

Career engagement among university students: The role of parent-child career goal congruence and support

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Abstract

During the transition to adulthood, students are increasingly required to demonstrate active engagement in planning and managing their career development. This engagement is shaped by contextual factors, including the degree of alignment between students' and parents' career goals and the support received from parents. However, empirical research on career engagement among Indonesian university students, particularly studies examining its connection with parental factors, remains limited. This study aims to investigate the association between parent-child career goal congruence, parental support, and career engagement. A total of 224 active students participated in this study. Data were collected using three instruments: the Career Engagement Scale ($\alpha=0.84$), the Parent-Child Career Goal Congruence Scale ($\alpha=0.89$), and the Parental Support Scale ($\alpha=0.87$). Multiple linear regression analysis revealed a significant association between parent-child career goal congruence, support, and career engagement. These findings highlight the potential for parents and career counselors to enhance students' career engagement by fostering alignment between parental and student career goals, and by providing consistent parental support.

Keywords: Career engagement; Parent-child career goal congruence; Parental support; University student

Abstrak

Selama masa transisi menuju dewasa, mahasiswa semakin dituntut untuk menunjukkan keterlibatan aktif dalam merencanakan dan mengelola pengembangan karier mereka. Keterlibatan ini dipengaruhi oleh faktor kontekstual, termasuk tingkat keselarasan antara tujuan karier mahasiswa dan orang tua serta dukungan yang diterima dari orang tua. Namun demikian, penelitian empiris mengenai keterlibatan karier pada mahasiswa di Indonesia, khususnya yang mengkaji keterkaitannya dengan faktor orang tua, masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara keselarasan tujuan karier orang tua-anak, dukungan orang tua, dan keterlibatan karier. Sebanyak 224 mahasiswa aktif berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan tiga instrumen, yaitu Career Engagement Scale ($\alpha = 0,84$), Parent-Child Career Goal Congruence Scale ($\alpha = 0,89$), dan Parental Support Scale ($\alpha = 0,87$). Analisis regresi linear berganda menunjukkan adanya hubungan yang signifikan antara keselarasan tujuan karier orang tua-anak, dukungan orang tua, dan keterlibatan karier. Temuan ini menegaskan potensi peran orang tua dan konselor karier dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan karier mahasiswa melalui upaya menyelaraskan tujuan karier orang tua dan mahasiswa serta memberikan dukungan orang tua yang konsisten.

Kata kunci: Dukungan orang tua; Keterlibatan karier; Keselarasan tujuan karier orang tua-anak; Mahasiswa

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Introduction

Rapid technological developments, particularly with the advent of artificial intelligence, have fundamentally transformed overall career patterns. These changes have led to the emergences of various new professions, while at the same time causing several traditional jobs to be replaced by automated systems (Wong, 2024; Rasa & Laherto, 2022). As a result, the younger generation is required to be more proactively involved in developing their skills and planning their career paths in order to remain competitive in the modern work environment.

To better understand how young individuals navigate these evolving career demands, it is important to consider the developmental characteristics of early adulthood. Early adulthood refers to individuals between the ages of 18 and 40. According to Hurlock (1980), individuals in this stage are expected to get a job, choose a spouse, learn domestic life, raise children, and accept responsibilities as a citizen as well as join in a social group. In line with the career development stage during early adulthood, individuals are expected to develop work readiness and skills, explore potential career paths, gain relevant experience, implement decisions, and manage early transitions (Lent & Brown, 2013).

To successfully navigate and complete these career developmental tasks, individuals are expected to be actively engaged in their careers. Career engagement is a critical factor in achieving future career goals. Career engagement is defined as the extent to which individuals are proactively involved in their career development through various career-related behaviors (Hirschi et al., 2014). It reflects a commitment to the implementation of one's chosen career path. Individuals with high levels of career engagement typically demonstrate proactive attitudes in managing their careers. Behavioral indicators include career planning (short- and long-term), self-exploration, environmental exploration, skills development through training, networking, and involvement in career decision-making (Hirschi et al., 2014). Past research has shown that engagement in career was associated with higher academic achievement, career adaptability (Nugraheni et al., 2021), life satisfaction (Çarkıt, 2022), career identity, self-efficacy among students, and employees' job and career satisfaction (Hirschi et al., 2014).

However, not all individuals in early adulthood exhibit high levels of career engagement. Many have not yet engaged in career planning, self and environmental exploration, network building, or resource development. Individuals who have not yet established career goals often experience confusion or indecision about their future, which may lead to misaligned educational choices (Saputra et al., 2024). These individuals may also struggle with career decision-making and feel unprepared for the workforce upon graduation (Grashinta et al., 2018). Additional studies indicate that many students seeking career counseling are relatively passive in their personal and career development, contributing to difficulty in future career determination. In the long term, this lack of preparedness and necessary competencies may contribute to higher unemployment rates (Indasari et al., 2023).

Both internal and external factors influence career engagement. Several research have explored both internal antecedents such as career adaptability, personality traits (Nilforooshan & Salimi, 2016), and goal discrepancies (Widyowati et al., 2023), as well as external factors like parent-child career goal discrepancies (Widyowati et al., 2024) and work experience (Tuononen et al., 2024). Nonetheless, limited research has been conducted on career engagement among young adults in Indonesia. This study addresses that gap by investigating how parent-child career goal congruence and support are associated with career engagement in university students. The findings are expected to enrich the current literature, particularly concerning parental involvement in fostering children's career engagement. Moreover, this research may be a valuable resource for parents and career counselors supporting career engagement among early adults.

Align with Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent & Brown, 2013), contextual factors such as parental support, socioeconomic status, and discrimination shape individuals' career behaviour and development. Individual and contextual factors shape experiences and learning processes, which are then perceived by individuals. These perceptions influence self-efficacy and outcome expectations, which, independently or jointly, form career interests that evolve into goals. These goals subsequently motivate individuals to engage in relevant career behaviors. This study focuses on two contextual factors: parent-child career goal congruence and parental support. These factors may act as facilitators or barriers in career decision-making and the implementation of career-relevant actions. Specifically, they influence how people turn their interests into goals and goals into behaviours. When individuals perceive their environment as unsupportive, they are less likely to pursue their interests and goals. Conversely, positive perceptions of environmental conditions, such as abundant support and minimal obstacles, enhance the likelihood of transforming interests into goals and actions (Lent & Brown, 2013).

One key contextual factor that influences career engagement is parent-child career goal congruence, defined as the alignment of interests, preferences, and career goals between children and their parents (Sawitri & Creed, 2015). This congruence encompasses the alignment between the child's developmental needs and parental/environmental support, the compatibility between the child's abilities and parental demands, and the harmony of career interests, goals, plans, and values (Sawitri et al., 2013).

Amidst rapid technological change, parents continue to exert a strong influence on students' career choices, especially in a collectivist culture such as Indonesia. Recent findings also show that family expectations remain a key consideration when students navigate various career paths and assess job opportunities arising from technological developments (Gustina et al., 2024; Pratiwi & Salim, 2025). Perceived alignment with parents' career expectations makes individuals more confident in their job search, holds



more positive expectations, and becomes more actively involved in preparatory career behaviors ([Sawitri & Creed, 2022](#)). Congruence in career goals can lead to increased intrinsic motivation and engagement in career exploration ([Dietrich & Kracke, 2009](#)). Prior studies have found that parent-child career goal congruence positively relates to job information-seeking behaviors ([Sawitri & Creed, 2022](#)), career planning, exploration, and problem-solving related to career achievement ([Putri & Salim, 2021](#)) *career engagement and reducing career confusion* ([Wang, 2023](#)).

Another contextual factor is parental support. The most crucial support often comes from the closest environment, namely, the family, because it can significantly influence children's future motivation ([Yuliya, 2019](#)). Support provided from childhood in a stable home environment is vital, as it helps children cope with challenges, including those related to health ([Puig et al., 2013](#)). Parents are expected to guide, educate, and support their children toward independence and future success ([Muninggar, 2021](#)). Parental support is defined as the encouragement and resources parents provide to help their children make well-informed future decisions ([Sinaga, 2018](#)). [Sarafino & Smith \(2012\)](#) categorize this support into five dimensions: appreciation (positive reinforcement), emotional support (comfort and understanding), instrumental support (practical help), informational support (problem-solving guidance), and social network support. Individuals who perceive parental support often feel more secure, valued, and appreciated ([Sarafino & Smith, 2012](#)).

Beyond these basic concepts, recent studies have begun to highlight the role of parental support in career development in the digital era. Recent research shows that autonomy support from parents increases students' academic engagement and career readiness by improving career adaptability and career decision-making self-efficacy ([Jiang et al., 2022](#)). Parental support focused on children's careers, especially in the Asia-Pacific region with middle-income countries, has been found to serve as an important psychological resource in helping students adapt to an increasingly digitized world of work ([Ramirez-duran, 2025](#)). In addition, other studies show that parental support that actively guides the career exploration process can increase students' career self-efficacy, thereby reducing career doubt when they have to make career decisions ([Cheung, 2024](#)).

In career development context, parents serve as facilitators, motivators, and role models ([Muninggar, 2021](#)). [Turner et al., \(2003\)](#) identified four dimensions of parents' support: (1) instrumental support, such as providing developmental resources; (2) role modeling through sharing work experiences; (3) verbal encouragement through positive feedback and incentives; and (4) emotional support, including validation of feelings and future concerns. Parental support also includes emotional, informational, and tangible resources essential for career planning ([Dietrich & Kracke, 2009](#)). These forms of support can promote career engagement by providing motivation and necessary resources. Research has shown that parental support fosters resilience, proactive behavior, and adaptability, essential traits for long-term career

success (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009). These forms of support can promote career engagement by providing motivation and necessary resources. Research has shown that parental support fosters resilience, proactive behavior, and adaptability, which are important traits for long-term career success (Sawitri et al., 2013; Jiang et al., 2022). Other studies have also found that parental support can improve academic engagement through career hope and career adaptability (Shu et al., 2024). Research on junior high school students shows that parental support has an effect on improving career adaptability. This confirms the role of parents in their children's careers from adolescence onwards (Zhao et al., 2024).

Psychological aspects can also be improved with social support, especially from parents who are able to influence career decisions (Zhou et al., 2024). Other studies have also found that parental support can strengthen internal factors such as psychological capital to improve career readiness (Gustina et al., 2024). Puspitasari et al. (2022) found that parental support helps students in career search efficacy, showing that parental support can increase student career engagement. Parental support also reduces career doubt and increases career self-efficacy, which can strengthen career engagement (Cheung, 2024).

Although a number of studies have highlighted the influence of parent-child career goal congruence and parental support on various aspects of career development such as career adaptability (Nugraheni et al., 2021), self-efficacy (Cheung, 2024), and career exploration (S. O. Putri & Salim, 2021) the relationship between these two variables and career engagement has not been widely studied. Most studies also focus on adolescents or school students, so the picture of how these factors play a role in early adulthood is still unclear. In fact, amid the acceleration of digitalization, students are required to be more actively involved in their career planning and development. In addition, research linking parent-child career goal congruence and parental support with career engagement in a collectivistic cultural context is still relatively scarce. This indicates the need for further study to understand how career goal congruence and parental support affect students' career engagement levels, especially in Indonesia, where family influence remains a dominant factor in career decision-making.

Therefore, we expected that: 1) Major Hypothesis: Parent-child career goal congruence and parental support are related to career engagement; 2) Minor Hypothesis 1: Parent-child career goal congruence is positively correlated with career engagement; and 3) Minor Hypothesis 2: Parental support is positively correlated with career engagement.

Research Methods

Participants

The population in this study included 1,491 active undergraduate students majoring



in psychology at a university in Yogyakarta in the 2024/2025 academic year. The sampling technique used was cluster random sampling, because in the psychology study program, students are naturally divided into parallel class groups in each batch. In this study, the 2023 cohort was selected as the basis for cluster formation. This cohort consisted of six parallel classes. All parallel classes in this cohort were included as research clusters because they had relatively homogeneous academic characteristics and were at the same stage of study development. From these six classes, students who met the criteria and were willing to fill out the questionnaire became part of the research sample.

Table 1

Participant demographic data

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	190	84.8%
	Male	34	15.2%
Age	17-19	154	68.7%
	20-22	68	30.4%
	≥ 23	2	0.8%
Semester	3	224	100%

A total of 224 students participated in the study, comprising 190 women (84.8%) and 34 men (15.2%), with ages ranging from 17 to 24 years ($M_{age} = 19.31$, $SD = 0.815$). Participants were drawn from the 2023 academic cohort using cluster random sampling and agreed to takepart in the study voluntarily.

Before filling out the questionnaire, each participant first received an explanation of the research objectives, filling procedures, duration, and their right to refuse or stop participating at any time without consequences. This explanation was conveyed through an informed consent form that was provided along with the research scale. On the form, participants were asked to read the information thoroughly and ensure that they understood the explanation. Participants then marked a statement of willingness that read, “I hereby agree/disagree to participate in this study” before proceeding to complete the scale. Only participants who gave their written consent proceeded to complete the research scale.

Measurement

Three scales were used to assess career engagement, parent-child career goal congruence, and parental support. Each scale comprises multiple items assessed using a 6-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strong disagreement and 6 indicates strong agreement. Total scores were derived by summing item scores, with elevated total scores reflecting greater levels of the corresponding construct.

Career Engagement Scale

The Career Engagement Scale, developed by (Hirschi & Freund (2014) was used to

measure the level of students' engagement with their career. The scale was translated into Indonesian using the back-translation method by bilingual experts. Content validity was established through expert judgment by professionals in industrial and organizational psychology. An example item is: "To what extent have you actively planned your future career?". [Hirschi et al \(2014\)](#) reported high reliability for the original scale ($\alpha = 0.88$). In the current study, the scale demonstrated good psychometric properties, with corrected item-total correlations (rit) ranging from 0.35 to 0.61 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84.

Parent-Child Career Goal Congruence Scale

Parent-child career goal congruence was assessed using the Indonesian version of the *Parent-Child Career Goal Congruence Scale* developed by [Sawitri et al. \(Sawitri et al., 2013\)](#). This scale is validated for use with Indonesian student populations. This scale measures the perceived alignment between parents and children regarding career interests, orientations, and goals. An example item is: "My parents support my career plans." [Sawitri et al. \(2013\)](#) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 for the original scale. In the current study, the scale showed corrected item-total correlations ranging from 0.49 to 0.68 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating good reliability.

Parental Support Scale

Parental support was measured using 26 items from the Career-Related Parental Support Scale developed by [Turner et al., \(2003\)](#). The scale was translated into Indonesian and validated for content by experts in industrial and organizational psychology. It assesses four dimensions of support: instrumental support, role modeling, verbal encouragement, and emotional support. Example items include: "My parents taught me things that one day I can use in my job/career" and "My parents told me how enjoyable my job would be in the future." [Turner et al., \(2003\)](#) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 for the original scale. In this study, corrected item-total correlations ranged from 0.35 to 0.65, and the has a good reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 27.0 for Windows. Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests were conducted, including tests for normality, linearity, and multicollinearity. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the central hypothesis and supporting hypotheses.

Procedure

Scales were distributed to students via course lecturers. Prior to distribution, the researcher obtained institutional approval and informed consent from participants. Participation was voluntary, and data collection was conducted anonymously to ensure



confidentiality. Participants received souvenirs as a token of appreciation for their involvement.

Results

Before testing the hypotheses, assumption tests were conducted, including normality, linearity, and multicollinearity tests. The results indicated that the data were normally distributed. Linearity tests confirmed that both parent-child career goal congruence and parental support were linearly related to career engagement. Multicollinearity tests showed no significant correlation between the two independent variables, indicating that parent-child career goal congruence and parental support were not multicollinear.

Table 2 presents the results of multiple linear regression analysis. The analysis yielded an R coefficient of 0.349 and an R-squared value of 0.122, with a significance level of $p < 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$). It suggested a statistically significant relationship between parent-child career goal congruence, parental support, and students' career engagement. Thus, the central hypothesis was supported, with 12.2% of the variance in career engagement explained by the two predictors.

Table 2
Central Hypothesis Test Results

Variable	R	R Square	F	Description
Parent-Child Career Goal Congruence and Parental Support	0.349	0.122	15.296	Significant

Parent-child career goal congruence and parental support together provided an effective contribution of 0.122% to career engagement. The results of the subsequent data analysis found that there was a significant positive relationship between parent-child career goal congruence and career engagement, and between parental support and career engagement. The results of the data analysis can be seen in the table below.

Table 3
Minor Hypothesis Test Results

Variable	Partial (r)	Sig (p)	β	Description
Parent-Child Career Goal Congruence and Career Engagement	0.151	0.024	0.105	Significant
Parental Support and Career Engagement	0.172	0.010	0.091	Significant

As shown in Table 3, the partial correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between parent-child career goal congruence and career engagement, with a partial correlation coefficient of 0.151 and a significance level of 0.024 ($p < 0.05$). It indicated that students who perceive greater alignment with their parents regarding career goals were more likely to demonstrate higher career

engagement.

Table 4 shows the regression coefficients for each predictor variable. The results indicate that both parent-child career goal congruence and parental support significantly predict students' career engagement.

Table 4
Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Career Engagement

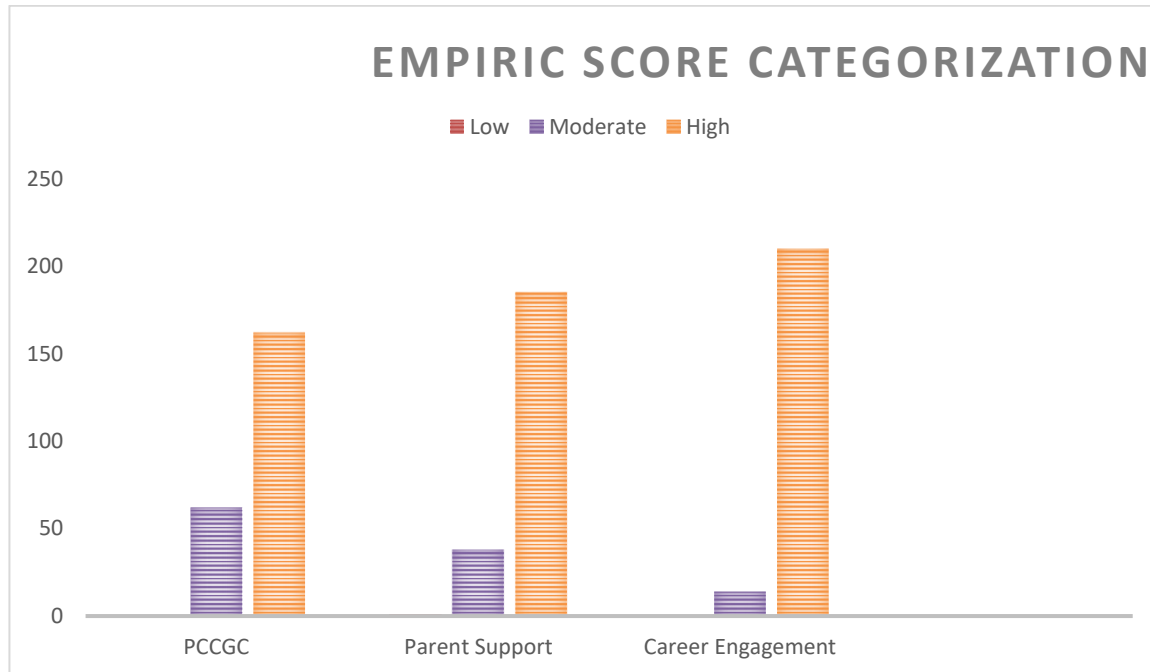
Predictor Variable	B (Unstandardized Coefficient)	Std. Error	B (Standardized Coefficient)	t	Sig. (p)
Constant	32.673	2.265	-	14.427	< .001
Parent-Child Career Goal Congruence	0.105	0.046	0.181	2.276	0.024
Parental Support	0.091	0.035	0.207	2.598	0.010

The regression model demonstrates that both predictors significantly and positively affect students' career engagement. The constant value ($B = 32.673$) indicates the baseline level of career engagement when both predictors are zero. Specifically, for every one-point increase in parent-child career goal congruence, students' career engagement increases by 0.105 points ($p = 0.024$). Likewise, for every one-point increase in parental support, students' career engagement increases by 0.091 points ($p = 0.010$). These results highlight that higher alignment between students' and parents' career goals, combined with greater parental support, contributes positively to students' engagement in career development activities.

Similarly, the partial correlation between parental support and career engagement yielded a coefficient of 0.172 with a significance level of 0.010 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant positive relationship. These results suggested that students who perceive higher levels of support from their parents were more engaged in their careers.

To gain deeper insights into the condition of participants across the studied variables, the researcher categorized each variable into three levels: low, moderate, and high. The categorization results are presented in Figure 1. In general, most participants were in the high category. In the career engagement variable, almost all participants, 210 people (93.8%) were in the high category. In the parent-child career goal congruence variable, 162 people (72.3%) were in the high category, and in the parental support variable, the results showed that 185 participants (82.6%) were in the high category.

Figure 1
Empiric Score Categorization



Discussion

This study shows that parent-child career goal congruence and parental support play an important role in shaping students' career engagement. These findings reinforce the evidence that alignment between children's and parents' career aspirations, accompanied by consistent emotional and instrumental support, can strengthen students' motivation and participation in career-related behaviors. These findings are consistent with previous research by [Sawitri & Creed \(2022\)](#), which found that the higher the career alignment between children and parents, the more confident the child becomes in finding a job, and the more positively they view job search outcomes, leading them to engage in career preparation behaviors. Furthermore, parental support accompanied by career alignment with their children fosters a significant positive relationship with students' career orientation ([Sawitri & Creed, 2022](#)). Past research has also found that parent-child career goal congruence is associated with adolescent confidence, which in turn enhances career aspirations and promotes more career exploration and planning ([Sawitri et al., 2014](#)).

The finding that parental support has a stronger contribution than career goal congruence suggests that emotional and practical assistance from parents can be a more direct and consistent source of influence on students' career engagement. Parental involvement, encouragement, and role modeling in work-related behaviors create a supportive environment that helps students cope with uncertainty in their future careers. They are better able to explore career opportunities, develop career

plans, and advance their personal and professional growth independently. These findings support previous studies showing that parental social support influences students' career decision-making by 26.2%, with the remaining influence attributed to external factors such as self-concept, interests, and others (Prabowo & Kusumaningsih, 2021). Another study also found that parental social support positively predicts a child's career planning, meaning that the greater the support provided by parents, the more extensive the child's career planning will be (Hidayatussani et al., 2021)

Interestingly, the analysis showed that parental support exerts a stronger influence on career engagement than career goal congruence. This highlights the central role of family as a source of psychological and emotional resources that guide students in navigating career choices (Putra & Taufik, 2024). This aligns with Prabowo & Kusumaningsih (2021), who highlighted that parents often act as role models by sharing their experiences and guidance, while emotional support builds a sense of comfort and security that enables students to take initiative in their career development. Parents further establish themselves as role models by recognizing and valuing their children's skills.

The results of this study are also in line with recent findings showing that parental autonomy support can increase self-efficacy and students' readiness to make independent career decisions (Putri & Salim, 2020; Pratiwi & Salim, 2025). Consistent with the meta-analysis conducted by Wang & Dong (2024), family support—especially from parents—has been proven to increase career adaptability, which is a psychological resource closely related to career involvement and proactive behavior. Thus, students who feel high support and career goal alignment with their parents tend to have stronger psychological capital, adaptability, and self-control in managing their career development.

Another possible explanation for the high levels of engagement found among participants is their educational context. Being psychology students, they are likely exposed to academic settings that encourage self-reflection and career planning. In addition, exposure to supportive family and social environments may help students develop clearer perceptions of available career opportunities, reinforcing both engagement and motivation. Furthermore, since the participants are university students majoring in psychology, their post-graduation career choices are more likely to be focused on psychology.

Implications of the Research Findings, Limitations, and Recommendations for Further Research

Parents, universities, and career counsellors may support the development of career engagement among students by enhancing perceived parent-child career goal congruence and parental support. Parents can help improve career engagement by fostering open communication with their children to express their expectations while



being receptive to their children's hopes and aspirations. Parents must also expand their knowledge to stay informed about evolving career trends. They can provide support by guiding their children's career paths, facilitating their educational needs, and offering emotional shelter during times of difficulty (Muninggar, 2021). In addition, parents can provide informational support, offer guidance on their children's choices, express care and affection, and act as motivators (Prabowo & Kusumaningsih, 2021). Universities can support the enhancement of student career engagement by offering facilities for skill development through student organizations, training programs, internships, and by building networks with industry and educational institutions. Career counselors can help students leverage their perceived parent-child career goal congruence and parental support by facilitating improved communication between parents and students, and by encouraging students to be more open with their parents.

There are several limitations to this study. First, the research sample was relatively homogeneous, as it was drawn from a single faculty at one university in Indonesia. This limits the generalizability of the research findings. Future research could examine a broader sample from various academic disciplines or universities, or include individuals with different characteristics, such as emerging adults who did not pursue higher education, those who are already employed, or individuals from non-collectivist cultures, to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Second, the sample composition was not balanced in terms of gender; the number of female participants was higher than that of males, which may have influenced the results. Previous research found that gender affects career engagement among employees, with women showing higher career engagement than men (Okurame, 2014). Future studies should consider using a more balanced gender composition or exploring the role of gender in the relationship among the three variables. Third, this study did not examine other variables that may explain indirect relationships (mediators) or that may moderate the relationship between perceived congruence in career goals between parent and child, parental support, and career engagement. Future research could investigate potential mediating or moderating factors in the relationships among these variables.

Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature by confirming that perceived parent-child career goal congruence and parental support are positively associated with career engagement. This suggests that when students feel their career goals align with their parents' expectations and experience support from their parents, they are more likely to be actively engaged in planning and pursuing their careers. These results have practical implications for parents, educational institutions, and career counselors. Parents can play an essential role in promoting students' career engagement by encouraging open communication about career aspirations and providing consistent emotional and instrumental support. Similarly, universities and counselors can develop programs and strategies that strengthen these forms of

support, ultimately helping students to engage more fully in their career development process.

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