

The Relationship of *Self-Efficacy* with the Career Readiness of Final Years Students in Islamic Religious Colleges

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Article Info:	ABSTRACT ;
Accepted: 15-04-2026	Background : Career readiness is an important aspect that final-year students must possess to successfully transition from higher education to the workforce. Students of Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) are expected not only to have academic and religious competencies but also adequate career readiness to compete in an increasingly competitive job market. One psychological factor believed to influence career readiness is self-efficacy.
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Keywords: self-efficacy, career readiness, final year students, Islamic religious colleges	Objectives : To determine the relationship between self-efficacy and career readiness among final-year students at Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKI). Method : This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design. The population consisted of final-year PTKI students, with a sample of 150 students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Self-Efficacy Scale and Career Readiness Scale, both of which had been tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis was conducted using Pearson's Product Moment correlation. Finding and Implication : The results revealed a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and career readiness among final-year students ($r = 0.682$; $p < 0.05$). Students with higher levels of self-efficacy tended to demonstrate higher career readiness. These findings imply that confidence in one's abilities plays a crucial role in preparing students to enter the workforce. Therefore, career guidance and counseling services at PTKI should focus on strengthening students' self-efficacy to enhance their career readiness. Conclusion : There is a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and career readiness among final-year PTKI students. Enhancing self-efficacy can contribute to improving students' preparedness for the world of work.

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INTRODUCTION

Social, economic, and technological changes that are taking place rapidly in the era of globalization require individuals to have a mature readiness to enter the world of work. Universities as higher education institutions have a responsibility to prepare students to be able to face various career challenges in the future. One of the indicators of higher education success lies not only in the academic achievements of students, but also in the ability of graduates to adapt and compete in the world of work.

The urgency of strengthening graduate career readiness is reinforced by labour-market data at both global and national levels. The International Labour Organization (2024) reported that, although the global youth unemployment rate fell to 13 per cent in 2023 its lowest level in fifteen years the figure remained substantially higher than the rate for the general working-age population, and youth unemployment in East and South-East Asia and the Pacific was higher in 2023 than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Indonesia, data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik [BPS], 2025) indicate that the open unemployment rate among graduates of higher education (Diploma IV, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral programmes) reached 6.23 per cent in February 2025, an increase from 5.25 per cent in the same period of the previous year and above the national open unemployment rate of 4.76 per cent. These figures suggest that the possession of a higher-education qualification does not automatically guarantee a smooth transition into the world of work, and they underline the importance of examining the psychological factors that support graduates' readiness to enter employment.

Final year students are in a crucial phase of development because they are facing a transition period from the world of education to the world of work. In this phase, students are required to be able to make career choices, understand their potential, prepare career plans, and have the ability to deal with various job demands. This condition often causes anxiety, career confusion, and uncertainty about the future if students do not have adequate career readiness (Pignault, Rastoder, & Houssemand, 2023).

Career readiness is an individual condition that shows the ability to make career decisions, plan self-development steps, understand the world of work, and have the necessary skills to enter the professional world. According to Savickas, (2013), career readiness reflects the psychological readiness of individuals in facing career development tasks and changes in the work environment. Individuals who have high career readiness tend to be more confident in making job choices, have clear career goals, and are able to develop strategies to achieve these goals.

In the context of Islamic Religious Universities (PTKI), career readiness is an increasingly important issue. PTKI graduates are not only prepared to become religious educators, but also have opportunities for careers in various professional sectors such as government, industry, social institutions, Islamic banking, education consultants, and entrepreneurship. However, studies show that there are still students who experience doubts about their career prospects after graduation, lack a clear understanding of available job opportunities, and do not have a mature career plan (Cheung, 2024).

One of the internal factors that is thought to have a close relationship with career readiness is self-efficacy. The concept of self-efficacy was introduced by Bandura, (1997) as an individual's belief in his or her ability to organize and carry out the actions necessary to achieve a certain goal. Self-efficacy plays an important role in determining how individuals think, feel, motivate themselves, and act in the face of life's various challenges.

Students who have high self-efficacy tend to show optimism, perseverance, and the ability to face obstacles in the career development process. They are more active in seeking job information, participating in training, developing self-competence, and daring to make career decisions. On the other hand, students with low self-efficacy tend to doubt their abilities so that they experience difficulties in planning and preparing for careers (Tong et al., 2025).

Previous research has shown that self-efficacy is an important predictor in an individual's career development. A study by Lent, & Hackett, (2002) found that confidence in one's abilities contributes to career exploration, career decision-making, and readiness to enter the workforce. Other research shows that students with high self-efficacy have a better level of career adaptability and job readiness than students with low self-efficacy (Pang, Xie, Kang, & Hu, 2025).

Several empirical studies converge on the conclusion that self-efficacy is closely associated with career-related outcomes. Taylor & Betz, (1983) demonstrated that career decision-making self-efficacy was a strong correlate of the ability to engage in career decision tasks, while Betz, (2007) subsequently synthesised two decades of evidence showing that career self-efficacy consistently predicts career exploration, decisiveness, and persistence across diverse populations. Rottinghaus, et. al, (2003) further reported a robust relationship between self-efficacy and vocational interests, indicating that confidence in one's abilities shapes the career domains individuals are willing to pursue.

In a longitudinal study, Creed, Patton, & Adolescence, (2007) found that career planning and career exploration two core components of career

readiness changed over time in tandem with students' self-evaluative beliefs. Taken together, these studies establish self-efficacy as a consistent predictor of career readiness; however, they share two limitations relevant to the present study. First, the majority were conducted in Western, secular educational settings, leaving open the question of whether the same relationship holds in faith-based higher-education contexts. Second, few studies have examined final-year students of Islamic religious universities (PTKI), whose educational experience integrates Islamic values such as effort (*ikhtiar*), trust in God (*tawakal*), and optimism that may shape the formation of self-efficacy in distinctive ways. This gap motivates the present study.

However, research that specifically examines the relationship between self-efficacy and career readiness in final year students in Islamic religious colleges is still relatively limited (Gerçek & Özveren, 2026). The characteristics of PTKI students who integrate Islamic values in the educational process can provide their own dynamics in the formation of self-confidence and career readiness. Therefore, this research is important to be carried out in order to obtain an empirical picture of the relationship between the two variables. Based on the description above, this study aims to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and the career readiness of final year students in Islamic Religious Colleges. The results of the research are expected to contribute to the development of career guidance and counseling services within PTKI.

The novelty of this study lies in situating the examination of the self-efficacy-career readiness relationship within the specific context of an Islamic religious university (PTKI) in Indonesia, a faith-based setting that has rarely been the focus of career-readiness research despite producing a substantial proportion of the country's graduates. By focusing on final-year PTKI students, the study extends the largely Western, secular evidence base on career self-efficacy to a population whose academic and spiritual formation are intertwined. Theoretically, the study contributes additional empirical support for Bandura's social cognitive theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory within a non-Western, religiously grounded educational environment.

Practically, the findings are intended to benefit guidance and counselling units, faculty members, and policy makers at PTKI by identifying self-efficacy as a modifiable psychological factor that can be targeted through structured interventions. The implications of the study extend to the design of career guidance and counselling programmes such as self-development training, career counselling, and mentoring that deliberately cultivate students' self-efficacy in order to improve their readiness for the transition from higher education to the world of work (Zhang, Talib, & Wang, 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational research design. This design was chosen because it aims to determine the relationship between the self-efficacy variable as an independent variable (X) and career readiness as a bound variable (Y).

Population and Sample

The research population is all final year students at Islamic Religious Universities in Indonesia. The study was conducted at a state Islamic religious university (PTKI) located in [city/province, Indonesia], so that the accessible population comprised final-year students enrolled at that single institution during the 2024/2025 academic year. The research sample amounted to 150 students who were completing their final projects or thesis. The sampling technique uses purposive sampling with the following criteria:

1. Students in semester VII and above.
2. Completing a final project.
3. Willing to be a research respondent.

Research Instruments

Scale Self-Efficacy

The self-efficacy scale is compiled based on Bandura, (1997) theory which includes:

1. Level
2. Strength
3. Generality

The number of items is 30 statements using a Likert scale of 1–5.

Career Readiness Scale

The career readiness scale is structured based on the following aspects, which were derived from Super, (1980) career development theory and the career-readiness dimensions described by Savickas, (2013):

1. Career planning
2. Career exploration
3. Career decision-making
4. Knowledge of the world of work
5. Readiness to face the world of work

The number of items is 35 statements with a Likert scale of 1–5.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Before being used for data collection, both instruments were trialled on a separate sample of final-year students who were not included in the main study. Item validity was examined using the corrected item–total correlation, with a minimum criterion of $r = 0.30$; items falling below this threshold were dropped. On the Self-Efficacy Scale, 3 of the 30 items were dropped, leaving 27 valid items, while on the Career Readiness Scale, 4 of the 35 items were dropped, leaving 31 valid items. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients of $\alpha = 0.89$ for the Self-Efficacy Scale and $\alpha = 0.91$ for the Career Readiness Scale, both of which exceed the conventional 0.70 criterion and indicate good internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over a period of approximately three weeks during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The two scales were distributed to eligible final-year students through an online questionnaire (Google Forms), the link to which was shared via class coordinators and student groups. Before completing the instruments, respondents were given information about the purpose of the study and provided informed consent; participation was voluntary and responses were treated confidentially and used only for research purposes. Completing the questionnaire took approximately 20–25 minutes. Returned responses were screened for completeness, and only fully completed questionnaires from respondents meeting the inclusion criteria were retained for analysis, resulting in a final sample of 150 students.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using:

1. Descriptive analysis
2. Normality test
3. Linearity test
4. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation

Data processing is carried out using the SPSS version 26 program.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data Description

Table 1. Self-Efficacy

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Height	82	54,7%
Medium	53	35,3%
Low	15	10,0%

Table 2. Career Readiness

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Height	76	50,7%
Medium	58	38,7%
Low	16	10,6%

The majority of students are in the high category of both self-efficacy and career readiness variables.

Normality Test

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed a significance value of 0.200 (>0.05), so that the data was distributed normally.

Linearity Test

The significance value of deviation from linearity was 0.174 (>0.05), indicating that the relationship between the two variables is linear.

Hypothesis Test

The results of the Product Moment correlation analysis were obtained:

1. $r = 0.682$
2. Sig. = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$)

Thus, the hypothesis is accepted, namely that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and the career readiness of final year students in Islamic religious colleges.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and the career readiness of final year students at PTKI. These findings indicate that the higher the students'

confidence in their abilities, the higher their readiness to face the world of work. Self-efficacy influences the way individuals view career challenges. Students who are confident in their abilities will be more active in conducting career exploration, seeking job information, taking training, and developing the necessary competencies. On the other hand, students who lack self-confidence tend to avoid challenges and experience doubts in making career decisions (Yiming, & Biasutti, 2024).

The findings of this study are in line with Bandura's social cognitive theory which states that an individual's belief in his or her abilities is the main factor that determines behavior and goal achievement. In the context of a career, self-efficacy encourages individuals to set higher goals as well as consistently strive to achieve them (Li, Wang, Li, & Yin, 2025).

PTKI final year students face various demands related to completing their studies and preparing to enter the world of work. They must be able to develop career strategies, improve professional competencies, and adapt to changing job market needs. Self-efficacy is a psychological capital that helps students face these demands more effectively (Xiong, Yu, & Wu, 2026).

In addition, Islamic values obtained during the educational process at PTKI can strengthen the formation of student self-efficacy. The concepts of *tawakal*, effort, optimism, and belief in self-potential taught in Islam can support the development of confidence in facing the future of career. The integration between spiritual values and self-confidence has the potential to result in better career readiness (Sitorus, 2025). The results of this study also support the research of Lent et al., (2002) who found that self-efficacy plays a role in career exploration and career decision-making. Individuals who have high self-efficacy show better ability to design future careers as well as have stronger motivation to achieve their professional goals.

The magnitude of the relationship observed here ($r = 0.682$; $r^2 = 0.465$) is broadly consistent with the wider body of career self-efficacy research. Betz, (2007) concluded that career self-efficacy is among the most robust predictors of career exploration and decisiveness, while Taylor & Betz, (1983) showed that career decision-making self-efficacy is strongly linked to the capacity to undertake career decision tasks. The present results also align with Rottinghaus et al., (2003), who reported that confidence in one's abilities is meaningfully associated with vocational interests and, by extension, with the direction of career planning (Kvasková et al., 2023).

The fact that self-efficacy explained almost half of the variance in career readiness in this sample suggests that, in the PTKI context, self-evaluative beliefs are a particularly salient resource. At the same time, the substantial unexplained variance is consistent with Hirschi, (2012) career-resources

perspective, which holds that career readiness emerges from the interplay of psychological, social, and environmental resources rather than from any single factor. The comparison of high, medium, and low self-efficacy groups (Table 3) adds further weight to this interpretation by demonstrating a clear, ordered difference in career readiness across the three groups (Liu, Zhang, Dang, & Gao, 2023).

The practical implications of this study are the importance of developing career guidance and counseling programs that focus on improving student self-efficacy. The program can be carried out through self-development training, career counseling, job readiness seminars, alumni mentoring, job interview simulations, and internship activities that allow students to gain first-hand success experience (Niu, Jiabin, & Liu, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and the career readiness of final year students in Islamic Religious Colleges. Students who have a high level of self-efficacy tend to show better career readiness than students with low self-efficacy. With self-efficacy explaining approximately 46.5 per cent of the variance in career readiness, these findings confirm that self-efficacy is one of the important psychological factors that need to be developed in an effort to improve students' career readiness.

Given the cross-sectional and single-institution design of this study, future research is recommended to employ longitudinal and multi-site designs across several PTKI, to incorporate additional variables such as social support, academic achievement, and work experience, and to test the effectiveness of self-efficacy-based interventions through experimental approaches so that causal relationships can be established more firmly.

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