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Student Career Maturity: A Study of the Power of Self-Concept and Peer Attachment

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Abstract. This study examines the influence of self-concept and peer attachment on career maturity in Vocational High School "X" students in Ciamis, West Java. The method used is correlational quantitative research. The study population consisted of 576 students, with a sample of 234 students selected using simple random sampling. The data collection instruments used included a career maturity scale ($\alpha=0.732$) modified from career maturity inventory form c, a self-concept scale ($\alpha=0.826$) modified from the questionnaire of self-concept 36, and a peer attachment scale ($\alpha=0.748$) revised from an inventory of parent and peer attachment. Data analysis was performed using multiple linear regression analysis. The results of this study show that self-concept and peer attachment have an essential role in determining the career maturity of Vocational High School students. Partially, it was found that self-concept influenced students' career maturity, while peer attachment did not significantly influence students' career maturity. Nonetheless, it should be noted that social factors remain essential in forming students' career maturity, although they were not considerably proven in this study. Therefore, it is recommended that subsequent researchers investigate other external variables that might affect students' career maturity.

Keywords. Career Maturity, Self-Concept, Peer Attachment, Vocational High School

1. Introduction

The basis of education in Vocational High School is integrating theory and practice in the teaching and learning process. Through this approach, Vocational High Schools present theory and provide valuable opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in authentic contexts. The main objective of this approach is to shape students into individuals who are responsive to the dynamics of job opportunities and able to develop successful careers in the future. By combining theory and practice, Vocational High Schools can provide more comprehensive skills to students. They are passive observers of academic concepts and active actors who can apply these concepts in real situations. Through practical experience, students can understand the complexity of the challenges of the world of work and learn to adapt quickly [1].

As teens enter high school, the challenge of career choice is often a significant concern. Although it is expected that students entering vocational education already have a clear career direction, the reality is that many of them feel confused about the career steps that should be

taken [2]. Symptoms of this problem indicate that students still have difficulties with career maturity.

Career maturity describes a person's level of career development, encompassing the stages that the individual reaches throughout career development, from the exploratory phase to the regression stage. Career maturity can be seen from the compatibility between individual vocational behavior and behavior expected at that age [3]. Career maturity is divided into two dimensions, namely competence and attitude. The attitudinal dimension includes involvement in the career selection process, orientation towards work, independence in career decision-making, preference for factors in career selection, and views towards the career selection process. On the other hand, the competency dimension involves self-assessment, goal setting, planning, mastery of information about work, and the ability to solve career-related problems [4].

Vocational High School students enter the exploratory developmental stage and tentative sub-stage. At this stage, individuals should ensure that they have employment options, exercise those options, and look at the field and level of employment that suits the individual. Affective and cognitive readiness in an individual is an effort to complete developmental tasks given to individuals because biological, *social* development, and *community ambitions* have reached the stage of career development; it is a form of career maturity. A person's success in completing tasks in the career development stage is known as career maturity [5]. Low career maturity can lead to mistakes in career decision-making because they do not have insight into oneself (abilities and skills possessed) and insight into future work (Lestari & Rahardjo, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to research that career maturity influences individuals in achieving success in the career they are interested in.

The research results show that internal locus of control has a positive and significant relationship with career maturity. If students have an internal locus of control, students are likely to feel in control of their fate and decisions, which can contribute to the development of better career maturity [7]. Self-concept is an individual's perception and understanding of who they are, including values, abilities, and life goals. The results of this study suggest that having a positive and confident outlook about oneself can affect the development of career maturity [8]. Peer attachment is the relationship and emotional bond that individuals form with their peers. These findings indicate that support and positive interactions from peers may play a role in shaping an individual's career maturity [9].

The results of other studies reveal that self-esteem plays a vital role in shaping individual career maturity [10].

Similar findings also found that an individual's perception of self-image contributes to the career maturity achieved [11]. Other research also provides valuable insight, stating that higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with increased career maturity. Through this research, it is evident that the emotional aspects of individuals can be influential in shaping career preparation and outlook [6].

Four key aspects are found in the context of the career maturity dimension. First, career planning involves an individual seeking information related to the world of work and the extent to which they feel they understand various aspects of the job. Second, career exploration describes the spirit of individuals in carrying out investigations into different career information from various available sources. Third, career decision-making results from combining individual expertise with the knowledge he has and mature thinking. Finally, in this dimension, information about the world of work also has two components: an understanding of one's

interests and abilities and a sense of how other individuals obtain information related to work [12].

Based on the literature review that has been conducted, researchers put forward the assumption that self-concept can play a significant role in shaping an individual's career maturity. By understanding themselves more deeply, individuals have a greater capacity to achieve desired career goals. On the other hand, related to attachment to peers, this factor also has substantial potential in shaping career maturity. Through close relationships with peers, individuals can gain insight and knowledge about their career fields of interest. Collaboration through discussion and exchanging opinions also allows individuals to gain a broader view. All of these arguments suggest that both self-concept and attachment to peers have the potential to influence the development of students' career maturity in the career selection process.

Self-concept has a strong relationship with career maturity because, through the understanding it has, individuals can direct their choices more clearly in determining their career path. The growth of self-concept that continues to develop with age and experience also contributes to increasing career maturity [13]. As a critical component in individual development, self-concept describes an individual's view of himself. This view is formed through the interaction and experience of the individual with his environment [14].

Individuals form self-concepts through interactions with others. Therefore, the role of self-concept in shaping individual behavior becomes essential [15]. Self-concept is an individual's view of personal identity, self-knowledge, and aspirations toward oneself according to individual expectations [16]. Self-concept contains an individual's physical, social, and psychological perceptions of themselves that are formed through interactions and experiences with others [17].

Almaida & Febriyanti [8] explains that a positive relationship exists between self-concept and career maturity, where a positive self-concept will support achieving a higher level of career maturity. Nonetheless, these findings contradict the conclusions generated by other studies that suggest no positive relationship exists between self-concept and career maturity [18]. A positive level of self-concept significantly contributes to increased career maturity. A positive self-concept allows individuals to have subjective insight into their potential in planning education and careers and introspection to recognize their strengths and weaknesses [17]. Various factors, including life experiences, can influence a person's self-concept. Interpersonal experiences, especially those that produce positive feelings and self-worth, competencies recognized by oneself and the environment, and the achievement of self-actualization, all play a role in shaping an individual's self-concept. All these factors shape an individual's view of themselves and influence the development of career maturity [15].

In addition, another factor considered to have the potential to affect career maturity, namely peer attachment. Peers, often called "peers," refer to individuals nearly equal in age or maturity. In this context, peers are essential to emotional support during the adolescent transition. In the teenage stage, interactions and time spent with peers tend to be more intense than in other life periods [19].

Attachment to peers also has a crucial role because peers' support and positive attention can motivate adolescents to overcome challenges more effectively. Children have a vital source of Trust from caregivers, and attachment to peers can have positive impacts such as increased self-esteem, good academic achievement, better emotional regulation, and superior social skills. Conversely, children who experience poor attachment to caregivers and peers are more susceptible to negative impacts such as behavioral problems and delinquent behavior [20]. If teenagers' social skills are of high quality, they will be more likely to be able to find solutions

to the challenges they face through means such as seeking advice or emotional support [21]. In addition, peers are a crucial element in adolescent social networks, forming an integral part of their lives[20]. Friend attachment significantly influences career maturity if there is self-efficacy [21]. Interaction with peers can also be a valuable source of learning.

Through discussions, exchanging ideas, and shared experiences, individuals can gain new insights into various career options, industry trends, and challenges they may face. This helps them make more informed decisions about the career path to take. In addition, a positive and robust self-concept increases an individual's confidence in facing challenges and opportunities in the career world. Individuals with high levels of self-confidence are more likely to take healthy risks, pursue opportunities, and overcome obstacles more effectively. So the purpose of this study is to determine the influence of self-concept and peer attachment on students' career maturity.

2. Methods

This study used a correlational quantitative approach. The population was 576 students, and the sampling method used was simple random sampling, so the number of samples taken was 234. The sample of male types was 91 students (38.89%), and women were 143 students (61.11%).

The data collection instrument uses a modified career maturity scale from *career maturity inventory form c* [22]. The dimensions used are Career planning, career exploration, decision-making, and information about the world of work. The scale is arranged using the Likert scale; the Likert scale is a scale used to measure the opinions, attitudes, and perceptions of a person or group. Alternative answers consist of Very Appropriate (SS), Appropriate (S), Neutral (N), Non-Compliant (TS), and Very Non-Compliant (STS). The scale includes favorable and unfavorable statements. Examples of items from the career maturity scale are : “*saya merasa memutuskan pekerjaan akan tidak berguna jika masa depan tidak pasti*”. The results of the calculation of the reliability test of the career maturity scale show a reliability coefficient of 0.732 which can be concluded that the career maturity scale is reliable.

Modified self-concept scale of questionnaire of self-concept 36 [23]. The dimensions used in self-concept variables are knowledge, expectation, and assessment. The scale is arranged using the Likert scale; the Likert scale is a scale used to measure the opinions, attitudes, and perceptions of a person or group. Alternative answers consist of Very Appropriate (SS), Appropriate (S), Neutral (N), Non-Compliant (TS), and Very Non-Compliant (STS). The scale includes favorable and unfavorable statements. Examples of items from the self-concept scale are : “*Saya terkadang mengalami rasa cemas ketika akan ujian*”. The results of the reliability test of the self-concept scale resulted in a reliability coefficient of 0.826.

Modified peer attachment scale of inventory of parent and peer attachment[24]. The dimensions of *peer attachment* are Trust, communication, and alienation. The scale is arranged using the Likert scale; the Likert scale is a scale used to measure the opinions, attitudes, and perceptions of a person or group. Alternative answers consist of Very Appropriate (SS), Appropriate (S), Neutral (N), Non-Compliant (TS), and Very Non-Compliant (STS). The scale includes favorable and unfavorable statements. An example of a peer attachment scale is: “*Saya dapat diterima oleh teman-teman.*” After conducting reliability tests on the peer attachment scale, the reliability coefficient was 0.748.

Data analysis used multiple regression analysis with the help of spss for Windows program version 25.0

3. Results and Discussion

Before testing the hypothesis, an assumption test is carried out. The normality test in this study was conducted to determine whether the variables were normal or abnormal. The normality test in this study uses the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov technique* by looking at the significance value, which is expected if $p > 0.05$. The test results of this study obtained the value of $\text{asympt.sig} = 0.200$ ($p > 0.05$); thus, it can be concluded that the variables in this study are normally distributed. Linearity tests are performed to evaluate whether there is a significant linear relationship between two variables. This linearity test is performed using a significance level of 0.05. The analysis results related to the relationship between self-concept variables and career maturity showed a linearity significance value of 0.000, indicating that these variables have a linear relationship. Meanwhile, in the context of the relationship between peer attachment variables and career maturity, a linearity significance value of 0.037 was found, which indicates a linear relationship between the two variables.

The multicollinearity test is run to assess the presence of solid intercorrelations between variables. The absence of intercorrelation between independent variables characterizes the excellent quality of regression models. To ensure that multicollinearity does not occur, a tolerance value of > 0.10 and a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of < 10.00 are required [25]. From the analysis results, it was found that regression models that analyzed the influence of self-concept and peer attachment on career maturity showed no indication of multicollinearity. The self-concept and peer attachment variables have a tolerance value of 0.743 and a VIF value 1.346, respectively.

From the results of the regression test at a significance level of 5%, it was found that the calculated t-value was 7.227 with a significance probability (p) of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis is acceptable, indicating a significant influence between self-concept and career maturity. The results of the regression test at the significance level of 5% also resulted in a calculated t-value of 1.914, with a significance probability value (p) of 0.057 ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that this result does not reach the required significance level. As a result, the second hypothesis is unacceptable, indicating no significant influence between peer attachment and career maturity.

The results of the regression test at the significance level of 5% showed that the calculated F value = 28.040 and the probability value of sig. (p) = 0.000. The influence of self-concept and *peer attachment* on career maturity was significant because $p < 0.05$. Hypothesis three accepted that there was a simultaneously significant influence between self-concept and *peer attachment* on career maturity.

. Previously there has been evidence of a link between self-concept and career maturity in previous research. This relationship indicates that the higher a student's self-concept, the higher their level of career maturity [8]. A positive self-concept helps students better to understand their interests, values, and potential. By having a clear view of themselves, they can more easily determine the career direction that suits their interests and expertise. Students with explicit self-concepts may be more likely to choose a program that matches their interests and competencies. A good self-concept helps students in taking wiser decisions about the career path they will choose. They will be better able to consider options that match their personality, interests, and potential.

Individuals who belong to the group with high self-concept tend to score high on all dimensions of the career maturity scale. This happens because those subjects' views of themselves have high scores. Therefore, to maintain and enhance a positive self-concept, they engage in career exploration, seek career-related information, and develop a positive attitude

toward careers [26]. They are also more competent in choosing career goals, planning steps toward a desired career, and addressing issues related to their career choices. This can be compared to individuals with a low self-concept, who tend to have less positive self-assessments and lower job aspirations, and more difficulty in making decisions and planning their careers.

This study showed no significant influence between peer attachment and career maturity. This finding contrasts previous research findings that relationships with peers can affect career maturity [21]. Although peer attachment, in general, has the potential to influence individual development, relationships with peers can vary. Not all peer relationships have the same impact on career maturity. Some relationships may be less supportive or less relevant to career development. In educational and career settings, support from other individuals such as teachers, career counselors, or parents also has a significant role in assisting vocational high school students in understanding career options, overcoming barriers, and developing career maturity.

The results of this study prove that self-concept and peer attachments can affect career maturity. Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes that individual development is influenced by internal and external factors [27]. In this context, self-concept reflects an individual's view of themselves, including assessing potential, interests, values, and career goals. On the other hand, peer attachment reflects interactions and emotional bonds with peers, which can provide social support, information, and perspectives that influence an individual's perception of the career world. The results of this study suggest that when self-concept and peer attachment work together, they mutually reinforce an individual's career maturity.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the significance of the combined influence of self-concept and peer attachment in shaping the career maturity of Vocational High School students. Individually, the study revealed that self-concept plays a crucial role in influencing students' career maturity. However, the impact of peer attachment on students' career maturity was not found to be statistically significant. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize that social factors are relevant in developing students' career maturity, even if they were not conclusively supported in this study. As a result, future researchers should explore additional external variables that could potentially impact students' career maturity. These variables could encompass broader aspects of social interaction, external support systems, or other psychological factors that may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing career maturity among students. Further investigations into these aspects can enrich our comprehension of the intricate interplay between internal and external factors that shape students' preparation for their future careers.

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