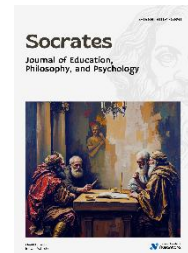




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Examining the Relationship Between Fear of Failure and Career Indecision Among Final-Year University Students in Bekasi City

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Abstract: Career anxiety constitutes one of the most prevalent psychological challenges encountered by final-year undergraduate students as they navigate the critical transition from higher education to the labor market. This condition has the potential to impair the process of career decision-making, particularly among individuals characterized by elevated levels of fear of failure. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between fear of failure and career indecision among final-year undergraduate students in Bekasi City. A quantitative approach with a correlational design was employed. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, yielding a final sample of 100 students who met the predetermined inclusion criteria. Data were collected using an adapted version of the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI; Conroy, 2001) to assess fear of failure, and an adapted version of the Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ; Gati et al., 1996) to measure career indecision. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment correlation. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between fear of failure and career indecision ($r = .494$; $p < .001$). The majority of participants exhibited high levels of fear of failure and moderate levels of career indecision. These findings indicate that higher fear of failure is associated with greater difficulty in making career decisions. The study contributes to the literature on career psychology and offers an empirical basis for developing targeted psychological interventions to support students in their career decision-making process.

Keywords: Fear of Failure, Career Indecision, Final-Year University Students

INTRODUCTION

Final-year undergraduate students occupy a critical developmental juncture characterized by the transition from the academic environment to the professional world. At this stage, individuals are not only required to fulfill their remaining academic obligations but are simultaneously confronted with the pressing demand to formulate concrete and consequential career decisions. This dual burden frequently constitutes a significant source of psychological distress, as students must reconcile their personal interests, perceived competencies, and the realities of an increasingly competitive labor market.

A prominent psychological phenomenon observed among final-year students in this transitional context is *career anxiety*. *Career anxiety* refers to a psychological state characterized by persistent worry, apprehension, and fear regarding one's vocational future, including concerns about the inability to secure suitable employment, difficulty competing in the job market, and uncertainty about post-graduation career prospects. Pertiwi et al. (2023), in their investigation of emotional maturity among university students, demonstrated that unresolved negative psychological states including maladaptive anxiety are closely associated with deficits in emotion regulation, which in turn impede the individual's capacity for effective decision-making. Hiaruman & Pratama (2025) similarly confirmed that *career anxiety* represents one of the primary barriers to work readiness among Generation Z final-year students. Indarti et al. (2026) further documented that final-year students in Bekasi City experience substantial anxiety related to workplace competition, an uncertain future, and the pressure to promptly enter the labor market following graduation.

Career anxiety does not merely affect students' general psychological well-being; it also disrupts the process of career decision-making in consequential ways. Imanda et al. (2024) demonstrated that psychological instability encompassing anxiety and emotional distress impairs individuals' capacity for rational and goal-directed judgment. A comparable dynamic emerges when students struggling with the fear of failure find themselves unable to systematically evaluate career alternatives, as their cognitive resources become predominantly oriented toward potential negative outcomes rather than prospective opportunities. Consequently, such individuals tend to defer decisions and harbor persistent doubts about their chosen career path. In the career psychology literature, this condition is conceptualized as *career indecision* a state of difficulty in committing to a vocational choice attributable to insufficient readiness, limited access to relevant occupational information, or the presence of internally inconsistent information (Gati et al., 1996).

A substantial body of empirical research has identified multiple psychological determinants of *career indecision*, including emotional intelligence, career decision-making self-efficacy, and social support. Among the variables that have received comparatively less empirical scrutiny in the Indonesian context is *fear of failure*. *Fear of failure* is conceptualized as a dispositional tendency to anticipate and cognitively appraise the potential negative consequences of failure, thereby orienting the individual toward avoidance of failure-relevant situations Conroy (2001). Permadi & Pertiwi (2024) found that deficient emotion regulation frequently rooted in fear of adverse evaluation was positively associated with maladaptive behavioral patterns among university students. Among final-year undergraduates, *fear of failure* may manifest as trepidation about making an erroneous career choice, apprehension about remaining unemployed after graduation, or anxiety about failing to meet parental expectations, all of which may render individuals susceptible to avoidance and deferral of career decision-making.

Prior research has consistently linked *fear of failure* to various dysfunctional patterns in decision-making. Ríos & Fernández (2025) found that individuals with elevated *fear of failure* tend to exhibit heightened risk aversion and self-doubt when faced with choices of consequence. Duru et al. (2024) provided further evidence that *fear of failure* correlates positively with procrastinatory behavior, which directly inhibits decisive action. Hutahaeen et al. (2025) additionally established that elevated psychological burden including fear-based cognitions contributes to increased aggressivity and diminished adaptive coping capacity in individuals under occupational stress. Notwithstanding these contributions, empirical studies specifically examining the relationship between *fear of failure* and *career indecision* among final-year students in Bekasi City remain scarce. The present study was therefore conducted to address this gap, with the objective of advancing the scientific understanding of the psychological factors underlying career decision-making difficulties in this population.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between *fear of failure* and *career indecision* among final-year undergraduate students in Bekasi City. A correlational design was deemed appropriate given the study's objective to identify associations between the two variables without imposing experimental manipulation. Data collection was conducted online via Google Forms, distributed to students enrolled at various higher education institutions in Bekasi City. All submitted responses were subjected to a systematic screening procedure to verify compliance with the established inclusion criteria, ensuring that only eligible data were retained for analysis.

The target population comprised final-year undergraduate students at higher education institutions in Bekasi City. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) active enrollment in a bachelor's (S1) degree program, (2) currently in semester 8 through 14, (3) enrolled at a university located in Bekasi City, and (4) not on academic leave. Following the screening process, a total of 100 participants who met all inclusion criteria were included in the final sample.

Two measurement instruments were employed in this study. The first was an adapted version of the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI), originally developed by Conroy (2001), used to assess *fear of failure*. The second was an adapted version of the Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ), originally developed by Gati et al. (1996), used to measure *career indecision*. Validity testing indicated that the *fear of failure* scale comprised 24 valid items, while the *career indecision* scale comprised 23 valid items.

Data analyses were conducted using JASP (version 0.97.1.0). Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were subjected to the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test and a linearity test to verify that the parametric assumptions underlying the Pearson correlation were satisfactorily met. The primary hypothesis was subsequently evaluated using Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis. Descriptive statistical analyses were also conducted to characterize the sample and to delineate the distributional properties of *fear of failure* and *career indecision* scores across categorical classifications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study recruited final-year undergraduate students from multiple higher education institutions in Bekasi City. Data were gathered online through a questionnaire disseminated to participants who satisfied the study's eligibility criteria. Prior to analysis, all collected data underwent a rigorous screening process to confirm adherence to the predetermined inclusion criteria. The sociodemographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	33	33%
Female	67	67%
Semester		
8	94	94%
10	4	4%
12	2	2%

As shown in Table 1, the majority of participants were enrolled in semester 8 (94%), with the remainder in semester 10 (4%) and semester 12 (2%). This distribution indicates that the sample was predominantly composed of students in the terminal phase of their undergraduate studies who were actively confronting the transition to professional life, thereby confirming the representativeness of the sample relative to the study's conceptual focus. Descriptive statistics for both study variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Category
Fear of Failure	88,05	17,65	High
Career Indecision	143,10	35,84	Moderate

Table 2 reveals that the majority of participants were categorized as having high *fear of failure* and moderate *career indecision*. These findings suggest that most final-year students in the sample harbor a strong disposition toward anticipating the negative consequences of failure manifesting as fears of choosing the wrong career path, concerns about post-graduation unemployment, or anxiety about failing to meet familial expectations. Azmi et al. (2024), in their examination of the psychosocial conditions of young adults in Bekasi City, noted that structural situational pressures including elevated regional unemployment rates exacerbate career-related anxiety and worry among youth, thereby contextualizing the high fear-of-failure scores observed in this sample. Conversely, moderate *career indecision* scores indicate that participants possess a general sense of their prospective career direction, yet continue to experience uncertainty in committing to a definitive vocational choice. Such indecision may originate from limited access to occupational information, insufficient confidence in one's competencies, or the inherent complexity of evaluating multiple career alternatives. Prior to hypothesis testing, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test and the linearity test confirmed that the data were normally distributed and that the two variables shared a linear relationship, satisfying the assumptions required for Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Analysis Results

Variable	r	p
Fear of Failure – Career Indecision	0,494	<0,001

As presented in Table 3, the Pearson correlation coefficient was $r = .494$ ($p < .001$), indicating a statistically significant positive relationship between *fear of failure* and *career indecision* among final-year undergraduate students in Bekasi City. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected, and the study hypothesis was supported. A coefficient of .494 situates the association in the moderate range, signifying that *fear of failure* and *career indecision* share a meaningful but not exclusive association. The positive directionality of the relationship indicates that higher levels of *fear of failure* are associated with greater career decision-making difficulty, while lower *fear of failure* corresponds to fewer difficulties in committing to a vocational choice. These findings suggest that fear-based cognitive appraisals of potential failure have a substantive bearing on the extent to which students experience uncertainty in their post-graduation career planning.

The present results demonstrate that students with elevated *fear of failure* are more prone to deliberative hesitation and avoidance in vocational decision-making. Fear of choosing an inappropriate career, anxiety about unemployment following graduation, and concern about disappointing family expectations collectively function as psychological inhibitors that motivate deferral of commitment and undermine students' confidence in their chosen direction. This pattern is consistent with the theoretical perspective advanced by Pertiwi et al. (2023), who established that maladaptive emotion regulation frequently conditioned by fear of negative evaluation directly impairs an individual's capacity to engage in rational and autonomous decision-making. The present findings further corroborate the empirical conclusions of Ríos and Fernández (2025), Duru et al. (2024), and Park et al. (2025), all of whom have documented the central role of *fear of failure* in decision-making impairment across diverse populations.

The moderate magnitude of the correlation coefficient underscores that *fear of failure* is not the sole psychological determinant of *career indecision*. A range of additional intrapersonal and contextual factors including career adaptability, career decision-making self-efficacy, and perceived social support are likely to exert independent and interactive influences on the career decision-making process. Saputra et al. (2026) have further demonstrated that occupational stressors, including psychological safety and perceived workload at the organizational level,

moderate individuals' capacity for adaptive decision-making, suggesting that the antecedents of career indecision extend beyond dispositional characteristics. A comprehensive understanding of *career indecision* in undergraduate populations therefore necessitates multivariate investigations that integrate both psychological and contextual predictors within a theoretically grounded framework.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides empirical evidence for the relationship between *fear of failure* and *career indecision* among final-year undergraduate students in Bekasi City. Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive association between the two variables ($r = .494$; $p < .001$), indicating that elevated *fear of failure* is meaningfully associated with heightened career decision-making difficulty. Although the strength of the relationship was moderate, the findings affirm that *fear of failure* constitutes a psychologically relevant variable in understanding the dynamics of career indecision in this population.

From a practical standpoint, these findings underscore the importance of developing targeted psychological interventions designed to assist students in managing *fear of failure* as a mechanism for enhancing career decision-making efficacy. Integrative career counseling programs encompassing components of emotion regulation, self-efficacy enhancement, and structured career planning should be systematically implemented within university settings. Future research is encouraged to examine additional psychological predictors of *career indecision*, including career adaptability, career decision-making self-efficacy, and parental social support, in order to construct a more comprehensive and theoretically nuanced account of the factors that shape vocational decision-making processes among final-year undergraduates.

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