

# EFFECTS OF DIGITAL CAREER EXPLORATION AND CAREER SELF-EFFICACY ON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' CAREER MATURITY

**Queendra Cheryl Wibowo<sup>1\*</sup>, Denok Setiawati<sup>2</sup>, Budi Purwoko<sup>3</sup>, Evi Winingsih<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>Guidance and Counseling Department, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

E-mail: [queendra.22012@mhs.unesa.ac.id](mailto:queendra.22012@mhs.unesa.ac.id)<sup>1\*</sup>, [denoksetiawati@unesa.ac.id](mailto:denoksetiawati@unesa.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>,  
[budipurwoko@unesa.ac.id](mailto:budipurwoko@unesa.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>, [eviwiningsih@unesa.ac.id](mailto:eviwiningsih@unesa.ac.id)<sup>4</sup>

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## Abstract

This research seeks to analyze the effect of digital career exploration and career self-efficacy on the career maturity of senior high school students. The study adopted a quantitative method with an explanatory research design and involved 80 eleventh-grade students from SMA Negeri 13 Surabaya, who were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire, which had previously undergone validity and reliability testing. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the partial and simultaneous effects among variables. The findings reveal that digital career exploration significantly and positively influences career maturity. This indicates that students who utilize digital platforms to access career-related information tend to have a clearer understanding of career options and demonstrate greater readiness in making career decisions. In addition, career self-efficacy was also found to have a positive and stronger effect on career maturity. This result emphasizes that individuals' belief in their capacity to plan career paths, make appropriate choices, and manage career-related obstacles plays a vital role in the development of career maturity. Simultaneously, both variables explain 76% of the variance in career maturity. These findings further underline the need to enhance digital career exploration and career self-efficacy through the implementation of effective career guidance programs in schools.

**Keywords:** *Career Self-Efficacy, Digital Career Exploration, Career Maturity; Career Counseling.*

## INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital technology have changed how adolescents obtain information, particularly with regard to career choices and educational opportunities. In Indonesia, more than 200 million people have been actively using the internet in recent years (Isnur, 2024). Based on data reported by KataData, Indonesia's internet penetration reached approximately 77.02% during the 2021-2022 period. In particular, internet usage among adolescents aged 13-18 years was notably high, accounting for about 99.16% (Pahlevi, 2022). These figures suggest that today's adolescents are growing up in a highly digital and interconnected environment, where access to information related to careers, employment, and education is increasingly extensive and readily available. Despite these developments, employment challenges among young people aged 15-24 years remain a significant issue. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) show that this age group contributed approximately 37.68% of total unemployment in 2024 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). Furthermore, a report by UNDP Indonesia (2024) indicates that around 25.80% of Indonesian youth in 2023 were classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), meaning they were not engaged in formal education, employment, or training programs. This situation highlights the urgency of implementing interventions aimed at strengthening career readiness and improving career decision-making skills among high school students, particularly through career guidance services that are responsive to advancements in digital technology.

Conceptually, students' career readiness is influenced by a number of psychological and behavioral factors that play a role in the career decision-making process. Two of the most significant factors are career exploration (Pham et al., 2024) and career self-efficacy (R. A. Rahman, 2025). Career exploration is defined as an individual's activity in gathering information about oneself and the world of work to support an accurate and informed career decision-making process (Fajriani et al., 2023, p. 62). Meanwhile, career self-efficacy rooted in Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks related to career decision-making (Bandura, 1977; R. A. Rahman, 2025). Confidence in one's own capabilities affects how individuals stay motivated, remain persistent, and choose appropriate actions when facing situations that involve critical career-related decisions.

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Career maturity itself is an indicator of the extent to which an individual is prepared to make realistic and adaptive career decisions. This dimension plays a vital role in adolescent career development (Lau et al., 2019, p. 2). Adolescents who possess a higher level of career maturity are generally more capable of making informed decisions, engaging in effective career planning, and demonstrating stronger readiness to transition from school into the workforce or pursue further education (Sharma & Ahuja, 2017, p. 242). A substantial body of empirical evidence has shown a positive association between career self-efficacy and career maturity. A meta-analytic study by Abdullah (2023) reported a significant relationship between career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity, with an average effect size of  $p = 0.4665$  derived from 11 studies involving 3,255 participants. Studies conducted among vocational high school (SMK) students further indicate that the majority of respondents (70.9%) demonstrated high levels of career self-efficacy, with no statistically significant differences observed across gender or field of specialization (Khatijatushahihah et al., 2022). Consistent with these findings, Assahrawiza et al. (2024) found that career guidance services contributed positively to the enhancement of students' self-efficacy in making career-related decisions.

At the same time, rapid technological progress has introduced various forms of digital career exploration, including career information websites, educational portals, professional networking platforms, career guidance applications, and educational content shared through social media such as TikTok. Nevertheless, the availability of digital career information alone does not automatically lead to higher levels of career maturity. Individual factors, particularly self-efficacy and the capacity to critically assess and interpret information, remain key determinants in shaping the effectiveness of digital career exploration activities (Pham et al., 2024). Drawing on the existing literature and considering the current conditions in Indonesia, an unresolved research gap can still be identified. Most previous studies have examined the relationship between career self-efficacy and career maturity in general, while research specifically exploring the role of digital career exploration in shaping the career maturity of Indonesian high school students is still very limited. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of studies that integrate digital career exploration and career self-efficacy simultaneously to examine their combined influence on students' career maturity.

Field evidence further supports the existence of this research gap. Results from the Student Needs Assessment (AKPD) conducted at SMA Negeri 13 Surabaya reveal that 78.4% of students in Class XI-9 (29 out of 37 respondents) and around 70% of students in Class XI-8 expressed uncertainty about their future goals and career direction. Most respondents agreed with the statement, "I still feel unsure about my future career plans or choices." These findings suggest that a large proportion of students have not yet developed clear career pathways, which may indicate limited career self-efficacy as well as insufficient use of digital career exploration in facilitating career decision-making. This situation highlights the need for research that emphasizes the enhancement of career self-efficacy and the more effective integration of digital career exploration to support the development of students' career maturity. In response to these conditions, this study seeks to address the following key question: To what extent do digital career exploration and career self-efficacy affect the career maturity of high school students in Indonesia? The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the advancement of career development literature in the digital era and to provide practical insights for guidance and counseling teachers in designing career guidance services that align with the needs of today's students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Digital Career Exploration

Career exploration refers to a structured process through which individuals seek to understand their personal strengths and interests while also identifying and evaluating potential career opportunities (Anwar, 2017). This process includes gathering information from both internal aspects, such as interests, talents, personal values, and life goals and external aspects, including types of occupations, industry sectors, and environmental conditions (F. A. Rahman & Bhakti, 2022, p. 36). Within contemporary educational settings, career exploration plays an important role in assisting students to identify their individual potentials and match them with feasible and relevant career choices (Fikriyani, 2023, p. 95).

With the rapid development of technology, career exploration activities have increasingly shifted to digital platforms, including career information websites, educational portals, professional networking sites, and online career guidance applications. Digital career exploration may involve activities such as seeking information on academic majors through educational websites, participating in online career seminars or webinars, completing digital interest and aptitude assessments, accessing educational content on platforms like TikTok, and communicating with professionals via career-oriented social media platforms such as LinkedIn (Solihah et al., 2023). In this context, digital career exploration can be assessed through several behavioral indicators: (1) actively searching for career-related information using digital media; (2) making use of digital platforms to support self-development; (3) applying

technology in career planning processes; (4) engaging in career-related communication and networking through digital channels; and (5) demonstrating critical and selective judgment when interpreting digital information. The indicators of digital career exploration employed in this study were adapted from the framework proposed by Pham et al. (2024). Several studies have shown that the more frequently students engage in career exploration through digital platforms, the higher their level of career maturity tends to be (Lau et al., 2019; Pham et al., 2024). Nevertheless, a number of studies indicate that the strength of this effect is shaped by students' digital literacy competencies as well as the degree of support offered by the school environment (Jalal, 2024; Soeprijanto et al., 2022).

### **Career Self-Efficacy**

Career self-efficacy is derived from Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capability to perform actions required to achieve certain outcomes or levels of performance. This concept highlights an individual's confidence in their ability to influence events and exert control over their surrounding environment (Lopez-Garrido, 2025, p. 1). Self-efficacy is regarded as a fundamental aspect of self-knowledge, as it substantially shapes individual behavior and decision-making in daily life. The degree of self-efficacy an individual possesses affects how goals are planned and pursued, as well as how various situations and challenges are anticipated and managed (Lahagu et al., 2023). In the context of career development, self-efficacy is considered a crucial determinant in career decision-making processes. Individuals with strong self-efficacy tend to be more confident in exploring career alternatives and in addressing obstacles encountered throughout their career development journey (Ardiyanti & Alsa, 2025). Higher levels of career self-efficacy enable individuals to approach career exploration with greater assurance, which in turn may contribute to enhanced career maturity (R. A. Rahman, 2025).

Career self-efficacy can be assessed using several indicators, including: (1) confidence in identifying personal strengths and potentials; (2) confidence in setting and planning career goals; (3) confidence in making career-related decisions; (4) confidence in dealing with career-related challenges; and (5) confidence in taking concrete actions toward achieving career goals. The indicators applied in this study were adapted from Rahman (2025). Empirical evidence supports the close relationship between self-efficacy and career maturity. Rahman (2025) found a highly significant positive association between self-efficacy and career maturity among twelfth-grade students at SMA Institut Indonesia Semarang, indicating that higher self-efficacy is associated with higher levels of career maturity, and vice versa. Meanwhile, Latifah and Basyirun (2024) reported that students enrolled in the Computer and Network Engineering (TKJ) program at SMK Al Musyawirin experienced difficulties in making well-planned career decisions due to low motivation and insufficient readiness. Their Product Moment correlation analysis involving 35 students yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.452 with a significance value of 0.148, suggesting a positive relationship between self-efficacy and career maturity.

### **Career Maturity**

Career maturity refers to an individual's readiness to make realistic career choices, understand personal potential, and develop the attitudes and competencies required for effective career planning and decision-making (Fadila & Rosiana, 2025). It can also be defined as an individual's preparedness to complete career development tasks that correspond to their developmental stage (Mahira et al., 2024, p. 26). According to Super (as cited in Mahira et al., 2024, p. 27) career maturity reflects adolescents' readiness to make vocational and educational decisions, encompassing self-control, awareness of personal strengths and limitations, positive self-concept, and effective decision-making skills. Furthermore, Hamzah (2019) explains that career maturity among students can be observed through their ability to formulate career plans, explore various career options, utilize career-related information, and make well-informed career decisions.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a quantitative approach using an explanatory research design. This design was chosen because the research seeks to examine the influence of two independent variables digital career exploration ( $X_1$ ) and career self-efficacy ( $X_2$ ) on the dependent variable, namely students' career maturity (Y). An explanatory design allows for the testing of causal relationships between variables through numerical data that are analyzed using statistical techniques (Sugiyono, 2022).

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study consists of all 405 eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 13 Surabaya in the 2025/2026 academic year. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a margin of error (e) of 10%, resulting in the following calculation:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{405}{1 + 405(0,1)^2} = \frac{405}{5,05} = 80,2$$

Accordingly, the sample size was rounded to 80 students. The study applied a simple random sampling technique, ensuring that every individual in the population had an equal chance of being selected, regardless of class divisions or particular characteristics (Sugiyono, 2022).

### **Data Collection Technique**

Data collection was carried out using an online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire was distributed to all eleventh-grade students of SMA Negeri 13 Surabaya in collaboration with the school's Guidance and Counseling teachers. Before responding to the questionnaire, participants were informed about the objectives of the study, assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and notified that their participation was entirely voluntary.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

The collected data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis to assess both the joint and individual effects of the independent variables digital career exploration ( $X_1$ ) and career self-efficacy ( $X_2$ ) on the dependent variable, career maturity (Y). Prior to performing the regression analysis, several classical assumption tests were conducted, including tests for normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, to confirm that the data satisfied the necessary assumptions for regression modeling.

The multiple linear regression model used in this study is formulated as follows:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$$

Description:

Y = Career maturity

$X_1$  = Digital career exploration

$X_2$  = Career self-efficacy

a = Constant

$b_1, b_2$  = Regression coefficients

e = Error term

Furthermore, a partial significance test (t-test) was conducted to determine the extent to which each independent variable individually influences the dependent variable. In addition, a simultaneous significance test (F-test) was used to assess the combined effect of digital career exploration and career self-efficacy on students' career maturity. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was used to assess the extent to which the independent variables contributed to variations in the dependent variable. All statistical analyses and data processing were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0.

### **Validity Test**

In this research, instrument validity was examined using the corrected item-total correlation approach. Each item's validity was evaluated by comparing the obtained correlation coefficient with the critical r-value from the r-table, calculated based on the degrees of freedom ( $df = N - 2$ ).

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## 1. Digital Career Exploration

**Table 1. Results of the Validity Test for Digital Career Exploration**

Indicator	Item	r-calculated	r-table	Description
Career information searching through digital media	EKD1	0,601	0,2199	Valid
	EKD2	0,564		
Utilization of digital platforms for self-development	EKD3	0,558	0,2199	Valid
	EKD4	0,641		
Use of technology for career planning	EKD5	0,529	0,2199	Valid
	EKD6	0,486		
Interaction and networking through digital media	EKD7	0,671	0,2199	Valid
	EKD8	0,491		
Critical and selective attitude toward digital information	EKD9	0,701	0,2199	Valid
	EKD10	0,371		

## 2. Career Self-Efficacy

**Table 2. Results of the Validity Test for Career Self-Efficacy**

Indicator	Item	r-calculated	r-table	Description
Confidence in recognizing personal potential	EDK1	0,518	0,2199	Valid
	EDK2	0,729		
Confidence in setting and planning career goals	EDK3	0,800	0,2199	Valid
	EDK4	0,825		
Confidence in making career decisions	EDK5	0,814	0,2199	Valid
	EDK6	0,539		
Confidence in overcoming career obstacles	EDK7	0,712	0,2199	Valid
	EDK8	0,571		
Confidence in taking steps toward a career	EDK9	0,736	0,2199	Valid
	EDK10	0,548		

## 3. Career Maturity

**Table 3. Results of the Validity Test for Career Maturity**

Indicator	Item	r-calculated	r-table	Description
Ability to plan a career	KK1	0,770	0,2199	Valid
	KK2	0,765		
Ability to explore careers	KK3	0,778	0,2199	Valid
	KK4	0,680		
Ability to utilize career information	KK5	0,735	0,2199	Valid
	KK6	0,786		
Ability to make career decisions	KK7	0,721	0,2199	Valid
	KK8	0,735		
	KK9	0,655		

Based on the results presented in the validity test tables, all items demonstrate r-calculated values that exceed the r-table value. Therefore, all items in each variable are declared valid.

## Reliability Test

**Table 4. Reliability Test Results**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Critical Value	Description
Digital Career Exploration	0,747	0,600	Reliable
Career Self-Efficacy	0,872	0,600	Reliable
Career Maturity	0,894	0,600	Reliable

Based on the reliability test results, all research variables have Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.60. Therefore, the research instrument is considered reliable.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

**Table 5. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and t-Test**

t-Test		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Description
Constant		-4.521	2.707		-1.670	.099	
Digital Career Exploration		0.373	0.070	0.337	5.303	.000	Significant
Career Self-Efficacy		0.664	0.064	0.660	10.392	.000	Significant

Accordingly, the multiple linear regression equation for this study is:

$$Y = -4.521 + 0.373X_1 + 0.664X_2$$

The regression coefficient for the digital career exploration variable is 0.373, indicating that each one-unit increase in digital career exploration leads to an increase of 0.373 units in career maturity, assuming other variables remain constant. The obtained t-value of 5.303 ( $t > 1.66412$ ) and the significance value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ) demonstrate that the effect of digital career exploration on the dependent variable is statistically significant. In other words, higher levels of digital career exploration significantly contribute to the improvement of career maturity. The regression analysis shows that the career self-efficacy variable has a coefficient of 0.664, meaning that a one-unit increase in career self-efficacy is associated with a 0.664-unit increase in career maturity, while other variables are held constant. The t-value of 10.392 ( $t > 1.66412$ ) and the significance value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ) confirm that career self-efficacy has a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable. This finding implies that career self-efficacy plays an essential role in enhancing students' career maturity.

**Table 6. Results of the F-Test**

F-Test		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Description
2170.249		2		1085.124	122.202	0.000 <sup>b</sup>	Significant
683.739		77		8.880			
2853.988		79					

The F-test results show that the calculated F-value is 122.202 with a significance level of 0.000, indicating that the multiple linear regression model has a statistically significant overall effect on the dependent variable. This indicates that digital career exploration and career self-efficacy jointly exert a significant effect on career maturity. The results further demonstrate that the regression model applied in this study is suitable and adequately explains the observed variation in the data.

**Table 7. Coefficient of Determination**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.872 <sup>a</sup>	0.760	0.754	2.980

An R-Square value of 0.760 indicates that 76% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables, digital career exploration and career self-efficacy, within the model. Meanwhile, the Adjusted R-Square value of 0.754 confirms that, even after adjusting for the number of independent variables, the model retains strong predictive capability.

## Discussion

### Digital Career Exploration

Digital career exploration can be understood as a structured activity in which individuals seek, process, and evaluate information related to various career alternatives through the use of digital technologies (Pham et al., 2024). Xu (2022) explains that self-exploration enables individuals to gain accurate insight into their own characteristics, which serves as a foundation for selecting careers that correspond with their abilities and interests. The findings of this study indicate that digital career exploration has a significant positive effect on career maturity. This suggests that the effective use of digital platforms and resources for career-related exploration enhances individuals' readiness to make thoughtful and informed career decisions.

Through digital career exploration, individuals are able to access a wide range of information regarding labor market trends, competency requirements, and career prospects across different occupational fields. The availability of digital information also supports individuals in comparing career alternatives, assessing personal interests and abilities, and organizing personal development plans in a more systematic manner (Solihah et al., 2023). Consequently, digital career exploration not only broadens career-related knowledge but also strengthens self-confidence and clarity of career direction, which ultimately contributes to higher levels of career maturity. These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Stumpf, Colarelli, and Hartman in the Career Exploration Survey (CES) introduced in 1983 (Stumpf et al., 1983), which conceptualizes career exploration as an active process of gathering information about both the self and the work environment to support career decision-making. In the current digital era, this process is further expanded through technological advancements that allow faster, more comprehensive, and more easily accessible information. Rahman (2025) also emphasizes that career maturity develops when individuals possess a clear understanding of their career options, interests, and competencies. In this regard, digital career exploration serves as an efficient means of providing such information, thereby accelerating the development of career maturity.

The results of this study are in line with previous research by Lau et al. (2019) and Pham et al. (2024), which demonstrates that both self-exploration and environmental exploration contribute positively to career choice clarity and career maturity. Xu (2022) similarly highlights that self-exploration offers reliable insights into individual capabilities, supporting more effective career decision-making. In addition, Jalal (2024) reports that career exploration reduces uncertainty in career selection and enhances career readiness. Within the digital context, Jalal's (2024) findings further show that the use of digital career platforms such as LinkedIn, e-learning systems, and educational content on TikTok significantly improves individuals' understanding of career opportunities and personal potential, thereby fostering career maturity. The accessibility of digital information enables individuals to compare career options, recognize competency demands, and evaluate career suitability in a more objective manner.

### **Career Self-Efficacy**

Career self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to perform tasks related to career exploration, planning, decision-making, and the achievement of career goals (Fitriyana et al., 2021). This concept reflects how strongly individuals perceive themselves as capable of identifying their interests and competencies, evaluating career alternatives, and overcoming challenges encountered throughout the career development process. Kristina et al., (2013) argue that low levels of self-efficacy are closely associated with difficulties in attaining career maturity. Individuals with low self-efficacy often experience hesitation in making career decisions, struggle to establish a clear vocational identity, and feel uncertain about their career choices. In contrast, individuals with high self-efficacy tend to demonstrate greater confidence in completing career development tasks, which facilitates the achievement of career maturity. This is because self-efficacy motivates individuals to exert sustained effort in overcoming obstacles, including those related to selecting and determining suitable career paths among various alternatives.

The findings of this study indicate that career self-efficacy has a significant influence on career maturity. This implies that individuals who possess stronger confidence in their ability to plan, choose, and manage career-related challenges are more likely to demonstrate mature career decision-making. Individuals with high self-efficacy are generally more proactive in exploring career options, formulating concrete career plans, and addressing obstacles that arise during the decision-making process. These results support Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory, which posits that individuals' beliefs about their capabilities influence their cognitive processes, motivation, and behavioral choices. Within the context of career development, self-efficacy encourages individuals to actively engage in career exploration and to make more deliberate and informed career decisions. The findings of this study are consistent with those reported by Permana and Sulastri (2025), who emphasize the essential role of self-efficacy in fostering career maturity, particularly in strengthening confidence when choosing a career and adapting to changes in the work environment. Similarly, Lahagu et al. (2023) found that individuals with high self-efficacy are better equipped to overcome barriers in career decision-making, leading to higher levels of career maturity. Latifah & Basyirun (2024) also conclude that self-efficacy significantly affects key dimensions of career maturity, including career planning, exploration, and decision-making abilities.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that digital career exploration and career self-efficacy significantly influence career maturity. Digital career exploration reflects individuals' capacity to utilize technology in accessing career-related information, identifying employment opportunities, and understanding labor market demands in a comprehensive manner. Meanwhile, career self-efficacy represents individuals' confidence in their ability to plan careers, make appropriate decisions, and cope with challenges throughout the career development process. Together, these two factors play a substantial role in enhancing career maturity by supporting individuals in navigating and managing their career development more effectively.

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