing their insights to enrich the depth and breadth of our research outcomes.

In this study, we utilized the career search efficacy scale and future work self-measurement tool. The career search efficacy scale employed in this research is drawn from the comprehensive work of (Solberg, 1998). Comprising 35 items, this scale rigorously evaluates various aspects of career search efficacy, demonstrating very high reliability with a value of 0.963 (Guilford, 1957). Similarly, our research incorporates the future work self-measurement tool developed by (Strauss et al., 2012), consisting of a concise set of 5 items designed to probe various dimensions of future work self-concept. This measurement tool exhibits a very high-reliability value of 0.91 (Guilford, 1957), attesting to its consistency and dependability.

The selection of the simple linear regression analysis as the primary data analysis technique is intentional, aligning with our research goal to unravel the linear relationship between future work self and career search efficacy. This approach provides a focused lens, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the predictive nature of future work self in shaping the effectiveness of career search efforts among students.

Throughout the research process, meticulous attention has been devoted to each phase. Accidental sampling ensures a robust representation of student perspectives, facilitating the generalizability of our findings to the broader Bandung student population. The substantial sample size of 101 respondents further bolsters the reliability and validity of our study, contributing to the credibility of the outcomes.

In conclusion, our research utilizes a quantitative research methodology with a causal approach to examine the influence of Future Work Self on Career Search Efficacy among students in Bandung. A simple linear regression analysis is employed to determine the predictive role of Future Work Self on Career Search Efficacy. The sample consists of 101 students selected through accidental sampling. Data collection involves two reliable measurement tools: the Career Search Efficacy Scale (Solberg et al., 1995) with 35 items (Reliability: 0.963) and the Future Work Self-Measurement Tool (Strauss et al., 2012) With five items (Reliability: 0.91). This methodology provides a clear framework for understanding the linear relationship between the two variables.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### *Findings*

The research embarked on its journey by meticulously applying classical assumption tests to fortify the robustness of the ensuing regression test. These foundational tests encompassed a thorough examination of normality and heteroskedasticity. Many statistical procedures, including correlation, regression, t-tests, and analysis of variance, namely parametric tests, are based on the assumption that the data follows a normal distribution (Singh & Masuku, 2014). It is assumed that the populations from which the samples are taken are normally distributed. The normality test, performed using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test with SPSS 25, assessed whether the data in this study were normally distributed. The results of this test are detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Normality Test Results

Variable	<i>p-value</i>	Description
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	0,2	Data is normally distributed
Total	101	

This is to see if the data we have is normally distributed or not. See Asymp values. Sig = 0.200, meaning:

Criteria: if, sig  $\geq$  0.05; then H0 is accepted

0.200 > 0.05; then H0 is accepted

This means that the residual data between the CSE and CA variables is normally distributed

Table 1 thoughtfully lays out the normality test results for residuals, unequivocally asserting that all variables under scrutiny in the study showcase normally distributed residual data. This confirmation inherently satisfies the normality assumption, instilling confidence in the subsequent analyses.

Subsequently, a judiciously conducted linearity test aimed to unveil whether a linear relationship exists between the two variables. Linearity assessment is important in verifying that an instrument or test method is in working order (Paulson & Wachtel, 1995). The intricacies of this assessment are meticulously detailed in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Linearity Test Results

Variable	<i>p-value (deviation of linearity)</i>	Description
Future Work Self	0,052	0,052 > 0,05; data is linear
Total	101	

As illustrated in Table 2, a p-value of 0.052 for the linearity deviation is obtained for the variable "Future Work Self." Since this p-value is greater than 0.05, it is concluded that the data exhibits a linear relationship. Therefore, the condition for the linearity test is met. This test is needed to determine whether or not one independent variable has similarities or relationships with other independent variables in one model. What needs to be considered is the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) value. The criterion is no multicollinearity if the VIF value is below 10. Conclusion: there is no multicollinearity in the IV variable that we have.

In addition, a heteroskedasticity test was also conducted to examine whether there are differences in residual variance from one observation period to another. Heteroskedasticity observed in cross-sectional data is typically related to the scale effect: larger cross-sectional units are often subject to larger erratic disturbance values. The heteroskedasticity test was performed using the Glejser's Test with SPSS 25. The results of the heteroskedasticity test can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Heteroskedasticity Test Results

Variable	<i>p-value (deviation of linearity)</i>	Description
Future Work Self	0,817	0,817 > 0,05; no evidence of heteroskedasticity in the data
Total	101	

Table 3 serves as a testament to the significant value of 0.817 (p-value > 0,05), which means there are no heteroscedasticity symptoms in the regression model. In other words, this result meets the condition for the absence of heteroskedasticity symptoms. Thus, the research environment lacks heteroskedasticity, and the imperative prerequisites for executing a simple linear regression test are conclusively satisfied. Conclusion: there is no heteroskedasticity between Future Work Self and Career Search Efficacy variables.

**Table 4. R-Squared**

IV (Independent Variable)	DV (Dependent Variable)	R-Squared
Future Work Self	Career Search Efficacy	0,006

Moving forward, Table 4 meticulously delineates the R-squared values extracted from the simple linear regression analysis. In regression, we generally deal with the dependent and independent variables. A change in the independent variable is likely to cause a change in the dependent variable. These results divulge that Future Work Self exerts a minor influence on Career Search Efficacy ( $R^2 = 0.006$ ), contributing a mere 0.6%. This revelation underscores the limited impact of Future Work Self on the efficacy of career search efforts among students.

**Table 5. Regression Test Results**

IV (Independent Variable)	DV (Dependent Variable)	$\beta$	R	<i>p-value</i>	Description
Future Work Self	Career Search Efficacy	- 0,075	0,075	0,454	Not significant

Table 5 succinctly encapsulates the regression test results, offering insights into the beta ( $\beta$ ) coefficient, R-value, and p-value for the relationship between Future Work Self and Career Search Efficacy. With a p-value of 0.454, the relationship is deemed not statistically significant, corroborating earlier findings that Future Work Self does not significantly influence career search efficacy. In this table, we only need to consider the significance value. This is the significance value of the independent variable (CSE) simultaneously with the dependent variable  $\text{Sig}=0.000$ . Recall that in looking at the significance, there are criteria, namely: If  $\text{sig} \geq 0.05$ , then  $H_0$  is accepted,  $0.000 < 0.05$ ; then  $H_0$  is rejected. So, the Future Work Self significantly contributes to the variation of Career Search Efficacy. Distinctly showcases that the data undergoes no significant pattern change (Sig. 0.454) concerning career search efficacy. Consequently, one can infer that Future Work Self does not substantially influence career search efficacy among undergraduate students in Bandung.

### Discussion

Based on the results of a simple regression analysis, it was found that Future Work Self does not significantly influence Career Search Efficacy ( $p > 0.05$ ;  $\beta = -0.075$ ). This finding suggests that students' vision for their future selves does not necessarily translate into confidence in their ability to gather information about desired jobs or prepare effectively for job searching.

The nuanced exploration into potential explanations for the absence of a significant role for Future Work Self in Career Search Efficacy reveals a pronounced focus on positive and tangible visions of future employment. Future Work Self represents an individual's envisioned self in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). By its very nature, this implies that the Future Work Self tends to foster a future-oriented mindset, aiming to realize the desired self, often referred to as the ideal self. However, disparities between an individual's current self and ideal self, as posited by (Strauss et al., 2012), introduce conflicts and potential dissatisfaction, thereby contributing to the development of low self-esteem (Moretti & Tory Higgins, 1990).

An in-depth comprehension of the concept of Career Search Efficacy becomes paramount, given its representation of an individual's conviction in career exploration encompassing career discovery and job searching. As (Solberg et al., 1995) Indicates that Career search efficacy represents an individual's ability to perform various career exploration and job hunting activities confidently. Research by (Spence, 1973) Establishes a link between Career Search Efficacy and higher self-esteem. The developmental trajectory of Career Search Efficacy is intricately tied to the gap between an individual's

current self and ideal self in the realm of careers.

This suggests that the gap between the ideal and real self may be a more direct factor impacting Career Search Efficacy than the Future Work Self. Individuals might feel discouraged if the gap is too large, undermining their confidence in career exploration and job searching. Therefore, the Future Work Self might play a role in how individuals bridge the gap between their ideal and real selves, particularly in career development (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). Once this disparity is minimized, individuals may feel more confident in taking risks and setting ambitious goals, which could help them make informed career decisions and pursue their desired careers.

The study's implications suggest the need for further research into the relationship between the current self-ideal self gap and Career Search Efficacy. Future research should expand the participant pool for greater generalizability and explore this relationship in greater depth. Such studies could refine career development theories and interventions, providing valuable insights for educators, career counselors, and policymakers.

In summary, these findings challenge conventional wisdom and highlight the complexity of the relationship between Future Work Self, self-disparities, and Career Search Efficacy. Continued research is essential to better understand and support individuals in their career development journeys, especially within the evolving landscape of higher education.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, examining the role of future work self in career search efficacy among undergraduate students in Bandung suggests that future work self does not significantly influence career search efficacy. This finding challenges preconceived notions about the presumed impact of individuals' envisioned future careers on their confidence and ability to explore desired occupations.

A potential disconnect between the ideal future self and the current self may lead to dissatisfaction and low self-esteem, affecting Career Search Efficacy. Therefore, the gap between an individual's ideal and real self may play a more critical role in Career Search Efficacy than Future Work Self.

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