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Self-Efficacy and Career Maturity in Students' Work Readiness

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Abstrak

Kesiapan kerja mahasiswa menjadi isu penting karena perubahan teknologi, kecerdasan buatan, dan tuntutan kompetensi membuat transisi dari perguruan tinggi menuju dunia kerja semakin kompleks. Artikel ini bertujuan mensintesis bukti empiris mengenai hubungan efikasi diri dan kematangan karier dengan kesiapan kerja mahasiswa. Kajian dilakukan menggunakan systematic literature review dengan kerangka Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses 2020. Literatur tahun 2021–2026 ditelusuri melalui Google Scholar, GARUDA, Sage Journal, Publish or Perish dan laman penerbit jurnal yang dapat diverifikasi. Sebanyak 15 studi empiris dipilih untuk sintesis naratif berdasarkan kriteria relevansi, populasi pendidikan tinggi, dan kecukupan informasi metodologis. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa efikasi diri secara konsisten berhubungan positif dengan kesiapan kerja atau employability, baik secara langsung maupun melalui motivasi, adaptabilitas, dan pengalaman pengembangan diri. Kematangan karier juga menunjukkan hubungan positif, terutama melalui pemahaman diri, eksplorasi, perencanaan, dan pengambilan keputusan karier. Sintesis menunjukkan bahwa kedua faktor perlu dikembangkan secara integratif bersama pengalaman organisasi, magang, soft skills, dan layanan bimbingan karier. Temuan ini memberikan dasar bagi penelitian kuantitatif mengenai hubungan efikasi diri dan kematangan karier dengan kesiapan kerja mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: efikasi diri; kematangan karier; kesiapan kerja; mahasiswa; bimbingan karier.

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Abstract

Students' work readiness has become increasingly important as technological change, artificial intelligence, and shifting competency demands complicate the transition from higher education to employment. This article aims to synthesize empirical evidence concerning self-efficacy and career maturity in relation to students' work readiness. A systematic literature review was conducted using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses 2020 framework. Literature published between 2021 and 2026 was searched through Google Scholar, GARUDA, DOAJ, and verifiable journal-publisher pages. Fifteen empirical studies were selected for narrative synthesis based on relevance, higher-education populations, and methodological adequacy. The findings show that self-efficacy is consistently and positively associated with work readiness or employability, both directly and through mechanisms such as motivation, adaptability, and developmental experiences. Career maturity is also positively associated with work readiness through self-understanding, career exploration, planning, and decision making. The synthesis indicates that these psychological factors should be developed together with organizational experience, internships, soft skills, and structured career guidance. The review provides a foundation for subsequent quantitative research examining the partial and simultaneous relationships of self-efficacy and career maturity with students' work readiness.

Keywords: self-efficacy; career maturity; work readiness; university students; career guidance

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and changes in occupational structures have made the transition from higher education to employment increasingly complex. Universities are therefore expected to prepare students not only through disciplinary knowledge but also through psychological resources, generic skills, practical experience, and career planning. The World Economic Forum (2025) estimates that 39% of workers' core skills will change or become outdated between 2025 and 2030. Skills expected to rise in importance include technological literacy, analytical thinking, creative thinking, resilience, flexibility, agility, and lifelong learning. These developments underline the growing importance of work readiness in higher education.

In Indonesia, the urgency is also visible in labour-market dynamics. Statistics Indonesia reported 153.05 million people in the labour force and 145.77 million employed people in February 2025. The open unemployment rate was 4.76%, with the absolute number of unemployed people reaching approximately 7.28 million. These figures cannot be interpreted as evidence that unemployment is caused by low work readiness alone, but they provide an important context for understanding the competitive transition from education to employment. Research on psychological and career-development factors that support students' work readiness is therefore relevant.

Work readiness has been conceptualized as a combination of personal characteristics, work competence, organizational acumen, and social intelligence that enables individuals to enter and perform effectively in work settings (Caballero et al., 2011). The construct overlaps with employability but is not identical to it. Work readiness emphasizes preparedness to meet work demands, whereas employability encompasses broader capacities to obtain, sustain, and develop employment. Orr et al. (2023) demonstrated that higher-education work-readiness research still uses varied definitions and assessment approaches, highlighting the need for focused synthesis of psychological determinants.

Self-efficacy is one of the most consistently discussed individual factors. In social cognitive theory, self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs about their capability to organize and execute actions required to attain goals (Bandura, 1997). Such beliefs influence behavioural choices, effort, persistence, responses to obstacles, and interpretations of success and failure. In career contexts, students who believe in their capabilities are more likely to explore occupational options, seek competence-building experiences, face recruitment processes, and adapt to unfamiliar environments.

Recent empirical evidence supports this relationship. Cahyaning et al. (2023) found a positive and significant association between self-efficacy and work readiness among undergraduate and applied undergraduate students. Wulandari et al. (2024) reported a positive effect of self-efficacy on employability among final-year students, while Dwiriyanto et al. (2024) identified self-efficacy and organizational experience as significant predictors of students' work readiness at Universitas Negeri Jakarta. International evidence further suggests that self-efficacy may operate through social adaptability, achievement motivation, and learning processes (Li et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2021).

A second relevant factor is career maturity. From Super's developmental perspective, career maturity refers to an individual's readiness to manage career-development tasks appropriate to the person's life stage (Super, 1990). For university students, these tasks include understanding the self, exploring alternatives, obtaining occupational information, planning for the future, and making realistic career decisions. Career maturity therefore concerns more than choosing an occupation; it reflects the readiness to connect personal characteristics, education, experience, and labour-market demands.

Evidence linking career maturity to work readiness is becoming clearer. Agustina and Dwanoko (2021) reported that career maturity made a substantial contribution to explaining work readiness among information-systems students. Rofi et al. (2023) found that career maturity and self-efficacy both significantly affected students' work readiness. More recent

evidence from Dwiratnasari et al. (2026) showed a strong positive relationship between career maturity and work readiness among psychology students ($r = .655$, $p < .05$). These findings indicate that work readiness depends not only on the ability to perform tasks but also on clarity of career direction and developmental preparedness.

However, previous studies have often examined self-efficacy, career maturity, work experience, career adaptability, or related variables separately. Some studies include multiple predictors, but evidence specifically synthesizing self-efficacy and career maturity as two psychological factors associated with students' work readiness remains limited. Earlier reviews of Indonesian higher-education work readiness have emphasized individual, practical-experience, and institutional factors, but have not focused specifically on the combined psychological role of self-efficacy and career maturity. Agustin et al. (2025), for example, identified individual factors as the dominant category in Indonesian work-readiness research.

Accordingly, this systematic literature review aims to identify, evaluate, and synthesize empirical evidence concerning self-efficacy and career maturity in relation to students' work readiness. Three questions guide the review: (1) what evidence exists for the relationship between self-efficacy and students' work readiness or employability; (2) what evidence exists for the relationship between career maturity and students' work readiness; and (3) how can the two factors be understood integratively as a basis for career guidance and counseling in higher education? The review is intended to clarify the research gap and provide a theoretical foundation for a subsequent quantitative study examining the two predictors simultaneously.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) with a narrative synthesis approach to systematically identify, examine, evaluate, and synthesize empirical evidence concerning the relationships between self-efficacy, career maturity, and students' work readiness. The SLR approach was considered appropriate because the purpose of this study was not to collect primary data directly from students, but rather to integrate findings from previously published empirical studies in order to identify consistent patterns, differences, and research gaps related to the psychological and career-development factors associated with students' readiness to enter the workforce. The review process was guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 framework, which provides a systematic procedure for reporting the identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion of relevant studies.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted by focusing primarily on publications published between 2021 and 2026 in order to obtain recent empirical evidence that reflects the current development of students' work readiness in response to technological transformation, changing employment demands, and developments in career preparation. The literature search was conducted through several academic and research information sources, including Google Scholar, GARUDA, DOAJ, Sage Journal, Publish or Perish, and verifiable journal publisher websites. These sources were selected to provide access to both indonesian and international studies relevant to higher education, career development, self-efficacy, employability, and work readiness. the search process used combinations of keywords such as "self-efficacy" and "work readiness", "self-efficacy" and employability and students, "career maturity" and "work readiness", "career maturity" and employability and university students, as well as related terms such as "career readiness" and "career guidance". boolean operators such as and and or were used to

combine and refine the keywords so that the search could identify studies that were sufficiently broad in scope while remaining relevant to the research objectives.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure that the studies included in the review were relevant to the research objectives, the identified literature was assessed using predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) empirical research involving university students, undergraduate students, final-year students, or other higher-education populations that were relevant to the context of the present review; (2) studies that examined at least one of the main constructs, namely self-efficacy, career maturity, work readiness, employability, career readiness, or other conceptually related constructs; (3) studies that provided sufficient methodological information concerning the participants, variables, research design, measurement procedures, analytical methods, and major findings; (4) studies published between 2021 and 2026 as the primary empirical evidence base; and (5) studies published in either Indonesian or English.

Meanwhile, studies were excluded when they consisted of opinion articles, editorials, news reports, purely conceptual articles without empirical findings, studies that did not address the research focus, or publications for which sufficient information could not be obtained to assess the research methodology and findings. Previous systematic literature reviews identified during the search process were not treated as primary empirical evidence; instead, they were used only to provide contextual information and to support the mapping of the broader research landscape concerning students' work readiness.

Article Selection Process

The selection of studies was conducted systematically according to the stages recommended in the PRISMA 2020 framework. The first stage was identification, in which potentially relevant records were collected from the selected academic databases and other verifiable sources. The second stage was screening, in which the titles and abstracts of the identified records were examined to determine whether the studies were relevant to the population, variables, and objectives of the review. Studies that were clearly unrelated to the research focus were excluded at this stage. The third stage was eligibility assessment, in which the full text of potentially relevant articles was examined more carefully to determine whether each study fulfilled all predetermined inclusion criteria. The final stage was inclusion, in which studies that satisfied the eligibility requirements were retained as the primary evidence for the narrative synthesis.

Following this selection process, 15 empirical studies were retained as the principal evidence base for the present systematic literature review. The characteristics and findings of each selected study were subsequently extracted and organized according to the author and publication year, research context or country, participant characteristics, variables examined, research design, analytical approach, and major findings. This systematic extraction process was conducted to facilitate comparison among studies and to identify recurring findings concerning the relationships between self-efficacy, career maturity, and students' work readiness.

Data Analysis and Narrative Synthesis

The findings were analyzed using narrative synthesis because the selected studies demonstrated differences in terms of participant characteristics, research settings, measurement instruments, research designs, and statistical analysis techniques. These

methodological variations made statistical pooling through meta-analysis inappropriate for the present review. Instead, the findings were systematically compared according to the direction of the relationships identified, the statistical significance or effect indicators reported by the original studies, the variables examined, and the potential mechanisms through which psychological and career-development factors may be associated with students' work readiness.

The synthesis was organized into three main themes. The first theme examined empirical evidence concerning the relationship between self-efficacy and students' work readiness or employability. The second theme focused on the relationship between career maturity and students' work readiness. The third theme examined the integrative relationship between self-efficacy, career maturity, and work readiness, including the potential contribution of developmental experiences such as organizational involvement, internship experiences, adaptability, motivation, and soft-skill development. The synthesis also considered the consistency between research objectives, research designs, participant characteristics, measurement procedures, analytical methods, reported findings, and conclusions in order to provide a balanced interpretation of the available evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Fifteen empirical studies formed the main evidence base. Most studies were conducted in Indonesia, while several were conducted in China and other higher-education contexts. Quantitative survey designs predominated, using correlation, regression, path analysis, or structural equation modeling. The overall literature therefore provides reasonably consistent evidence of associations relevant to work readiness, but it remains dominated by cross-sectional designs and self-report measures.

Table 1. Synthesis of the Empirical Studies Reviewed

Study	Context	Participants	Focus	Main finding
Agustina & Dwanoko (2021)	Indonesia	150 Information Systems students	Career maturity + future time perspective	Career maturity explained 33% of work readiness; combined model 38%.
Fitriyana et al. (2021)	Indonesia	SMK students	Self-efficacy + work readiness	Self-efficacy significantly predicted work readiness.
Qamaria & Astuti (2021)	Indonesia	University students	Career maturity intervention	Cognitive information processing approach addressed career confusion and supported career maturity.
Zhao et al. (2021)	International	Students	Self-efficacy + employability	Self-efficacy operated as a mediator in a social cognitive career model.

Nasution et al. (2022)	Indonesia	100 UNP students	Self-efficacy + work readiness	Self-efficacy had a positive significant effect on work readiness.
Li et al. (2022)	China	726 undergraduates	Self-efficacy + employability	Self-efficacy positively correlated with employability and mediated effects of innovation/social adaptability.
Cahyaning et al. (2023)	Indonesia	230 S1/D4 students	Self-efficacy + work readiness	Positive significant relationship between self-efficacy and work readiness.
Rofi et al. (2023)	Indonesia	365 undergraduates	Self-efficacy + career maturity + work readiness	Self-efficacy and career maturity both significantly affected work readiness; model explained about 61%.
Zhou et al. (2023)	China	1,078 higher vocational students	Career decision self-efficacy + employability	Positive effect on employability; emotional intelligence mediated the relationship.
Wulandari et al. (2024)	Indonesia	95 final-year students	Self-efficacy + employability	Self-efficacy positively and significantly affected employability; achievement motivation also mediated.
Dwiriyanto et al. (2024)	Indonesia	177 UNJ students	Self-efficacy + organizational experience + work readiness	Self-efficacy and organizational experience were significant predictors of work readiness.
Masosusa et al. (2024)	Indonesia	IPB undergraduate students	Internship + self-efficacy + career adaptability + work readiness	Internship experience was examined as a pathway to work readiness through psychological/career mechanisms.
Pianda et al. (2025)	Indonesia	266 vocational students	Internship + 21st-century competencies + employability	Internship experience positively increased employability through

				competencies; psychological capital strengthened effects.
Kristiana et al. (2025)	Indonesia	Final-year university students	Soft skills + organizational experience + self-efficacy + work readiness	Self-efficacy functioned as an important pathway linking developmental experiences to work readiness.
Dwiratnasari et al. (2026)	Indonesia	115 psychology students	Career maturity + work readiness	Strong positive relationship between career maturity and work readiness (r=.655, p<.05).

Self-Efficacy and Work Readiness

The first finding is a consistent positive association between self-efficacy and work readiness. Studies by Fitriyana et al. (2021), Nasution et al. (2022), Cahyaning et al. (2023), Dwiriyanto et al. (2024), Wulandari et al. (2024), and related studies summarized in recent reviews show a broadly consistent direction: students with stronger beliefs in their capabilities tend to report greater readiness for employment. Rofi et al. (2023) similarly identified self-efficacy as an important predictor alongside career maturity. This consistency supports self-efficacy as a psychological resource in the transition from education to employment.

From a theoretical perspective, the pattern is consistent with Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy is not equivalent to actual competence; rather, it influences whether people use their competence, how much effort they invest, and how long they persist when difficulties arise. During job preparation, these beliefs may be expressed through confidence in preparing applications, attending interviews, seeking experience, networking, responding to feedback, and learning from setbacks. Because work readiness includes personal characteristics, competence, adaptability, and social intelligence, self-efficacy can function as a psychological mechanism connecting available competence with readiness behaviour.

International evidence adds nuance to this explanation. Li et al. (2022) found that self-efficacy was positively associated with undergraduate employability and mediated relationships between innovation capability, social adaptability, and employability. Zhao et al. (2021) placed self-efficacy within a Social Cognitive Career Theory model of student employability. Zhou et al. (2023) further showed that career decision-making self-efficacy positively predicted employability and that part of the association operated through emotional intelligence. Thus, the role of self-efficacy may be both direct and indirect, operating through motivation, adaptability, learning engagement, or other psychological resources.

Career Maturity and Work Readiness

The second finding concerns career maturity. Agustina and Dwanoko (2021) reported that career maturity contributed substantially to a model that also included future time perspective. Rofi et al. (2023) found career maturity to be a significant predictor of work readiness. The strongest recent evidence in the selected studies comes from Dwiratnasari et al. (2026), who reported a positive correlation of 655 between career maturity and work readiness among psychology students. These findings suggest that students who understand themselves, explore career alternatives, obtain occupational information, plan realistically, and make informed decisions tend to be better prepared for entry into work.

Career maturity can therefore be understood as a developmental dimension that gives direction to work readiness. A student may possess strong academic competence but still be uncertain about occupational goals, workplace requirements, or career decisions. In such circumstances, competence may not be translated effectively into transition readiness. Qamaria and Astuti (2021) found that a cognitive information-processing approach could support career maturity, reinforcing the view that career maturity can be developed through structured interventions rather than treated solely as a fixed individual characteristic.

Integrating Self-Efficacy, Career Maturity, and Developmental Experience

The third finding concerns the conceptual relationship between self-efficacy and career maturity. Students who believe in their abilities may be more willing to explore options, seek information, try new experiences, and persist under uncertainty. Such processes may contribute to greater career maturity. Conversely, stronger career maturity may provide clearer goals, more structured decision making, and mastery experiences that reinforce self-efficacy. This suggests a potentially reciprocal relationship, although causal conclusions cannot be drawn from the predominantly cross-sectional evidence.

The fourth finding highlights the importance of practical experience and educational environments. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) emphasized the value of curricular, co-curricular, extracurricular, and paid-work experiences for employability development. Masosusa et al. (2024) examined internship experience together with career adaptability and self-efficacy, while Pianda et al. (2025) found that internship experience could enhance employability through twenty-first-century competencies. Kristiana et al. (2025) likewise highlighted soft skills, organizational experience, and self-efficacy in final-year students' work readiness. Strengthening self-efficacy and career maturity should therefore be integrated with authentic opportunities to practise and reflect on workplace competencies.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that students' work readiness may be understood as an interaction between psychological resources and career development. Self-efficacy answers the question of whether students believe they can act, whereas career maturity provides direction concerning what actions are appropriate. Internships, organizational projects, training, mentoring, and career services provide environments in which both resources can be tested and strengthened. This interpretation is consistent with social cognitive theory, which conceptualizes personal factors, behaviour, and environment as mutually influential.

Career Guidance Implications and Research Gaps

The implications for university career guidance and counseling are substantial. Services should not be limited to job-vacancy information; they should also develop self-efficacy, career exploration, planning, decision making, and readiness for workplace situations. Potential programs include individual career counseling, group career-decision interventions, interview simulations, reflection on internship experiences, career portfolios, mentoring, and structured workplace exploration. Such interventions are particularly relevant as labour markets increasingly demand a combination of technological and human-centred capabilities.

Several research gaps remain. First, most studies are cross-sectional, limiting conclusions about causal direction among self-efficacy, career maturity, and work readiness. Second, work-readiness and employability measures vary considerably, limiting direct comparisons across studies. Third, many studies use samples from a single institution or program. Fourth, empirical studies simultaneously examining self-efficacy and career maturity among Indonesian university students remain limited, particularly among physical-education students. Fifth, integrative mediation and moderation models are less common than studies of direct associations.

These gaps justify a subsequent quantitative study among students in the Physical Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Jakarta. Such research can test whether self-efficacy and career maturity are separately and jointly associated with work readiness. Carefully validated instruments, proportional sampling, and appropriate correlational and regression

analyses can strengthen local evidence. The systematic review therefore does not replace primary field research; rather, it provides a structured basis for specifying a more focused empirical model.

CONCLUSION

Based on the systematic literature review of 15 primary empirical studies, self-efficacy and career maturity emerge as two psychological factors consistently associated with students' work readiness. Self-efficacy contributes through confidence to act, persistence, motivation, and the ability to manage obstacles, whereas career maturity contributes through self-understanding, career exploration, occupational knowledge, planning, and decision making. The evidence also indicates that these factors interact with organizational experience, internships, soft skills, career adaptability, and educational support.

From a career-guidance and counseling perspective, students' work readiness should therefore be developed through an integrated approach. Strengthening confidence should occur alongside career-maturity development and authentic workplace experiences. The review supports the need for quantitative research examining the partial and simultaneous relationships of self-efficacy and career maturity with students' work readiness, especially among physical-education students in Indonesia. Future research should also consider longitudinal designs and mediation models to clarify mechanisms and address the limitations of cross-sectional evidence.

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