



The Influence of Family Communication on Students' Self-Efficacy in Choosing College Majors at Universities in Medan City

Natalia Syafitri Br Marpaung^{1*}, Dewi Kurniawati², Emilia Ramadhani³
Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Natalia Syafitri Br Marpaung nataliasyahfitri01@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The choice of a major in college is a critical decision that has a significant impact on students' academic and career success. Although many studies have been conducted on family communication and self-efficacy, there is still a gap in the literature that connects these two factors, therefore this study aims to measure the extent of the influence of family communication on students' self-efficacy in choosing a major after being controlled by gender, parental education, and economic status. This study uses a quantitative method with calculations through SPSS 22 statistics on 398 samples of active D4, D4, S1 students from 4 university locations as representatives of the population. The results showed that Family Communication (X) had a significant positive effect on Student Self-Efficacy (Y) ($t = 4.879$; $p < 0.001$). Every 1-point increase in the family communication score increases self-efficacy by 0.132 points, indicating that open dialogue and family support are key foundations in educational decision making. Then, from the four control variables, two of them showed a significant effect and the rest had no effect on students choosing a major.

INTRODUCTION

V. Liu, et al., (2021) explained that students' primary choices not only determine, but also the variety of potential courses available, the network of peers and instructors who will interact with them in the short term to influence their future career choices. The phenomenon of the high number of students who do not graduate on time in Indonesia can be linked to the problem of choosing the wrong major. According to the Integrity Development Flexibility (IDF) institution, Irene Guntur, an Educational Psychology Expert (2021) said that as many as 87% of Indonesian students choose the wrong major. In line with a survey conducted by the Indonesian Career Center Network (ICCN) survey institution in 2017, 87 percent of Indonesian students admitted to choosing the wrong major (Arifin, et al., 2021).

This opinion is in line with the results of a study showing that students who feel unsuitable for their major tend to experience dissatisfaction in learning, which leads to low academic achievement and even a higher risk of dropping out (Saputra, et al., 2024). This is in line with a study that found that 62.5% of students who chose the wrong major felt discouraged by their learning process. In addition, dissatisfaction in choosing a major can result in prolonged stress and anxiety, which can affect students' mental health (Arifin, et al., 2021). The complexity of choosing a major is often caused by a lack of information about the major and a lack of understanding of students' personal interests and talents (Barseli, et al., 2017). This problem not only affects the quality of learning during college, but also the professional future of graduates.

Atuahene (2021) in his research argues that the difficulty of making major decisions is influenced by several factors including students' lack of readiness and reluctance to make decisions, current job probabilities, and the uncontrollable effects of global labor market uncertainty. Another factor that is often overlooked is the increasing cost of post-secondary education. More worryingly, many students are forced to take certain majors because of parental pressure. Research by Pratiwi & Wardana (2016) found that around 56% and 90% of them chose the wrong major and were forced to follow their parents' wishes who prioritized job prospects where it is estimated that salary is associated with the possibility of a student taking a particular major compared to interests and abilities (Baker, et al., 2018).

Many factors including pressure from parents, peers, and societal expectations influence the beliefs and self-confidence of prospective students in the process of choosing a major. Many of them feel forced to choose a particular major because it is considered "popular" or "safe" for the future, without considering their own interests and talents (Yonanda, et al., 2022). This creates a dilemma for students, where they have to balance the expectations of others with their personal desires. Parental involvement in the process of choosing a major can provide emotional support and information needed for children. Research shows that 70% of students who engage in open discussions with their parents about their career choices feel more confident in choosing a major that suits their interests and talents (Zakira, et al., 2023).

A study found that children who grow up in an authoritarian communication environment tend to feel less satisfied with their choice of major, because decisions are mostly determined by parents without involving the child's personal aspirations (Widiarto, et al., 2018). It is important to understand how effective communication between parents and children can help reduce confusion and increase students' confidence in choosing a study program. In line with research showing that 62% of students feel that parental support greatly influences their decision to choose a major at university (Siregar, et al., 2022).

In line with the results of the study (Laden, 2014) where the decision to choose a major at university was made based on considerations, namely considerations of the family's economic ability to help students pursue education at university. Although much research has been done on family communication and self-efficacy, there is still a gap in the literature that connects these two factors, namely how family communication can affect a person's self-efficacy in determining something such as choosing a major at university. Most previous studies have focused more on the impact of parental communication on academic achievement or the influence of self-efficacy on success in a particular field, without considering the interaction between the two in the context of major selection. For example, research by (Nurhayati et al., 2019) shows the importance of family social support in building entrepreneurial interest, but does not link it to the decision to choose a major at university. In addition, studies that examine self-efficacy in choosing a major at university often do not consider the role of family communication as a variable that can influence the relationship.

Based on these data and phenomena, the researcher wants to examine more deeply the influence of family communication on students' self-efficacy in choosing a major at a university in the city of Medan with the research subjects being active students who are currently studying for Bachelor's Degree (S1), Diploma 4 (D4), Diploma 3 (D3) at the University of North Sumatra, Muhammadiyah University of North Sumatra, Medan Area University, and HKBP Nommensen University. This location will represent the diversity of the active student population in the city of Medan. This location was chosen because first, this university is popular and is in the top 10 Best Universities in the city of Medan according to UniRank 2024. Second, because the population is too large or difficult to reach as a whole, this location was chosen because it represents the entire population in the city of Medan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Everet M. Rogers gave a clue about this. He mentioned six characteristics, namely 1. The flow of messages tends to be two-way. 2. The context of face-to-face communication. 3. The level of feedback that occurs is high. 4. The ability to overcome a high level of selectivity. 5. The speed of reaching a large audience is relatively slow. 6. The possible effect is a change in attitude (Abidin, 2022). During the process of direct interpersonal communication, between the communicator and the communicant, there will be an understanding of the function in turns with each other (Hasmawati, 2020).

The family as the first and main communication environment plays an important role in building character and shaping individuals. The communication of each family will be different, between families with few family members and families with many family members. This interaction pattern and behavior can occur in a short or long time (Syafrina, 2022). Family communication itself is a relationship between members of the primary group that is more intimate, more personal and more touching to the heart in association and cooperation. In other words, members of the primary group will be emotionally attached. Thus, the understanding of family communication as stated by the expert is a communication dynamic where there is an exchange of communication messages between family members to create good relationships and understanding between family members (Nauw, et al., 2018).

According to Aziz Safrudin in (Sabarua & Mornene, 2020), family communication is an organization that uses words, body language, voice intonation, actions to create image expectations, express feelings and share understanding. Judging from the understanding above, words, body language, voice intonation, and actions contain the intention of teaching, influencing and providing understanding. While the main purpose of this communication is to initiate and maintain interaction between one member and another so that effective communication is created. In essence, communication in a family, especially between parents and children, has an extraordinary contribution to both, because with effective and efficient communication that is carried out continuously, it can create closeness, openness, and more attention between the two and parents can also be more aware of the development of their children, both physically and psychologically (Sabarua & Mornene, 2020).

Family communication is not just about how many times it is done but how the communication is done effectively. Through the family, a person begins to learn, socialize, form character, and develop the values that have been instilled in him through a certain pattern. Family is a person who continuously lives together, such as father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, brother, and sister and even a housemaid. A family consisting of only father, mother and child in society is called a nuclear family (Arliman, 2022). Important elements of family communication are also explained in the research of Hart, et al., (2019), namely containing openness, emotional support, and interaction patterns.

Effective communication in the family can be realized through the active participation of each member, both parents and children. The key to good communication is openness when interacting, both verbally and non-verbally. Politeness and ethics in communication are also very important, including involving children in discussions about various things. In addition, something that is no less important is avoiding imposition of will and excessive control over children in their activities.

Thus, it can be concluded that the family is the main foundation where we socialize and form character from an early age (Sidiq, 2024). Self-efficacy is a belief that individuals can get positive results and even master situations. Bandura stated that self-efficacy greatly influences behavior. Then, Bandura and Woods explained that self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to mobilize

the motivation, cognitive abilities, and behavioral actions needed to meet the demands of the situation (Sumampouw & Mandey, 2024). Self-efficacy is an individual's optimistic attitude in solving every problem that occurs with persistence and a sense of responsibility in order to get the expected results with indicators of confidence in overcoming difficulties, ability to complete tasks, persistence in completing tasks, and self-evaluation ability (Karmila & Raudhoh, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative correlational method. The correlational method is used to study the relationship between variables in a particular group. Therefore, it can be concluded that correlational research has two objectives, namely, first, to describe the direction and strength of the relationship between variables in one group. Data is measured carefully and using appropriate instruments or tools and, in this study, using a Likert measurement scale or numeric scale. The Likert scale is used to measure attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of people or groups towards social phenomena (Sugiyono & Lestari, 2021). In using the Likert scale, the variables to be measured are described into variable indicators. Based on these indicators, a question/statement will be made that will be used as an item on the instrument. The answers to each instrument item using the Likert scale have a graduation from very positive to very negative (Widodo, 2023).

The population in the study were students with active status who are currently studying for Bachelor's degree (S1), Diploma 4 (D4), Diploma 3 (D3) at the University of North Sumatra, Muhammadiyah University of North Sumatra, Medan Area University, and HKBP Nommensen University. This location will represent the diversity of the active student population in the city of Medan. This location was chosen because first, this university is popular and is in the top 6 Best Universities in Medan according to UniRank 2024. The sampling technique used was probability sampling with the simple random sampling method. Probability sampling is a method of sampling by giving equal opportunities to members of the population to be selected as sample members, namely active students who have chosen a major at the university and are willing to participate in the study. Simple random sampling is a method of sampling from members of the population which is carried out randomly without considering the strata in the population (Sahir, 2021). Determining the sample size in this study used the Slovin formula with an error rate of 5%. The Slovin formula is used to determine a representative sample size from a larger population. Here are the steps to calculate a sample from a population of 68,533 students using the Slovin formula.

This study used a questionnaire in the form of a Google Form as a data collection technique. This study uses a Construct Validity test, namely the validity that assesses the extent to which questions can measure the conceptual definition that has been determined by the researcher. Construct validity uses Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) or which is often symbolized by the letter r . A Pearson r relationship has two pieces of information (1) an estimate of the strength of the relationship (2) a statement regarding the direction of the relationship (Morissan, 2018). This study uses the Cronbach's Alpha reliability

test. The reliability test of the instrument can be declared reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is > 0.60 . This reliability test is included in internal reliability using the help of SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) version 22.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of Family Communication on Students' Self-Efficacy in Choosing a Study Program at a University in Medan City

The results of the multiple linear regression test showed that family communication (X) had a positive and significant effect on student self-efficacy (Y) with a coefficient of 0.132 ($p = 0.000$). This finding is in line with Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which emphasizes that social support, including open communication within the family, can strengthen individual confidence in making decisions. The majority of respondents (90%+) reported that their families provided opportunities to express opinions, listened seriously, and respected their choice of major. This participatory communication pattern creates an environment that encourages students to be confident in evaluating their own abilities and the prospects of the chosen major.

The results of this study clearly show that family communication has a significant effect on student self-efficacy in choosing a major at universities in Medan City. This finding directly answers the main problem formulation in the study, namely the extent to which family communication plays a role in shaping students' beliefs and self-confidence when they make important decisions regarding their academic and career futures. This significant influence is reflected in the high self-efficacy scores of students who reported open, dialogical, and supportive communication in their families. The majority of respondents admitted that they had the opportunity to have honest and equal discussions with their parents regarding their interests, talents, and prospects for the majors they wanted to choose. Active family involvement, not only in the form of providing information, but also in listening to aspirations and providing emotional reinforcement, has been shown to increase students' confidence in their choices.

This finding is in line with the theory of family communication put forward which emphasizes the importance of effective communication in the family through the use of words, body language, voice intonation, and actions that create understanding and mutual understanding between family members. Open and supportive communication allows students to feel heard, appreciated, and supported in important decision-making processes, such as choosing a major.

In the context of this study, participatory and democratic family communication patterns have been shown to encourage students to be more active in exploring their potential, considering various alternatives, and making decisions that are in accordance with their personal interests and abilities. Conversely, students who grow up in an authoritarian or closed family communication environment tend to experience doubt and anxiety in making choices, and often feel pressured to follow their parents' wishes without considering personal aspirations.

This is also reinforced by Hernita (2019) who emphasized that the family is the most important environment in individual development, especially supporting children's education and decision-making. The results of the study are also relevant to Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to organize and carry out the actions needed to achieve certain goals. In the process of choosing a major, students with high self-efficacy are more confident in evaluating their interests, abilities, and prospects for the major they are interested in. Good family communication support strengthens students' self-efficacy, because they feel they have sufficient emotional resources, information, and motivation to make decisions independently and responsibly. This is in line with self-efficacy indicators which include confidence in overcoming difficulties, ability to complete tasks, and objective self-evaluation, as described by Maslikhah, et al., (2022). This finding is also in line with previous research that highlights the importance of family communication in educational decision-making. Research by Widiarto, et al., (2018) shows that family communication patterns greatly influence student satisfaction with their choice of major. In conversation-oriented families, discussions and exchanges of opinions are encouraged, children tend to be more confident in choosing a major. On the other hand, in families with a conformity orientation, where harmony and obedience are prioritized, students often feel pressured and dissatisfied with the decisions taken, because personal aspirations are less given space.

The Influence of Family Communication on Students' Self-Efficacy in Choosing a Study Program at a University in Medan City with Control Variables: Gender, Parents' Last Education, Parents' Salary, Parents' Source of Income

Further analysis involving control variables in this study showed that the influence of family communication on students' self-efficacy in choosing a college major remained significant, even after taking into account demographic factors such as gender, parents' highest education, parents' salary, and parents' source of income. This finding directly answers the formulation of the research problem, namely whether family communication remains the main factor influencing students' self-efficacy in choosing a college major, even when socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds are taken into account. The findings in the previous chapter explained that Gender (JK) and Parental Education (PTO) did not significantly influence self-efficacy ($p=0.834$ and $p=0.521$). This indicates that students' self-efficacy levels do not differ statistically based on gender or parental educational background. Parents' Salary (GOT) has a significant negative effect ($\beta=-0.731$, $p=0.000$). Students from families with higher incomes tend to have lower self-efficacy. This phenomenon may be related to indirect pressure from parents with better economic capacity to choose a major that is of interest or according to family expectations, thus reducing students' sense of autonomy. In addition, high academic expectations in high-income families can create anxiety about failure.

Furthermore, it was found that Parental Income Source (SGO) had a positive effect ($\beta = 0.628$, $p = 0.041$). Families with passive income sources (investment, rent) tend to provide greater freedom in choosing a major compared

to families with active income (business profits). This may be due to financial stability that allows parents to be more flexible in supporting their children's interests without economic pressure.

There is an R^2 value of 10.4% indicating that 89.6% of the variance in self-efficacy has not been explained by the model. Other factors such as peer influence, personal experience, or access to information about majors may play an important role. However, the statistical significance of the variables X, GOT, and SGO ($p < 0.05$) strengthens the urgency of considering family dynamics in education policy.

Thus, it can be concluded that open, participatory, and supportive family communication is a major factor that strengthens students' self-efficacy in choosing a college major, even after taking into account control variables such as gender, parents' last education, parents' salary, and parents' source of income. This finding explicitly answers the formulation of the research problem and provides empirical contributions to the development of family communication strategies and higher education policies in Indonesia, especially in Medan City.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Family Communication (X) has a significant positive effect on Student Self-Efficacy (Y) ($t = 4.879$; $p < 0.001$). Every 1-point increase in family communication score increases self-efficacy by 0.132 points, indicating that open dialogue and family support are key foundations in educational decision-making. Parental Salary (GOT) has a significant negative effect on Self-Efficacy (Y) ($t = -4.407$; $p < 0.001$). Students from high-income families (>Rp10 million) actually have 20% lower self-efficacy than those from the middle-income group (Rp6-10 million), allegedly due to economic pressure or rigid family expectations (Table 4.5.3). Parental Salary Source (SGO) has a significant positive effect ($t = 2.054$; $p = 0.041$). Students with parents with passive income (investment/rent) have 30.3% high self-efficacy, 12% higher than the active income group (Table 4.5.4), indicating that financial stability supports student self-confidence. Family Communication Category (based on standard deviation): 61.8% of respondents are in the medium category (score 29.77–38.27), indicating that the majority of families have a fairly participatory communication pattern, but it is not optimal in stimulating self-efficacy (Table 4.4). Family Tradition has a dualistic influence: 72.7% of respondents are not pressured to choose a major according to tradition, but 27.4% still experience value conflicts (Table X11). This confirms the cultural shift from collectivism to individualism in education. Parental Education (PTO) is not significant ($p = 0.521$), but 55% of parents have a Bachelor's/Doctoral background resulting in 65.1% of students with medium self-efficacy (Table 4.5.2). The implication is that parents' higher education does not guarantee the ability to support children's decision-making. Academic Self-Confidence: 90.9% of students are confident that their chosen major is in line with their abilities (Table Y1), and 92% do not hesitate to explain the advantages of the major to their family (Table X4), reflecting strong self-awareness as the basis for self-efficacy. Family Discussion Pattern: 91.7% of respondents actively discuss with their families about the differences in majors (Table X6), but 53% still feel pressured to

choose the "best" major according to their family (Table X7), indicating the dynamics between support and control in communication. Regression Model Assumptions: 10.4% of the variation in self-efficacy ($R^2 = 0.104$) is explained by the model variables, leaving 89.6% influenced by other factors such as personality, personal experience, or the education system (Table 4.6.3). Policy Recommendations: Family-based interventions are needed to change communication patterns from instrumental (focus on career prospects) to expressive (psychological support), especially in high-income families who tend to be suppressive (Tables X7 and X8).

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future advanced research could delve deeper into the longitudinal impact of family communication styles – ranging from authoritarian to democratic – on students' long-term academic satisfaction and career alignment. While this study establishes a significant positive influence of participatory family communication on self-efficacy in major selection, further exploration is needed to determine how these dynamics evolve over time, especially during academic stress or after students enter the workforce. Additionally, integrating qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews with students and parents could uncover nuanced emotional and cultural factors, particularly in collectivist societies where family expectations often override individual preferences. Cross-cultural comparisons or multi-city studies would also be valuable in understanding how socioeconomic status and educational background interact with communication patterns to shape self-efficacy and decision-making. This could support the development of tailored guidance programs that foster both autonomy and familial harmony in educational planning.

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