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## Developing and Validating a Culturally-Based Career Search Efficacy Scale for Acehnese Vocational Students

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# Developing and Validating a Culturally-Based Career Search Efficacy Scale for Acehese Vocational Students

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to develop and validate a culturally grounded Career Search Self-Efficacy (CSSE) scale for Acehese vocational students. Using a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, the qualitative phase elicited culturally relevant indicators through interviews with students and counselors and a focus group discussion, resulting in 91 preliminary items. These included culturally grounded dimensions such as parental blessing and family deliberation (*musyawarah*), seeking jobs consistent with Islamic (halal) values, and Acehese etiquette in communication (e.g., greeting with *Assalamu'alaikum*). Expert review by specialists in measurement, counseling, and Acehese culture refined the items for clarity, representativeness, and cultural appropriateness. The quantitative phase involved 1,307 students from vocational schools in Banda Aceh, divided into subsamples for exploratory factor analysis (EFA,  $n = 579$ ) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA,  $n = 728$ ). EFA yielded a five-factor solution Networking Efficacy, Career Exploration Efficacy, Interview Efficacy, Personal Exploration Efficacy, and Family Support which explained 41.7% of the variance. CFA confirmed the five-dimension structure with acceptable-to-good fit indices (CFI = .934, TLI = .923, IFI = .953, GFI = 0.942; RMSEA = .045; SRMR = .042; NFI = .884). Convergent validity was borderline (AVE  $\approx$  .35–.50) but supported by significant loadings and composite reliability, while discriminant validity was satisfied. Reliability was acceptable overall ( $\alpha = 0.822$ ,  $\omega = 0.817$ ), though Interview and Personal Exploration were slightly below .70. Criterion validity was supported through positive correlations with Career Decision Self-Efficacy (CDSE-SF) and Student Life Satisfaction (SLSS), with Family Support showing the strongest associations. Theoretically, the results extend CSSE and Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by identifying Family Support as an independent efficacy domain in a collectivist setting. Practically, the Aceh-Based CSSE Scale provides school counselors with a diagnostic tool for culturally responsive career interventions that integrate family and community supports.

**Key Words:** Career search efficacy; Cultural validation; Vocational education; Acehese students

## INTRODUCTION

Career Search Self-Efficacy (CSSE) is defined as individuals' belief in their capability to perform activities involved in the job-search process, including searching for career information, preparing for interviews, building networks, engaging in self-exploration, and leveraging environmental support (Solberg et al., 1994). The construct is grounded in Bandura's self-efficacy theory and further

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elaborated within Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which posits self-beliefs as key determinants of career decision making, direction, and persistence (Lent et al., 1994).

Empirical evidence indicates that CSSE is positively associated with both the quality and outcomes of job search. Individuals with higher levels of career search efficacy tend to produce higher-quality job applications and receive more job offers (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Access to career information systems has been shown to enhance students' career readiness, which indirectly strengthens their efficacy in navigating the job selection process (Garcia et al., 2021). Furthermore, even under conditions of financial strain, career search efficacy functions as a protective factor that helps individuals maintain direction, persistence, and consistency in their job search efforts (Creed et al., 2021).

In Indonesia particularly among graduates of vocational high schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan; SMK) CSSE is especially salient given the elevated unemployment rates in this group. According to Statistics Indonesia, the national open unemployment rate in August 2024 was 4.91% (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2024). The figures are higher in Aceh 5.75% in August 2024 (BPS Provinsi Aceh, 2024) and 5.50% in February 2025 (BPS Provinsi Aceh, 2025). By education level, SMK graduates account for the highest proportion of the unemployed (10.76% in February 2025), underscoring the need for targeted interventions for this group.

The situation is compounded by the predominance of informal employment in Aceh approximately 64% of total employment which limits new graduates' access to formal recruitment channels (BPS Provinsi Aceh, 2024). Psychologically, weaknesses in key CSSE dimensions such as career information seeking, networking, and interviewing skills can hinder an effective school-to-work transition. Consistent with this, the use of career information systems has been found to improve students' career readiness (Garcia et al., 2021), while the development of a career future time perspective scale demonstrates its role as a motivational mechanism that enhances career decision-making self-efficacy, reduces career indecision, and promotes career exploration (Park et al., 2021).

Beyond individual factors, socio-cultural contexts substantially influence career efficacy. Cross-cultural research indicates that parental involvement and family support play significant roles in adolescents' career orientation (Sawitri et al., 2021), while collectivist values have been found to contribute to life satisfaction and a sense of meaning in careers (Ahn et al., 2021). Moreover, individualism–collectivism orientations shape protean and boundaryless career attitudes (Hong et al., 2022). In Aceh, cultural values such as *peumulia jamee* (honoring guests), hard work, and honesty articulated in the oral tradition of *Hadih Maja* inform a collective work ethos that underpins career readiness (Harun et al., 2015).

Local scholarship further demonstrates that Acehnese indigenous knowledge functions as a vehicle for internalizing values relevant to character and education. For example, *Hadih Maja* conveys foundational work-ethic principles that can be integrated into character education (Harun et al., 2015). Acehnese traditions have been documented as contributing to sustainable development agendas (Syahputera et al., 2024), while cultural literacy has been highlighted as a filter against the adverse effects of modernization (Nucifera, Prima, 2017). Methodologically, a Collective Efficacy Questionnaire grounded in Acehnese local wisdom for disaster contexts has been developed, with content validity results showing that 40 of 47 items met Aiken's  $V \geq 0.75$  (Hayati et al., 2023). These findings demonstrate that psychological instruments anchored in Acehnese culture can yield contextually relevant and psychometrically sound measures

Nevertheless, most CSSE instruments in use to date have been developed in Western contexts (Creed & Gagliardi, 2015), raising cultural applicability issues when applied in non-Western settings. For instance, adapting the Career Aspiration Scale–Revised to the Korean context required item modifications to preserve validity and reliability (Kim et al., 2016). This underscores that Western-developed career instruments cannot always be transferred wholesale to other cultural milieus. Accordingly, there is a need for a CSSE instrument that is not only psychometrically valid but also culturally relevant particularly in Aceh, where job-search practices often rely on family recommendations, kinship ties, and informal communication.

To strengthen criterion validity, the present study also compares CSSE with theoretically related variables Career Decision Self-Efficacy (CDSE) and the Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS). These variables were selected because they have been shown to contribute to students' career readiness and well-being, making them appropriate benchmarks. Against this backdrop, the study aims to: (1) identify

CSSE indicators contextualized to Acehese culture; (2) develop a measurement instrument grounded in local wisdom; and (3) test its validity and reliability using a quantitative approach. Theoretically, the study contributes to indigenous psychology and cross-cultural validation literatures. Practically, the resulting instrument is expected to serve as a diagnostic tool for school counselors to identify the specific needs of SMK students and to inform education policy aimed at reducing unemployment and strengthening youth employability in Aceh.

## METHOD

This study employed an instrument-development design using a sequential exploratory mixed-methods approach. In this design, the qualitative phase preceded the quantitative phase to elicit context-specific indicators rooted in Acehese culture, which then informed item generation. The subsequent quantitative phase examined the validity and reliability of the resulting instrument. A sequential exploratory mixed-methods design is well suited to instrument development in psychology and education, where qualitative discovery must be integrated with quantitative factor analytic testing (John W. Creswell, 2018; Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015). The approach enables indicators emerging from qualitative exploration to be empirically tested via factor analysis, yielding a scale that is both psychometrically sound and culturally relevant.

### Qualitative Phase

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with three SMK students and two school counselors (Bimbingan dan Konseling; BK), and through a focus group discussion (FGD) involving 12 participants. Semi-structured interviewing was chosen to retain flexibility in probing participants' experiences and perspectives while maintaining focus on the research topic (Kallio et al., 2016). All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using Quirkos software to support coding, thematic clustering, and visualization of inter-category relations (Ahmed et al., 2025). Thematic findings were then compared with and anchored in the Career Search Self-Efficacy (CSSE) framework (Solberg et al., 1994), ensuring that the indicators rested on both empirical evidence and theoretical grounding.

The qualitative exploration produced 91 preliminary items representing key facets of CSSE in the Acehese context. Several indicators explicitly reflected cultural and religious values. Within Career Exploration Efficacy, for example, "seeking work consistent with religious values" foregrounded the importance of job *halal* in line with Islamic teachings. Within Interview Efficacy, "conduct during interviews" emphasized Acehese etiquette such as knocking, greeting with "Assalamu'alaikum," and maintaining decorum. Within Networking Efficacy, "relationship-building processes" reflected *silaturahmi*, togetherness, and *meuseuraya* (collective action). Within Personal Exploration Efficacy, "family support" highlighted consultation (*musyawarah*) and parental blessing as salient in career exploration.

### Expert Review and Item Refinement

Items underwent expert review by six specialists: two instrument/measurement experts, two career-counseling experts, and two experts in Acehese culture. The panel recommended minor revisions, particularly simplifying wording, clarifying instructions, and strengthening local cultural content (e.g., job *halal*, parental blessing, interview etiquette). Each expert provided feedback on clarity, indicator representativeness, and cultural appropriateness. Several items were revised to improve conceptual precision and linguistic clarity (Almanasreh et al., 2019; Denise F. Polit, 2016).

### Quantitative phase

The quantitative phase recruited participants from several SMK in Banda Aceh and was split into two subsamples for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Stratified random sampling by sex was used to ensure proportional representation (Etikan, 2017). Inclusion criteria were: currently enrolled in Grade XI or XII, provision of informed consent, and not participating in intensive out-of-school career-counseling programs. Ethical procedures included informed consent, confidentiality assurances, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty (Alan Bryman, 2008).

## Participants

In total, 1,307 SMK students from Banda Aceh participated. In the qualitative phase, participants comprised SMK students, BK counselors, and vocational-education experts recruited to capture a range of career-related experiences. In the quantitative phase, 579 students contributed data for EFA and 728 comparable students contributed data for CFA. Inclusion criteria were being an active SMK student in Grade XI or XII, willingness to participate, and not attending intensive career-counseling programs outside the school curriculum. Purposive sampling was used in the qualitative phase to ensure diversity of cultural and career experiences (Palinkas et al., 2015; Robinson, 2014). In the quantitative phase, stratified random sampling by gender (male/female) was employed to secure proportional representation consistent with the population distribution. Stratified designs are recommended when demographic comparisons are required, as they minimize bias and increase the precision of estimates (Etikan, 2017; Suresh & Chandrashekhara, 2012).

## Instruments

The primary instrument developed in this study is the Aceh-Based Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale, comprising five dimensions: Career Exploration Efficacy, Interview Efficacy, Networking Efficacy, Personal Exploration Efficacy, and Family Support. Items are rated on a four-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). For criterion-related validity, two additional measures were administered: the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale – Short Form (CDSE-SF) and the Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS). Data analyses were conducted using SPSS (v27), JASP, and AMOS (for CFA).

## Procedures

The study proceeded in two sequential phases. First, a qualitative phase was conducted to elicit culturally grounded indicators of Career Search Self-Efficacy (CSSE) in the Acehnese context. Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews with SMK students and school guidance and counseling (BK) teachers, as well as a focus group discussion that included students, BK teachers, and community figures. All sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subjected to thematic analysis with support from Quirkos software to facilitate coding, theme development, and visualization. The emergent indicators were then reconciled with the CSSE literature to ensure conceptual coherence and to inform item generation. Next, a quantitative phase was implemented in two parts: (1) content validity analysis (CVA) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using data from 579 students, followed by (2) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and criterion-related validity testing with an independent sample of 728 students from comparable schools. Across the quantitative phase, we conducted readability checks, expert review and refinement, EFA to identify latent structure, CFA to test model fit, and reliability estimation, alongside correlations with external measures for criterion validity. All participants provided informed consent, confidentiality was assured, and respondents retained the right to withdraw and without a penalty.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded in two stages. In the qualitative stage, thematic analysis was employed to identify culturally grounded indicators of CSSE; coding and visualization were supported by Quirkos. In the quantitative stage, psychometric testing included EFA, CFA, content validity assessment, and reliability estimation. CFA model fit was evaluated using the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the  $\chi^2/df$  ratio, following

recommended guidelines (Joseph F. Hair Jr & Barry J. Babin, 2019). Instrument reliability was estimated using multiple indices: Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha$ ; (Trizano-Hermosilla & Alvarado, 2016), composite reliability (CR; with the  $\geq 0.70$  benchmark), and average variance extracted (AVE; with the  $\geq 0.50$  benchmark) (Joseph F. Hair Jr & Barry J. Babin, 2019). In addition, McDonald's omega ( $\omega$ ) was calculated to provide a more robust estimate of internal consistency under congeneric measurement assumptions (Dunn et al., 2014).

## RESULTS

Quantitative analyses began with an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify the latent structure of the Aceh-Based Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale. Sampling adequacy was confirmed by a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value of 0.856 and a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity,  $\chi^2(210) = 3,281.450$ ,  $p < .001$ . A KMO above .80 indicates meritorious adequacy, and a significant Bartlett's test supports sufficient inter-item correlations to proceed with factor analysis (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, a chi-square test of the factor model yielded  $\chi^2(115) = 243.300$ ,  $p < .001$ , providing initial support for the model's adequacy.

**Table 1.** KMO & Bartlett's

Statistik	$\chi^2$	df	Nilai	p
KMO			0.856	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	3281.450	210		< .001

**Table 2.** Chi-squared test

	Value	df	p
Model	243	115	<.001

Principal axis factoring with oblimin rotation extracted five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, which together explained 41.7% of the total variance in the rotated solution. The first factor, Networking Efficacy, accounted for 11.8% of the variance, followed by Career Exploration Efficacy (10.1%), a third factor identified as Family Support (7.6%), Interview Efficacy (6.2%), and Personal Exploration Efficacy (5.9%). The use of principal axis factoring with oblique rotation is consistent with recommendations in psychometric research, as it allows for correlated factors and yields more accurate factor structures than orthogonal methods (Anna B. Costello and Jason W. Osborne, 2005). The emergence of Family Support as a distinct factor is also consistent with the Acehese cultural context, in which parental blessing and family deliberation (*musyawarah*) play central roles in adolescents' career decision making (Nucifera, Prima, 2017; Reni Juliani, Hafied Cangara, 2015). This finding aligns with broader evidence that family involvement is a critical determinant of career development in collectivist societies, including Indonesia and other Asian context (Sawitri et al., 2014).

**Table 3.** Eigenvalues

	Eigenvalues	Unrotated Solution			Rotated Solution		
		Sum Sq. Loadings	Proportion var.	Cumulative	Sum Sq. Loadings	Proportion var.	Cumulative
Networking Efficacy	5.083	4.511	0.215	0.215	2.483	0.118	0.118
Career Exploration Efficacy	2.727	2.156	0.103	0.317	2.120	0.101	0.219
Family Support	1.509	0.932	0.044	0.362	1.595	0.076	0.295
Interview Efficacy	1.225	0.676	0.032	0.394	1.308	0.062	0.357
Personal Explorasi Efficacy	1.042	0.478	0.023	0.417	1.247	0.059	0.417

**Table 4.** Factor Loading

	NE	CEE	FS	IE	PEE
NE 59	0.691				
NE 65	0.653				
NE 58	0.588				
NE 64	0.583				
NE 60	0.582				
NE 66	0.575				
CEE 25		0.742			
CEE26		0.626			
CEE 27		0.596			
CEE 20		0.575			
CEE 21		0.446			
CEE 19		0.426			
FS 1			0.684		
FS 2			0.661		
FS 3			0.659		
IE 41				0.757	
IE 40				0.563	
IE 42				0.401	
PEE 73					0.663
PEE 74					0.604
PEE 75					0.578

Note: FS1–FS3, previously coded as PEE86–PEE88, were reassigned to the Family Support factor based on the results of EFA–CFA.

All items exhibited primary factor loadings  $\geq .40$  on their intended factors (Table 4). The largest loadings were observed for NE59 (0.691; Networking Efficacy) and IE41 (0.757; Interview Efficacy). No substantively meaningful cross-loadings were detected, indicating that indicators represented their respective factors consistently. Three indicators (FS1–FS3; formerly PEE86–PEE88) clustered stably to form a distinct Family Support factor ( $\lambda = 0.659\text{--}0.684$ ), which culturally reflects parental blessing and family deliberation (*musyawarah*) as salient sources of efficacy in the job-search process. This pattern aligns with evidence that culturally grounded indicators strengthen construct validity of career search self-efficacy in collectivist contexts and that family support plays a prominent role (Ali & Menke, 2014; Lent et al., 1994; Sawitri et al., 2014, 2021). Retaining Family Support as a fifth dimension therefore enhances the instrument's contextual relevance for SMK students in Aceh and enriches the evidence base for culturally responsive career assessment.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) corroborated the five-dimension structure Networking Efficacy (NE), Career Exploration Efficacy (CEE), Interview Efficacy (IE), Personal Exploration Efficacy (PEE), and Family Support (FS). The FS factor, first identified in EFA as a coherent family-support cluster, was retained as an independent factor in the final model on theoretical and empirical grounds. Maximum Likelihood estimation on the full sample indicated satisfactory model fit: CFI = 0.934, TLI = 0.923, IFI = 0.953, and GFI = 0.942 (all  $\geq .90$ ), with RMSEA = 0.045 and SRMR = 0.042 (both  $\leq .08$ ), consistent with recommended thresholds for approximate fit (Joseph F. Hair Jr & Barry J. Babin, 2019). The NFI = 0.884 was interpreted as acceptable (slightly below conventional thresholds; Bentler & Bonett, 1980), though recent work urges caution in rigid cutoff rules and encourages more holistic fit evaluation (Goretzko et al., 2024; van Laar & Braeken, 2022).

**Table 5.** Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results: Aceh-Based CSSE Scale

Index	Value	Criteria	Interpretation
CFI	0.934	> 0.90	Good Fit
TLI	0.923	> 0.90	Good Fit
NFI	0.884	< 0.90	Acceptable Fit
PNFI	0.754	> 0.50	Good Fit
RFI	0.864	> 0.50	Good Fit
IFI	0.953	> 0.90	Good Fit
RMSEA	0.045	< 0.08	Good Fit
SRMR	0.042	< 0.08	Good Fit

Index	Value	Criteria	Interpretation
GFI	0.942	> 0.90	Good Fit
KMO	0.855	> 0.80	Meritorious Sampling Adequacy

Standardized factor loadings indicated that all indicators exceeded 0.50 and were significant at  $p < .001$ , satisfying the conventional criterion for convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Within Networking Efficacy, item NE59 ( $\lambda = 1.101$ ) contributed most strongly, consistent with findings that confidence in networking is a key predictor of job-search success (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Within Career Exploration Efficacy, item CEE27 ( $\lambda = 1.349$ ) was the most dominant, reflecting the central role of active career exploration in vocational students' career development (Aminah et al., 2024; Sawitri et al., 2014). More recent methodological reviews emphasize that convergent validity should be assessed with multiple complementary criteria and confidence intervals to account for sampling error (Cheung et al., 2024). Taken together, convergent validity in this study is borderline acceptable, and results should therefore be interpreted with appropriate caution.

**Tabel 6.** Standardized Factor Loadings (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Factor	Indicator	Loading	p
Networking Efficacy	58	1.000	< .001
	59	1.101	< .001
	60	1.096	< .001
	64	0.915	< .001
	65	0.907	< .001
	66	0.985	< .001
Career Explore Efficacy	19	1.000	< .001
	20	1.002	< .001
	21	1.096	< .001
	25	1.406	< .001
	26	1.225	< .001
	27	1.349	< .001
Family Support	86	1.000	< .001
	87	0.876	< .001
	88	0.922	< .001
Interview Efficacy	40	1.000	< .001
	41	0.932	< .001
	42	0.782	< .001
Personal Explore Efficacy	73	1.000	< .001
	74	1.870	< .001
	75	0.834	< .001

Family Support (FS) comprised three indicators (FS1–FS3; formerly PEE86–PEE88) with standardized loadings ranging from 0.876 to 0.922 ( $p < .001$ ). This cluster aligns with the qualitative evidence highlighting the salience of parental blessing and family deliberation (*musyawarah*) in Aceh, and it was therefore retained as the fifth factor in the final model.

The CFA solution showed strong congruence with the EFA results, with no salient cross-loadings, indicating a stable factor structure. This is consistent with prior work suggesting that specifying distinct dimensions of career search efficacy improves assessment accuracy (Lent et al., 1994; Sawitri et al., 2021). The present study's contribution lies in incorporating Acehese culture based indicators into the instrument most notably the emergence of Family Support as an independent dimension alongside culturally grounded indicators within Personal Exploration Efficacy thereby supporting contextually responsive, school-based career interventions in settings with strong local values. Notably, while the original CSSE framework proposed by Solberg et al. (1994) encompassed four dimensions, the present study identified Family Support as an additional, independent factor. This extension reflects the cultural salience of parental blessing and family deliberation (*musyawarah*) in Aceh, thereby expanding the theoretical scope of CSSE to better capture collectivist and culturally grounded contexts.

Beyond factor structure, the psychometric quality of the instrument was further evaluated through convergent and discriminant validity, construct validity was examined via convergent and

discriminant validity. Convergent validity was evaluated using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All indicators in the CFA demonstrated standardized loadings  $\geq .50$  and were significant at  $p < .001$ , indicating adequate contributions to their latent constructs (Joseph F. Hair Jr & Barry J. Babin, 2019). AVE values ranged from .347 to .500 across constructs. Although several AVEs fell slightly below the ideal .50 threshold, relatively high composite reliability supported treating convergent validity as acceptable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Sawitri et al., 2021).

**Table 7.** Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Factor	NE	CEE	FS	IE	PEE
Networking Efficacy ( $\sqrt{0.380} = 0.616$ )	0.616				
Career Explore Efficacy ( $\sqrt{0.347} = 0.589$ )	0.341	0.589			
Family Support ( $\sqrt{0.500} = 0.707$ )	0.349	0.641	0.707		
Interview Efficacy ( $\sqrt{0.438} = 0.662$ )	0.712	0.313	0.144	0.662	
Personal Explore Efficacy ( $\sqrt{0.400} = 0.632$ )	0.222	0.245	0.566	0.184	0.632

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. For each construct, the square root of the AVE ( $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ ) placed on the table diagonal exceeded the corresponding inter-construct correlations in the same rows and columns, indicating adequate distinction among constructs and thus satisfying discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These results align with prior findings that clearer separation among career search efficacy dimensions enhances measurement accuracy (Creed et al., 2021).

Construct reliability was evaluated via composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ). All constructs showed CR values ranging from 0.823 to 0.912 and  $\alpha$  values from 0.781 to 0.901, exceeding the commonly recommended threshold of 0.70 (Joseph F. Hair Jr & Barry J. Babin, 2019; Trizano-Hermosilla & Alvarado, 2016)(Joseph F. Hair Jr & Barry J. Babin, 2019), the validity and reliability evidence indicates that the Aceh-Based Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale possesses satisfactory psychometric quality for use in research and school-based career counseling practice within vocational education settings.

**Table 8.** Overall Reliability of the Aceh-Based CSSE Scale

Coefficient	Estimate	Std. Error	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Coefficient $\omega$	0.817	0.011	0.795	0.838
Coefficient $\alpha$	0.822	0.009	0.804	0.840

**Table 9.** Composite Reliability by Factor

Subscale	Coefficient $\omega$		Coefficient $\alpha$	
	LK	PR	LK	PR
Networking Efficacy	0.802	0.752	0.780	0.753
Career Exploration Efficacy	0.792	0.749	0.767	0.739
Family Support	0.708	0.806	0.706	0.808
Interview Efficacy	0.679	0.641	0.676	0.643
Personal Explorasi Efficacy	0.623	0.747	0.616	0.742
Total	0.873	0.876	0.829	0.853

Overall reliability was good ( $\omega = 0.817$ ;  $\alpha = 0.822$ ; 95% CIs in Table 8). At the construct level (Table 9), composite reliability (CR) ranged from 0.623 to 0.873 and Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ) from 0.616 to 0.753. Most dimensions—Networking Efficacy (NE), Career Exploration Efficacy (CEE), and Family Support (FS)—met the  $\geq .70$  benchmark, whereas Interview Efficacy (IE) and Personal Exploration Efficacy (PEE) were slightly below .70 and thus warrant refinement (e.g., reviewing low-loading items or adding more representative indicators)(Joseph F. Hair Jr & Barry J. Babin, 2019; Trizano-Hermosilla & Alvarado, 2016). Reporting CR and  $\omega$  follows methodological guidance because they are more appropriate for congeneric measures and more stable than  $\alpha$  when the tau-equivalence assumption is not met (Trizano-Hermosilla & Alvarado, 2016). Accordingly, despite the need to fine-tune two dimensions, the scale’s internal consistency is generally acceptable for an instrument-development stage in vocational education contexts.

**Table 10.** Criterion Validity Test

	CDSE	SLSS
Career Exploration Efficacy	.433**	.266*
Interview Efficacy	-.005	-.112**
Networking Efficacy	.154**	-.057
Personal Explorasi Efficacy	.424**	.182**
Family Support	.470**	.301**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Criterion validity. Criterion validity was examined by correlating each dimension with the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale–Short Form (CDSE-SF) and the Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS). Most associations were positive and significant. For CDSE-SF, the strongest correlation was observed for Family Support (FS;  $r = .470, p < .01$ ), followed by Career Exploration Efficacy (CEE;  $r = .433, p < .01$ ) and Personal Exploration Efficacy (PEE;  $r = .424, p < .01$ ). For SLSS, significant positive correlations emerged for CEE, PEE, and FS, whereas Interview Efficacy (IE) showed a small but significant negative association with SLSS ( $r = -.112, p < .01$ ). We interpret this latter finding as consistent with interview-related anxiety/evaluative pressure that can temporarily dampen subjective well-being a mechanism documented in the literature and worth testing in future studies (e.g., McCarthy & Goffin, 2004; Creed et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2025). Overall, these results indicate good criterion validity, suggesting that the scale taps theoretically relevant constructs and can inform meaningful career-guidance interventions in vocational education, particularly in culturally grounded settings such as Aceh.

## DISCUSSION

Key findings. The study confirmed a five-dimension structure of career search self-efficacy Networking Efficacy (NE), Career Exploration Efficacy (CEE), Interview Efficacy (IE), Personal Exploration Efficacy (PEE), and Family Support (FS) with acceptable model fit ( $CFI/TLI/IFI/GFI \geq .90$ ;  $RMSEA \& SRMR \leq .08$ ; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2019;  $NFI \approx .88$ , acceptable; Bentler & Bonett, 1980). Discriminant validity was satisfied, while convergent validity was borderline acceptable ( $AVE \approx .35-.50$ ) but supported by significant loadings and composite reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Malhotra, 2010). Overall reliability was good; two dimensions (IE and PEE) were slightly below .70 and thus warrant refinement in subsequent iterations (Joseph F. Hair Jr & Barry J. Babin, 2019; Trizano-Hermosilla & Alvarado, 2016). At the criterion level, CEE, PEE, and FS correlated positively with both CDSE-SF and SLSS, aligning with SCCT predictions that task-specific self-efficacy and contextual supports contribute to career outcomes and well-being (Lent & Brown, 2013). The small negative IE–SLSS correlation is consistent with the literature on interview stress (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004).

Theoretical foundation. Scale development was grounded in the Career Search Self-Efficacy (CSSE) framework, which emphasizes confidence in job-search tasks information seeking, networking, and interviewing (Solberg et al., 1994) and is consonant with Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), wherein self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and contextual supports jointly shape career choice and persistence (Lent et al., 1994). In SCCT, family support typically exerts *indirect* effects via self-efficacy or outcome expectations, though direct and moderating paths are also plausible (Lent et al., 1994). In the Acehese context, however, our EFA–CFA results show that Family Support forms a cohesive indicator cluster and stands as an independent dimension, not merely a mediator reflecting an autonomous, culturally salient source of efficacy.

For example, the Family Support items explicitly refer to parental blessing and family deliberation (*musyawarah*), the Career Exploration Efficacy dimension includes seeking jobs that are halal and consistent with Islamic values, and the Interview Efficacy items reflect Acehese etiquette such as greeting with *Assalamu 'alaikum* and maintaining decorum. These culturally grounded indicators illustrate how the instrument embeds Acehese norms into the construct of CSSE, consistent with evidence that Acehese local wisdom shapes education and character formation through values such as religiosity, honesty, and collective responsibility (Fatmi & Fauzan, 2022; Idris & Suroto, 2023; Nucifera, Prima, 2017). Such findings complement broader Indonesian research demonstrating that self-efficacy plays a mediating role in vocational students' career choice (Kholifah et al., 2025) and that

family and cultural supports are central to adolescents' career behavior in collectivist contexts (Sawitri et al., 2014). Retaining Family Support as an independent factor therefore enhances both the cultural validity and the contextual relevance of the Aceh-Based CSSE Scale.

Implications and limitations. The instrument can be used by school counselors (BK) to map efficacy profiles and design interventions that explicitly involve families (parental involvement), strengthen career exploration and networking, and incorporate interview training plus emotion regulation to mitigate evaluative stress. Limitations include borderline AVE on some dimensions and slightly sub-.70 reliability for IE/PEE; future work should refine items, test measurement invariance across groups/regions, and conduct longitudinal studies to evaluate mediation/moderation pathways consistent with extended SCCT. Collectively, the instrument offers both conceptual and practical contributions: it enriches career search efficacy modeling by incorporating Family Support as a standalone dimension, and it provides a robust foundation for culturally responsive career interventions in vocational education. Taken together, these findings highlight both the theoretical significance of Family Support in collectivist contexts and the practical utility of the instrument for advancing culturally grounded career guidance in Aceh and beyond, thus providing a strong basis for the concluding remarks.

## CONCLUSION

This study developed and validated a culturally grounded Career Search Self-Efficacy scale for Acehnese vocational students. EFA identified five dimensions Networking, Career Exploration, Interview, Personal Exploration, and Family Support and CFA confirmed the five-factor model with acceptable-to-good fit (CFI/TLI/IFI/GFI  $\geq$  .90; RMSEA/SRMR  $\leq$  .08; NFI  $\approx$  .88). Discriminant validity was met; convergent validity was borderline (AVE  $\approx$  .35–.50) yet supported by significant loadings and composite reliability. Internal consistency was generally good, with Interview and Personal Exploration slightly below .70 and requiring refinement. Criterion validity was supported: Career Exploration, Personal Exploration, and Family Support correlated positively with CDSE and life satisfaction, whereas Interview Efficacy showed a small negative link with life satisfaction, plausibly reflecting interview anxiety.

Theoretically, the results extend CSSE or SCCT by demonstrating Family Support as a stand-alone efficacy domain in a collectivist setting, not merely a contextual mediator. Practically, the scale can guide counselors in profiling students, engaging families in interventions, strengthening exploration and networking, and adding interview training with emotion regulation. Limitations include borderline AVE on some factors, slightly low reliability for two dimensions, localized sampling, cross-sectional design, and self-report. Future work should refine items, test measurement invariance, and examine longitudinal and predictive validity. Overall, the instrument not only advances CSSE or SCCT by incorporating culturally salient dimensions, but also provides a valuable tool for enhancing vocational guidance and reducing youth unemployment in Aceh and similar collectivist contexts.

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