



The influence of self-concept and resilience on career aspiration through career choice among senior high school students in Semarang Tengah District

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Article Info	Abstract
Keywords: Self-concept, resilience, career aspiration, career choice	Career aspirations play an essential role in shaping students' future career development and decision-making. This study aimed to examine the relationships between self-concept, resilience, and career aspirations, with career choice as a mediating variable, and explore their implications for school guidance and counseling services. An ex post facto research design was employed, involving 316 students selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected using validated Likert-type instruments measuring self-concept, resilience, career aspirations, and career choice. Data were analyzed using path analysis and the Sobel test. The results revealed that self-concept was not significantly associated with career aspirations ($t = 0.877, p > .05$), whereas resilience ($t = 2.867, p < .05$) and career choice ($t = 7.025, p < .01$) were significant positive predictors, explaining 27.7% of the variance in career aspirations ($R^2 = .277$). Self-concept ($t = 2.497, p = .013$) and resilience ($t = 9.731, p < .001$) also significantly predicted career choice ($R^2 = .352$). Furthermore, the Sobel test confirmed significant indirect associations between self-concept and career aspirations ($ab = .022, z = 2.38, p = .018$) and between resilience and career aspirations ($ab = .103, z = 5.79, p < .001$) through career choice. These findings highlight the mediating role of career choice and emphasize the importance of integrating self-concept development, resilience strengthening, and career decision-making skills into comprehensive school guidance and counseling programs.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15294/jubk.v15i2.33916>

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p-ISSN 2252-6889

e-ISSN 2502-4450

Introduction

Schoon & Polek, (2011) explain that career aspiration, as an individual's ideal or goal, tends to trigger behavioral processes within the person and ultimately supports the achievement of career objectives. In line with this, Febriani, (2015) state that career aspiration is the goal a person sets for themselves in a job or task that holds significant meaning for them; in other words, career aspiration can be understood as a hope or expectation in career choice. Kim et al., (2016) mention that career aspiration refers to an individual's ambition to attain leadership positions and to pursue further education in their career. Meanwhile, according to Patton & Creed, (2007), career aspiration is part of an individual's needs, motives, interests, and intentions in choosing their future career. They further define career aspiration as hopes or objectives that encompass individual intentions and personality.

Aulia et al., (2022) emphasize that a person's career choice plays an important role in achieving future success, making career planning something that requires careful consideration. This is particularly important for students in deciding the right steps in choosing a career for their future, by taking into account personal factors such as self-concept, strengths, and weaknesses (Pratiwi & Retnowati, 2019). The study by Akbar & Hamzah, (2022) shows that students' career aspiration levels fall into the moderate category. Career aspiration is an important factor in students' career development. It directs individuals' behavior toward achieving the career they hope for or aspire to. Career aspiration can help students choose further education that matches their abilities and potential (Widiastuti, 2017).

According to Robinson et al. (2017), career aspiration involves guiding a person to realize their desired career goals. They also argue that career aspiration, which is connected to a person's career expectations and individual perceptions, consists of ideas and judgments that are the product of mental organization, integration, and acknowledgment of existing realities. Career aspiration consists of three aspects: orientation, attitude, and career (Sa'idah, 2021). These three aspects are closely interrelated, producing a tangible career dream. Orientation refers to the plan of action to achieve certain goals, attitude reflects an individual's orientation toward those goals, while behavior refers to the actual actions taken to reach the desired goals.

The education they pursue at present becomes a major hope for students at this level, as it leads them toward the career aspirations that shape their career choices. This begins with the curriculum that has previously directed students toward choosing majors, which later shifts into selecting subjects of interest, with the aim that students will eventually be able to choose their career paths in the future. However, a classic problem often arises in cases where students feel confused about choosing a career, selecting a major, setting or achieving career goals, facing limitations in creating potential career opportunities, and lacking information about jobs and further education after high school. Stated that school counselors have a greater role compared to other school personnel in helping students with the process of making career decisions for their future.

The role of guidance and counseling is also very important in providing information about various career options, so that students have more references in the process of making their career decisions. Guidance counseling, as an integral part of education, functions to assist students in achieving optimal development—one aspect of which is helping them fulfill their developmental task in career decision-making in line with their aspirations.

Study on the effect of resilience on career orientation, found that the resilience level of students was in the high category, while their career orientation level was in the moderate category. The study also revealed a positive and significant relationship, showing that resilience influenced the career orientation of twelfth-grade senior high school students in Candisari District, Semarang, by 58.8%. Based on these findings, it is expected that school counselors can maintain students' resilience, which is already in the high category, while also enhancing students' knowledge of career orientation, which remains in the moderate category, so that they will be more capable of making future career decisions.

Maya et al., (2023), in her study on the relationship between self-concept and career choice, confirmed the existence of a sufficient level of correlation. This result is consistent with the findings of Purwandika & Ayriza, (2020), which showed a significant influence of self-concept on career maturity among senior high school students in Pacitan Regency. Adulthood demands that individuals continue their development. However, before reaching that stage, they must be able to complete developmental tasks in adolescence, one of which is the formation of career identity (Almaida & Febriyanti, 2019).

A similar phenomenon was also observed by Sumita et al., (2018) in his study conducted on twelfth-grade students at a public senior high school in Pontianak. The study identified several career-related problems that students were concerned with, namely: 1) uncertainty regarding their current curriculum choices, 2) limited information about the world of work, 3) confusion about future career options, 4) difficulty in selecting jobs that match their skills and interests, 5) fear of the job-seeking process after graduation, 6) difficulty deciding whether to pursue higher education or enter the workforce after graduation, and 7) lack of understanding about the characteristics, requirements, skills, abilities, and future career prospects associated with different types of jobs.

This study aims to analyze the extent to which the variables of self-concept and resilience influence career aspiration through career choice, given that many students still experience confusion regarding both their career aspirations and the career options available to them. The researcher intends to re-examine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable without intervening or altering the causal relationship among the variables studied. For future researchers, this study can serve as a reference and source of material in the field of personal and career development.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with an ex-post facto design. The purpose of the research was to identify possible causes underlying behavioral changes resulting from certain events. The participants were senior high school students in Semarang Tengah District, with a total population of 2,700 students and a sample of 316 students. Data on self-concept were collected using the Personal Self Concept (PSC) scale, which consists of 22 items with response options ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The validity coefficients ranged from 0.381 to 0.667, with a reliability coefficient of 0.836.

Data on resilience were obtained using the Rasch calibration of the 25-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). This scale consists of 25 items with response options ranging from strongly disagree (1) to

strongly agree (5). The validity coefficients ranged from 0.370 to 0.680, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.837. Data on career aspiration were collected using the Career Aspiration Scale–Revised (CAS-R), consisting of 8 items with response options from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The validity coefficients ranged from 0.379 to 0.657, with a reliability coefficient of 0.607.

Data on career choice were obtained using the Career Choice Scale (CCS), which includes 23 items with response options from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The validity coefficients ranged from 0.372 to 0.601, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.851. The study was conducted by distributing questionnaires to respondents drawn from the senior high school population in Semarang Tengah District. The sample consisted of two public schools and two private schools out of the total eight senior high schools in the district. The questionnaires were administered using Google Forms. The collected data were then tabulated into quantitative form and presented in distribution tables.

Result and Discussion

Based on descriptive analysis using SPSS version 25. The results of this study, processed descriptively, show the following: the self-concept variable had $M = 75.2$, $SD = 7.99$; the resilience variable had $M = 97.5$, $SD = 6.87$; the career aspiration variable had $M = 33.3$, $SD = 3.27$; and the career choice variable had $M = 90.5$, $SD = 9.13$.

Table 1. Classification of Respondents on All Variables

Variable	Mean	Std.
Self-Concept	75.2	7.99
Resilience	97.5	6.87
Career Aspiration	33.3	3.27
Career Choice	90.5	9.13

Table 2 Regression Coefficients for Self-Concept, Resilience, and Career Choice

Predictor	β	t	p
Self-concept	.020	0.877	> .05
Resilience	.870	2.867	< .05
Career choice	.151	7.025	< .01

Model Summary

Statistic	Value
R	.526
R^2	.277
F	39.79
p	< .01

Based on Table 2, which presents the path analysis of self-concept, resilience, and career choice on career aspiration, the results show a negative relationship between self-concept and career aspiration, with $p > .05$ and $\beta = -0.020$. Self-concept does not have a significant influence on career aspiration. Although, in theory, individuals with a positive self-concept are expected to develop career aspirations in line with their personal goals, this study found that self-concept does not directly affect career aspiration. In other words, while there are indications of a relationship between self-concept and career aspiration, its effect is too small to be considered as having a meaningful impact on students' ability to understand themselves in relation to the career goals they wish to pursue in the future.

There is a positive relationship between resilience and students' career aspiration, with the path analysis showing $p < .005$ and $\beta = 0.684$. This means that resilience has a significant effect on students' career aspiration. The higher an individual's resilience level, the better their career aspirations. This finding suggests that individuals' confidence in their ability to face and solve problems can guide them toward their future career goals. This aligns with (Khampirat, 2020), who examined the relationship between career aspiration and resilience and found significant differences in career aspiration and career adaptability with respect to gender interactions. Career aspiration was also found to be positively correlated with career adaptability.

There is also a positive relationship between career choice and career aspiration ($\beta = 0.151$, $p < .05$), indicating a significant positive influence of career choice on students' career aspiration. In other words, the better their ability to make career choices, the clearer, more realistic, and more directed their career aspirations will be. This finding indicates that career choice becomes an important factor in shaping students' vision and

mission for the future, especially in planning their career path, further education, and the professional trajectory they wish to pursue. Similarly, Fauzan & Zahra, (2025) reported a significant influence of family support for career aspiration on career choice among students in the Vocational Family Welfare Education Study Program, Faculty of Engineering, State University of Jakarta.

Table 3. Path Coefficients Predicting Career Choice

Predictor	β	t	p
Self-concept	.151	2.497	< .05
Resilience	.684	9.731	< .001
Model Summary			
Statistic	Value		
R	.593		
R^2	.352		
F	85.03		
p	< .01		

Based on Table 3, which presents the path analysis of self-concept and resilience on career choice: The path analysis shows that self-concept has $\beta = 0.151$ with a p -value of 0.013, which is well above the threshold of 0.05. This means that although students possess a certain level of self-concept, it is not strong or consistent enough to significantly influence their career choices. Career choice is more likely influenced by other factors such as career information, family support, or social environment conditions. Meanwhile, the relationship between resilience and career choice is positive ($\beta = 0.684$, $p < .01$). The higher students' ability in resilience—such as setting goals, monitoring, and evaluating their learning behavior the greater their tendency to have career choices that are clear, realistic, and well-directed.

These findings indicate that resilience is one of the key factors in shaping students' clarity of vision for the future, particularly in planning further education and the career paths they wish to pursue. García-Martínez et al., (2023), in his study, stated that resilience is the most essential tool for overcoming difficulties, enhancing mental health, and that its most important predictor is self-concept. His research found that there is a positive relationship, or a positive influence, of self-concept in strengthening resilience. In this context, students who have a tendency to solve problems will be better able to determine the direction and career choices they wish to pursue.

Table 4. Sobel Test Results for Indirect Effects

Mediation Path	Indirect Effect (ab)	SE	z	p
X1 → M → Y1	.022	.009	2.38	.018
X2 → M → Y1	.103	.017	5.79	< .001
Variable	Coefficient	SE		
Self-concept	.151	.060		
Resilience	.684	.070		
Career choice	.151	.021		

Based on Table 4, the results of the Sobel path analysis between self-concept and resilience with career choice show that there is an indirect relationship, with a significant effect of self-concept on career aspirations through career choice ($\beta = 0.117$, $Z_{\text{sobel}} = 2.375$, $p < 0.01$). A study in Hong Kong (2024) examined how self-concept (in the academic domain) moderates the influence of perceptions toward STEM professionals in shaping career aspirations. The study found that positive perceptions of STEM professionals indeed encouraged career aspirations, but this effect was only significant for students with adequate or high levels of self-concept. In other words, perception and self-concept interact—perception alone is insufficient without the support of a strong self-concept. Self-concept, therefore, has a significant effect on students' career aspirations through their career choices, albeit indirectly (Chen et al., 2024).

The analysis further shows that resilience has a positive and significant effect on students' career aspirations through career choice ($\beta = 0.103$, $Z_{\text{sobel}} = 5.791$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, it can be concluded that the independent variables have a significant influence on the dependent variable. A study in Semarang reported that the resilience level of 12th-grade students across SMA schools in Candisari District was high (54.22% of the total sample), while the level of career orientation was moderate (77.23% of the total sample). The results

of Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis further revealed that resilience accounted for 58.8% of the variance in students' career orientation ($r = 0.588$), while the remaining variance was explained by other factors.

Resilience enables students to develop career choices that are clear, realistic, and well-directed. As the level of individual resilience increases, so too does the quality of their career aspirations, along with the ability to set goals, monitor progress, and evaluate their behavior. Possessing these abilities is expected to help individuals develop themselves, enabling them to solve problems with optimism and confidence in the choices they make

Conclusion

It is concluded that resilience and career choice have a significant influence on career aspirations, indicating that these variables are most likely the primary drivers of career aspirations. The higher the level of individual resilience, the better their career aspirations; and the higher their ability to choose their career, the more likely they are to have clear, realistic, and well-directed career aspirations. In this case, if school counselors want to improve students' career aspirations, they should strengthen students' resilience, not merely provide an overview of future career aspirations. Rather, it should involve a deeper understanding of the reasons and the cause-and-effect of career choice on their career aspirations. Furthermore, career guidance programs are not sufficient if limited to providing career information; instead, they should balance this with an understanding of the magnitude of risks students will face if they pursue certain career aspirations and make certain career choices.

Author Contributions Statement

Apriliyana Devi Ariani contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, and original draft. **Edy Purwanto** and **Sunawan** provided supervision and methodological guidance. **Stuart V. Guild** contributed to manuscript review and editing. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Declaration of Generative AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, ChatGPT was used to assist with language refinement and improve the clarity of the academic text. The authors reviewed and evaluated the suggested revisions and remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the article.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known financial interests or personal relationships that could reasonably be considered to have influenced the research or the findings reported in this article.

Funding Statement

This research did not receive any specific grant from public, commercial, or nonprofit funding agencies.

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