

Analysis of Factors Influencing Career Anxiety Among High School and Vocational High School Students in Ambon City

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Abstract	This study aims to analyze the factors influencing career anxiety among high school (SMA) and vocational high school (SMK) students in Ambon City. The study employed a descriptive quantitative approach with a sample of 115 students selected using a saturated sampling technique. Data were collected via a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, criterion-referenced assessment (PAP), exploratory factor analysis, and normality testing. The results indicate that the students' level of career anxiety falls into the moderate category, with a mean score of 213.96, a minimum score of 160, and a maximum of 258. Based on the criterion-referenced assessment, 79 students (68.7%) were in the moderate category, 20 students (17.4%) in the high category, and 16 students (13.9%) in the low category. The most dominant factor influencing career anxiety was self-efficacy (mean score of 47.67), followed by achievement motivation (30.42), parental support (30.25), school environment (28.93), career information (27.40), family socioeconomic status (27.26), and peers (22.03). Factor analysis results showed a KMO value of 0.634 with a significance of 0.000, indicating the data were suitable for analysis. These findings demonstrate that both internal and external factors play a role in influencing students' career anxiety, with self-efficacy being the most dominant factor.
Keywords	career anxiety; career information; career self-efficacy; parental support; secondary students
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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical developmental period in which individuals begin preparing for adult life, including decisions about education and future careers. Career planning is therefore an important developmental task because adolescents must gradually understand their interests, abilities, values, and available opportunities (Suryana et al., 2022). At the secondary-school level, students begin to face choices concerning further study, vocational pathways, and entry into employment. These choices may become psychologically demanding when students have limited experience, incomplete information, or uncertainty about their own abilities.

Senior high school and vocational high school students experience this transition in somewhat different educational contexts, but both are expected to develop a meaningful direction for their future. Vocational education is oriented toward preparing students for competent participation in the world of work, while senior high school commonly provides a broader academic pathway toward higher education. In

both settings, students may experience uncertainty when their interests, abilities, family expectations, educational opportunities, and perceptions of the labor market do not appear to fit together (Marita & Izzati, 2017; Hamidah et al., 2024).

Career anxiety refers to worry, tension, uncertainty, fear, or doubt that emerges when individuals think about career planning, educational choices, and future employment. From a cognitive perspective, anxiety can be intensified when individuals perceive future situations as threatening while evaluating their coping resources as inadequate (Clark & Beck, 2010). In career contexts, low confidence in one's ability to make decisions may therefore reinforce negative expectations about the future. Career adaptability and career decision-making self-efficacy are also relevant because they help young people respond to transitions and uncertainty (Fan et al., 2022; Savickas, 2021).

Previous research indicates that career anxiety is shaped by multiple interacting conditions. Internal resources include self-efficacy and achievement motivation, while external resources include parental support, school support, peers, socioeconomic circumstances, and access to career information. Students who doubt their abilities may be more likely to avoid difficult career decisions, whereas supportive environments may provide information, encouragement, and opportunities for exploration. Research on parental support, for example, suggests that supportive family relationships can contribute to career adaptability and vocational identity (Zhang et al., 2021).

The issue is particularly relevant in rapidly changing educational and employment environments. Students are exposed to changing occupational requirements, technological development, competition, and large amounts of information through digital media. Such conditions can provide useful career knowledge, but they can also increase uncertainty. Reviews of student career anxiety emphasize the importance of self-understanding, career information, social support, and preparedness in explaining students' concerns about their futures (Atikah et al., 2023; Hazla et al., 2024).

Preliminary observations in Ambon City indicated similar concerns. Some students reported uncertainty about selecting an appropriate study program, difficulty planning their careers, and fear about what would happen after graduation. Guidance and counseling teachers also reported that not all students had a sufficiently clear understanding of appropriate career directions. Expectations from parents regarding supposedly promising study programs or occupations were also reported as an additional source of pressure.

These conditions suggest that career anxiety should not be understood as the result

of a single variable. It is better viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon involving personal beliefs and motivational resources as well as family, school, peer, economic, and informational contexts. Accordingly, this study examined career anxiety among Grade XI students in four secondary schools in Ambon City and identified the relative prominence of seven factors: career self-efficacy, achievement motivation, parental support, school environment, peer influence, family socioeconomic condition, and career information.

METHODS

This study used a quantitative descriptive design. The research was conducted in four secondary schools in Ambon City, Maluku: SMAS Pertiwi Ambon, SMKS Al-Wathan Ambon, SMAS 45 Ambon, and SMKS Jaya Negara Ambon. Data collection took place in June 2026. The population consisted of 115 Grade XI students, and saturated sampling was used so that all 115 students became respondents. The distribution was 36 students from SMAS Pertiwi Ambon, 34 from SMKS Al-Wathan Ambon, 20 from SMAS 45 Ambon, and 25 from SMKS Jaya Negara Ambon. Data were collected using a career-anxiety questionnaire developed from the theoretical indicators identified in the source thesis. The questionnaire initially contained 72 statements covering career self-efficacy, achievement motivation, parental support, school environment, peer influence, family socioeconomic condition, and career information. Responses were recorded using a four-point Likert scale. After validity testing, 67 items were retained and five items were excluded because their item-total correlation coefficients were below the reported *r*-table value of 0.183. The retained instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.919. Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics, criterion-referenced assessment (PAP), exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and a one-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test. Descriptive analysis was used to calculate the mean, minimum, and maximum scores and to compare the seven factors. PAP was used to classify respondents into low, moderate, and high career-anxiety categories. EFA was conducted using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to assess factorability. A significance value greater than 0.05 was used as the criterion for normality. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The study involved 115 Grade XI students from four secondary schools in Ambon City. The questionnaire initially contained 72 items. Validity testing retained 67 items,

while five items were excluded. The retained instrument showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.919, indicating strong internal consistency.

School	Respondents	Percentage
SMAS Pertiwi Ambon	36	31.3%
SMKS Al-Wathan Ambon	34	29.6%
SMAS 45 Ambon	20	17.4%
SMKS Jaya Negara Ambon	25	21.7%
Total	115	100.0%

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by school

Source: Primary data processed by the researcher, 2026.

The overall career-anxiety score had a mean of 213.96, a minimum of 160, and a maximum of 258, with a standard deviation of 21.564. Based on the criterion-referenced categories, most students were in the moderate category.

Career-anxiety category	n	Percentage
Low	16	13.9%
Moderate	79	68.7%
High	20	17.4%
Total	115	100.0%

Table 2. Career-anxiety categories

Source: Primary data processed by the researcher, 2026.

Factor	Mean	Rank
Career self-efficacy	47.67	1
Achievement motivation	30.42	2
Parental support	30.25	3
School environment	28.93	4
Career information	27.40	5
Family socioeconomic condition	27.26	6
Peers	22.03	7

Table 3. Mean scores of factors related to career anxiety

Source: Primary data processed by the researcher, 2026.

Career self-efficacy had the highest mean score among the seven factors (47.67), followed by achievement motivation (30.42) and parental support (30.25). The school environment had a mean of 28.93, career information 27.40, family socioeconomic

condition 27.26, and peers 22.03.

Indicator	Result	Interpretation
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin	0.634	Adequate factorability
Bartlett's Test	p = 0.000	Significant correlation matrix
Extracted factors	19	Eigenvalue > 1
Cumulative variance	63.294%	Variance explained
Convergence	0.073 after >25 iterations	Interpret cautiously

Table 4. Exploratory factor analysis results

Source: Primary data processed by the researcher, 2026.

The EFA produced a KMO value of 0.634 and a Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significance value of 0.000, indicating that the correlation matrix was sufficiently factorable. Nineteen factors had eigenvalues greater than 1 and collectively explained 63.294% of the variance. However, the extraction process did not reach complete convergence after more than 25 iterations and stopped at a convergence value of 0.073. The factor solution should therefore be interpreted as exploratory rather than definitive.

The one-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test produced a test statistic of 0.055 and an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.200. Because the significance value exceeded 0.05, the career-anxiety scores were considered normally distributed according to the criterion used in the study.

Statistic	Value
N	115
Mean	213.96
Standard deviation	21.564
Absolute difference	0.055
Positive difference	0.047
Negative difference	-0.055
Test statistic	0.055
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.200

Discussion

The dominance of the moderate category suggests that career anxiety was present for most students but did not predominantly reach the high category. Secondary students are in a period of career exploration and identity development, so uncertainty about further study, work, and personal capabilities can be expected. However,

persistent uncertainty may become problematic when students lack adequate resources for career decision-making (Santrock, 2021; Savickas, 2021).

The most prominent factor in the descriptive comparison was career self-efficacy. This finding is theoretically consistent with cognitive approaches to anxiety, in which perceived coping resources influence how threatening a situation becomes (Clark & Beck, 2010). When students believe that they are unable to choose an appropriate study program, compete with others, or overcome future obstacles, career-related situations may be appraised as more threatening. Stronger confidence in one's capability can support more active exploration and decision-making. Previous research has also linked self-efficacy with career preparation and adaptability (Tsai et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2022).

Achievement motivation was the second most prominent factor. Students who have clear goals and a strong desire to achieve may be more active in preparing for future education and employment. At the same time, high performance demands can become a source of pressure when students perceive themselves as unable to meet expected standards. Motivation should therefore be accompanied by realistic goal setting and supportive guidance (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Parental support ranked third. Parents are an important source of emotional support, information, encouragement, and educational resources. Positive support can increase students' confidence when exploring alternatives, whereas excessive pressure to select a particular field may intensify uncertainty if the expected choice conflicts with the student's interests or perceived abilities. Research has identified relationships among career-related parental support, vocational identity, and career adaptability (Zhang et al., 2021).

The school environment also emerged as an important factor. Schools provide structured opportunities for students to receive career information, understand educational pathways, develop decision-making skills, and obtain guidance and counseling services. Strengthening school-based career guidance may therefore be particularly relevant for students who remain uncertain about their post-graduation plans (Hamidah et al., 2024).

Career information had a higher mean than socioeconomic condition and peers. Access to information about higher education, occupations, employment requirements, and career pathways is an important part of students' preparation. In a changing labor market, information should help students understand entry requirements, skill development, educational routes, and alternative pathways (OECD, 2021).

Family socioeconomic condition and peer influence had comparatively lower mean scores. This lower descriptive ranking does not mean that the factors are irrelevant. Financial limitations may affect perceived access to higher education, while peer relationships can provide encouragement and information but may also produce comparison and pressure.

The EFA findings add an important methodological perspective. The KMO value of 0.634 and Bartlett's significance of 0.000 indicate that the item correlations were adequate for exploratory analysis. However, the extraction of 19 factors and incomplete convergence after more than 25 iterations suggest that the structure is complex. The factor solution should therefore not be treated as a definitive model. Future research should replicate the measurement with a larger sample and, where appropriate, confirm the structure using confirmatory factor analysis.

Overall, the findings support a multidimensional understanding of career anxiety among secondary students. The results point especially to the importance of strengthening students' confidence in their own capabilities while simultaneously improving motivational support, family communication, school career services, and access to reliable career information.

CONCLUSION

This study found that career anxiety among 115 Grade XI students in four secondary schools in Ambon City was predominantly at a moderate level. The mean career-anxiety score was 213.96, with a minimum of 160 and a maximum of 258; 68.7% of respondents were in the moderate category, 17.4% in the high category, and 13.9% in the low category. Among the seven factors examined, career self-efficacy had the highest mean (47.67), followed by achievement motivation (30.42), parental support (30.25), school environment (28.93), career information (27.40), family socioeconomic condition (27.26), and peers (22.03). The EFA showed adequate factorability (KMO = 0.634; Bartlett's $p = 0.000$), while 19 extracted factors explained 63.294% of the variance, although incomplete convergence requires cautious interpretation. These findings indicate that career anxiety involves both personal and contextual resources, with self-efficacy emerging as the most prominent factor in the descriptive analysis. Guidance and counseling programs should therefore strengthen career self-efficacy, clarify educational and occupational pathways, provide reliable career information, and encourage supportive parental involvement.

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