

Communication effectiveness of counselling teacher on career maturity of Vocational High School (SMK) students

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Received 1 June 2025
Revised 20 July 2025
Accepted 15 August 2025

ABSTRACT

The age of SMK students falls into the category of adolescents who tend to need guidance and direction, especially in the school environment, namely career assistance that can be provided by Counselling Guidance (BK) teachers. Many adolescents tend to spend more time with their peers than with their teachers and parents. This research examines the effectiveness of interpersonal communication between counselling teachers and vocational students towards career maturity in terms of communication effectiveness in the form of openness, positive attitude, support, equality, and empathy. Career maturity consists of the elements of concern, curiosity, confidence, and consultation. This research uses a mixed method that combines quantitative and qualitative methods with the help of descriptive, correlation, and regression tests, as well as in-depth analysis through interviews and observations. The results showed that the communication intervention of counselling teachers was more effective in increasing vocational school students' career maturity.

Keywords: Career Maturity, Interpersonal Communication, Teacher, Students.

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



1. INTRODUCTION

The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) released the results of the Youth Not in Employment, Education, and Training (Youth NEET) survey in Indonesia, showing a decrease in the young population that should be part of the potential workforce. The percentage of Youth NEET by 2024 was 20.31%. This figure decreased by 1.94% points compared to 2023 (BPS, 2025). NEETs of Youth NEETs are young people aged 15-24 years who are not working, not attending school, and not taking training/courses. The figure for Youth NEET at the Senior High School (SMA) and Vocational School (SMK) education levels also decreased in percentage by 2024 compared to 2023.

Desta Febriana Indriyatika, BPS Staff, explained that Youth NEET is different from youth unemployment because not all Youth NEET can be considered unemployed (Wafa, 2025). The data show an increase in youth participation in productive activities such as employment, education or training. The Youth NEET data seems to contrast with the BPS data release which noted that graduates of senior high school (SMA) and vocational high school (SMK) were the largest contributor to the number of open unemployment in 2024, reaching 1,840,162 people, or higher than in 2023 at 1,621,672 people (BPS, 2025) (see Tables 1 & 2).

Table 1. Youth NEET in Indonesia

Education Level	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
2023			
Primary School or Lower	21.31	39.31	28.54
Junior High School	7.92	15.04	11.39
Senior High School	24.74	32.84	29.05
Vocational High School	24.54	31.86	27.66
University/College	29.29	27.52	28.11
2024			
Primary School or Lower	19.60	36.35	26.13
Junior High School	7.30	12.89	9.99
Senior High School	22.31	29.63	26.23
Vocational High School	23.16	30.18	26.12
University/College	28.17	28.34	28.29

Source: BPS (2025)

Table 2. Open Unemployment by Highest Education Graduated

No.	Education Level	Feb-24	Aug-24
1	Primary School or Lower	1,265,448	1,228,158
2	Junior High School	1,154,255	1,091,015
3	Senior High School (General)	2,107,781	2,293,359
4	Vocational High School	1,621,672	1,840,162
5	Academy/Diploma	173,846	170,527
6	University	871,86	842,378
	Total	7,194,862	7,465,599

Source: BPS (2025)

The resulting high unemployment rate for SMK graduates is certainly due to both internal and external factors. Internal factors arose from students' beliefs and self-confidence in being able to predict their career path and abilities (Aminah et al., 2021). External factors refer to the lack of appropriate career information received by SMK students, who do not have a career picture after graduating from vocational

school. Juwitaningrum (2013) mentioned that vocational students only realize choosing and planning a career during times of crisis and are too slow to make choices and preparations. Approximately 80% of students have not determined their future careers steadily, and 75% of students have difficulty in properly deciding and planning their careers.

Schools play a key role in providing students with career information. Research by Rambe & Saragih (2023) at SMK Negeri 3 Rantau Utara highlighted teachers' dual capacities as "Educators" and "Innovators" which underscores the need for an evolved teaching paradigm that goes beyond conventional methods to cultivate a truly engaging educational environment. Mubarik et al. (2014) also stated that the dominant external factor influencing career decision making in 11th grade students of SMK Bina Sejahtera 1 Bogor was the school aspect at 71.16%, followed in sequence by community aspects at 46.03%, socio-economic aspects of the family at 39.42%, peer aspects at 34.66%, and family aspects at 32.54%. In addition, each school provided a counselling teacher who played a role in the career guidance process. Putri (2019) found that the career guidance process provided to students using career tree media can maturing students' career choices so that participants do not feel bored. It implies that the presence of counselling guidance (BK) teachers is needed by students to assist the maturation process of students, especially in their career choices through social interactions and interpersonal communication between BK teachers and vocational students (Diana et al., 2023). High school students experienced moderate levels of career anxiety. So, to help them more secure when planning their future careers, school counseling services can provide career-related information and guidance (Kuloğlu et al., 2025).

In the juvenile phase, vocational students love to hang out and communicate with peers. Peer relationships begin to play a central role in individuals' social lives, by spending more time with friends through friendships as adolescents transition to adulthood (Masten et al., 2012). The research of Sulusyawati and Juwanto (2022) findings of peer attachment can affect students' career planning, includes trust, communication, and experience. This implies that peers also play a role in determining students' career choices after graduation.

Previous research shows that the career maturity of vocational students is an issue related to the ineffectiveness of the communication process. Interpersonal communication is effective in helping students who need counselling services (Widodo et al., 2021), but there is no research on how the effectiveness of interpersonal communication can affect the career maturity of vocational students. Research on the career maturity of vocational students has often been conducted, but many gaps remain over time. Juwitaningrum found that the level of students' career maturity was categorized as medium, but the career guidance program proved to be effective in improving students' career maturity. However, this research needs to be updated because the survey is in 2013 and suggested using interviews and observations for qualitative data to complement quantitative data (Juwitaningrum, 2013). According to Suwanto's research, students' career maturity is related to self-management embedded in the counselling techniques of counseling teachers for vocational students. Therefore, self-management is a strategy to change students' behavior, not the effectiveness of interpersonal communication between counseling teachers and vocational students (Suwanto, 2016). Research on vocational students in Bogor revealed that external factors such as community, family socioeconomics, and peers, have a dominance on decision making and career maturity of vocational students (Mubarik et al., 2014).

In fact, vocational students should have a career preparation map since they enter vocational school. This research aimed to examine the effectiveness of communication and the influence of counseling teacher communication on vocational school students' career maturity. The purpose of this research is to focus on how interpersonal communication between counseling teachers and vocational students becomes a series of communications that is effective and has an impact on the career maturity of vocational students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Interpersonal Communication between Teacher to Students

Interpersonal communication (IPC) has been focus on how the messages, both in content and quality, between two interdependent persons and the possibility of further relationship development (Dainton & Zelle, 2019). The research of Sari & Wati (2020) shows that high school students have a tendency to have high interpersonal communication skills in resolving interpersonal conflicts constructively and wisely, but their verbal interpersonal communications skills are low so that they tend to cause misunderstandings. According to the results of Utami & Widodo (2015) research, the high effectiveness of adolescents' interpersonal communication with parents effects the higher career maturity of these adolescents. Meanwhile, compared to Juwitaningrum (2013) career guidance programmes conducted by schools and counselling teachers have not been able to improve all indicators of vocational students' maturity. Vocational High Schools are supposed to produce ready-to-work graduates, but in reality, according to the BPS, the most open unemployment is from vocational schools. Career maturity is considered an important aspect that vocational students must have to choose an appropriate career during the majoring process. Career maturity of vocational students is supported by effective communication that begins with interpersonal communication between students and counselling teachers (Suwanto, 2016).

2.2. Communication Effectiveness of Vocational Students

Effective communication refers to the exchange of messages that results in maximum understanding, while mindfulness makes communication effective to help manage uncertainty and anxiety (Littlejohn et al., 2017). Therefore, effective communication plays an important role in improving an individual's life skills because by honing communication skills, a learner (including students) improves their social, interpersonal, critical thinking, creative, and conflict management skills (Purwanto et al., 2023). This study argues that effective communication with vocational students can influence and impact career maturity.

Joseph A. DeVito (2001) states that there are many aspects that can be used to understand interpersonal skills, including mindfulness, cultural sensitivity, other-orientation, immediacy, openness, flexibility, expressiveness, empathy, supportiveness, equality, and interaction management. However, to understand the effectiveness of interpersonal communication of counselling teachers on the career maturity of vocational students, different elements should be used because it focuses on message exchange. Basically, interpersonal communication is an activity of giving and receiving messages carried by two individuals who have a relationship for a specific purpose so that the indicators used can be through openness, equality, empathy, positivity, and support (Hermawan et al., 2023). This research focuses on 5 points of the effective interpersonal communication between counselling teacher and vocational students, based on reasons (DeVito, 2016):

1. Openness – willingness to disclose and be honest.
2. Empathy – feeling what another person feels from that person's point of view.
3. Supportiveness – messages that express understanding rather than evaluation.
4. Equality – attitude and behaviour in which each person is treated as interpersonally equal.
5. Positiveness – a characteristic of attitude and messages expressing along with acceptance and approval.

Every single points has a significant relationship with the points forming the career maturity of vocational school students.

2.3. The Maturity Career of Vocational School Student

While students' career maturity was measured using Crites' (1965) Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) Form C developed by Mark L. Savickas and Erik J. Porfeli (2011). CMI Form C consists of 4 indicators, such as curiosity, concern, confidence, and consultation. Hence, the effectiveness of communication consisting of elements of openness, empathy, positiveness, supportiveness, and equality form counselling teachers is believed to have an impact and affect the career maturity of vocational

students as identified through Form C indicators of concern, curiosity, confidence, and consultation (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011).

According to Kerlinger and Lee (2000) to explain the purpose and predict the phenomenon of the relationship between variables must be through a set of constructs (concepts), definitions and propositions that are interrelated, so that the concepts of the variables being examined provide a concrete framework for understanding complex representations of reality (Cobley & Schulz, 2013).

Openness, empathy, supportiveness, equality, and positiveness are not just used as indicators of the effectiveness of counselling teachers' interpersonal communication with vocational students, but also influence four indicators of students' career maturity; concern, curiosity, confidence, and consultation. The way each indicator of career maturity is influenced by each element of the communication effectiveness indicator. Also, in what measure each indicator of the effectiveness of interpersonal communication between vocational students and counselling teachers is capable of affecting career maturity. The relationship between the effectiveness of counselling teachers' communication to the career maturity of vocational students can be illustrated through the Figure 1 below:

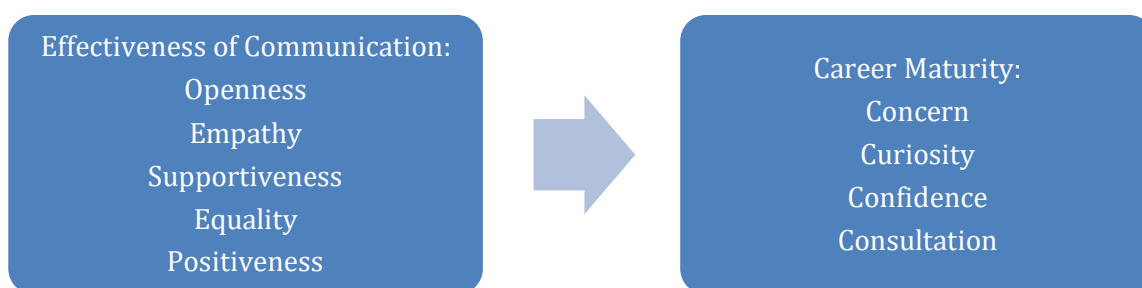


Figure 1. Framework of Thinking

Source: Researcher

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Approach

This research used quantitative and qualitative mixed methods to obtain comprehensive, valid, reliable and objective data (Sugiyono, 2013). The first phase of this research as quantitative approach to predict relationship and a substantive review of the literature. Qualitative approach may initially seek to explain the relationship in details (Creswell, 2009). Fundamentally, qualitative methods aim to reveal the unique characteristics found in individuals (Rambe & Saragih, 2023). So, this research uses mixed methods to provide novelty from previous studies regarding the effectiveness of counselling teacher communication for career maturity of vocational students.

3.2. Data Sources

The research data sources come from the subjects, vocational students and counselling teachers, which provide primary data through questionnaires, observations, and interviews. The secondary data of this research comes from documentation and literature study. The questionnaire will be the research's preliminary data that detects communication between vocational students and counselling teachers to measure students' career maturity through variables that become the object of research. The questionnaire is also the initial data to determine the effectiveness of communication between counselling teachers and students of career maturity of vocational students. Meanwhile, observation is a direct measurement of the interaction of vocational students at school, which is complemented by in-depth interviews. Interviews were also conducted with counselling teachers to find out the process of communication and mentoring students to prepare for career maturity after graduating from school. Documentation and literature studies

are needed to complete the analysis and discussion of the research, especially literature related to a number of variables in effectiveness of communication and career maturity.

3.3. Research Procedures

The questionnaire is an instrument to measure the variables which are being examined, namely student identity, counselling teacher identity, communication between counselling teachers and students, and career maturity of vocational students. The primary data of the questionnaire consists of several questions that must be answered by 33 vocational students and 1 counselling teacher, the respondents. The words and actions of observed and interviewed are recorded as primary data collection (Rambe & Saragih, 2023). For the purpose of complementing the questionnaire primary data, this mixed method research conducted observations and interviews. Observation is a personal assessment of the object of research, vocational students and counselling teacher, which is synthesized with interviews to explore the questionnaire data as well as to find out more about the process of assisting students to prepare their career maturity. Secondary data is obtained from documentation and literature studies using written word studies for researchers to compare the results of research done in the field in comparison to reference information derived from previous research results or other expert opinions.

3.4. Sampling Technique

This research was conducted for 33 students class XI and 2 counselling teachers at SMK PGRI 1 Baraja, located at Kabupaten Tangerang, Banten. The research period spanned Agustus 2024 to Agustus 2025. The selection of respondents in this research employed the simple random sampling method which selects respondents through random sampling of the population considering strata in the population. While the number of samples taken, 33 respondents, refers to Kerlinger and Lee (2000), the minimum number of people in quantitative research is 30.

3.5. Data Analysis Technique

Quantitative analysis data from questionnaires comprise the main data that is yet to be processed, or raw data, so it requires data processing and presenting through calculations and descriptions to test hypotheses with the help of Excel and SPSS. The data analysis technique used in this research consists of:

- a. Descriptive Analysis - describes the data collected without intending to make overview conclusions due to the descriptive analysis data being variables about identity, career maturity, and communication that's described in the form of percentage tables after scoring.
- b. Correlation and Regression Test - to see if there is a relationship and/or influence of counselling teacher communication with vocational students for career maturity.
- c. Measurement of Communication Effectiveness - using the 5 dimensions of communication effectiveness according to DeVito.
- d. Career Maturity Measurement - applying the Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) Form C measurement tool to analyse a person's adaptability in deciding a career and readiness to choose a job.
- e. The data analysis (point c and d) will be matched with the results of observations and interviews of respondents to complete the data analysis of mixed method research.

3.6. Validity and Reliability Tests

The validity test was conducted thoroughly on 33 vocational students, the respondents, to measure the research variables by using SPSS for Windows 21.0 software applying Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. While the reliability test was used by the Cronbach's alpha method with the help of SPSS for windows 21.0 software to obtain reliable measurement results. Cronbach alpha is grouped into 5 criteria: Very Reliable, Reliable, Quite Reliable, Not Reliable, and Very Unreliable. According to these criteria, the

reliability of each research variable is in the fairly reliable, reliable, and very reliable categories, which means that the question items have sufficient consistency or reliability.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Result of Characteristics of Vocational Students and Counselling Teacher

The 33 vocational students who became respondents consisted of 23 female students and 10 male students with the majority being at the age of 17 years (20 people), age 16 years (8 people), age 18 years (4 people), and age more than 18 years (1 person). From the questionnaire dissemination, the results show that 17 students want to work immediately after graduation, 12 students want to continue their studies, and 4 students are still confused about making choices. SMK PGRI only has one counselling female teacher. From interviews with several students, the BK teacher is firm, disciplined, always reminds students to comply with school regulations, and regularly makes time to meet students who apply for mentoring or counselling. A unique finding was that some student respondents did not know the full name of the counselling teacher. Sometimes, counselling teachers have different roles and functions in each school. At SMK PGRI 1 Balajara, the counselling teacher has another role as a subject teacher, consequently student guidance activities often overlap with other subject sessions. Essentially, counselling teacher fulfil the role of providing career guidance and counselling to every vocational students in order to make students establish effective communication with counselling teacher. In addition to the counselling teacher, students are also influenced by association with peers at school and the surrounding environment.

4.2. Result of Communication Effectiveness of Vocational School Students

The effectiveness of communication by vocational students was measured and analysed using five dimensions sourced from DeVito's interpersonal communication effectiveness: openness, empathy, support, positive attitude, and equality. Measurements were taken from several questions in the questionnaire for which the average index value was calculated. Descriptive analysis using the average index value (0-100) made the questions on each indicator different through coding, scoring, and index transformation. Each variable produces different values because there are different questions for each indicator. Overall, the career maturity of SMK PGRI 1 Balaraja students is in the medium category. However, if the data is detailed in each dimension, it can be seen that the dimensions of confidence and concern are in the very low category. This means that the level of self-confidence and caring attitude of students towards their career choices is in a very low category. Self-assessment, social affirmation and personality are 3 of the 6 aspects that have a major influence on Career Decision Making Self Efficacy (CDMSE). These 3 aspects are related to the level of self-confidence and care of youth. If the self-confidence and caring of teenagers aged 16-19 are low, it will be directly proportional to low career decisions as well (Laily & Naqiyah, 2025).

Table 3. Average Value of Communication Effectiveness Index of Vocational Students with Counselling Teacher and Peers at SMK PGRI 1 Balajara

Average Value of Index (0-100)			
No	Dimension Category	Communication: Vocational Students & Counselling Teacher	Communication: Vocational Students & Peers
1	Openness	13,64	71,72
2	Empathy	4,55	75,45
3	Supportiveness	27,12	49,81
4	Positiveness	43,75	70
5	Equality	30,11	92,42
Effectiveness of Communication		23,83	71,88

Source: processed from primary data research (2025)

Table 3 shows the differences in the average index values in each variable indicator. Overall, the largest index shows that vocational students interact more with peers than counselling teachers. Vocational students feel more open, comfortable and free to talk with peers than counselling teachers. Peers are also considered to be more empathetic, expressing care and support. Counselling teacher seem to be perceived by the vocational students as not providing enough information for career, motivation and academic guidance. Positiveness refers to good behaviour according to values and norms. Meanwhile, equality is defined as the same status in perceiving social or position. These two variables, positiveness and equality, also showed higher numbers with peers than counselling teachers.

The questionnaire data results are correlated with the results of previous research on vocational students and peers. Peers are known to have an active role in influencing the emotional development of adolescents, as well as providing negative and positive impacts on adolescents (Nasution & Amanda, 2025) so that there is a significant relationship between peer social support and increasing adolescent self-confidence (Winata et al., 2018). This confirms the data that SMK students are more comfortable and tend to communicate about many things with peers than with counselling teachers. On the other hand, there is an opinion among students that negative stigma exists about students who consult and are assisted by counselling teachers as problematic, naughty, delinquent, and undisciplined (Busmayaril & Heldayani, 2016). Consequently, students are reluctant to ask questions, and even hesitant to stop by the counselling teacher's room to talk about their plans after graduating from school. One of the students said:

“Saya biasanya jarang curhat ke guru BK soal urusan karier, karena memang tidak terlalu dekat dengan guru BKnya”
(WD, 17 years)

“I seldom confide in the counselling teacher about career matters, because I am not too close to the counselling teacher” (WD, 17 years old).

This statement confirms the argument that vocational students have a tendency to communicate effectively with peers rather than with counselling teachers, but it does not mean that all vocational students feel uncomfortable communicating with counselling teachers.

4.3. Result of Communication Effectiveness Between Vocational Students and Counselling Teachers

From 33 research respondents, 25 students or 75.8% rated the dimension of openness with the counselling teacher very low, indicating that students do not feel comfortable, calm, and free to talk to the counselling teacher, which makes students tend to be afraid and reluctant to consult. The same thing also happened to the Empathy dimension, where 27 students or 81.8% of respondents felt that the counselling teacher was not empathetic enough to the problems that students experienced, causing the supportiveness dimension to fall into a very low category, at 51.5%. Only the positiveness dimension is in the moderate category at 48.5% because students feel that counselling teachers have behaved according to values and norms such as using positive words to give advice, and to improve the confidence of students in planning careers after graduating from school (see Table 4).

Table 4. Categories of Communication Effectiveness of Vocational Students with Counselling Teacher

Dimension of Effectiveness Communication	Openness		Empathy		Positive		Supportive		Equality		Communication	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Very High	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
High	0	0	0	0	5	15,2	2	6,06	2	6,06	0	0
Middle	0	0	0	0	16	48,5	7	21,2	8	24,2	3	9,09

Dimension of Effectiveness Communication	Openness		Empathy		Positive		Supportive		Equality		Communication	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Low	8	24,2	6	18,2	9	27,3	7	21,2	13	39,4	17	51,5
Very Low	25	75,8	27	81,8	3	9,09	17	51,5	10	30,3	13	39,4
	33	100	33	100	33	100	33	100	33	100	33	100

Description: n = number (people/students), % = percentage, Σ = number (people)

Source: processed from primary data research (2025)

The low average value of the counselling teacher communication index with vocational students is influenced by several factors, one significant is only one person in the school act as a counselling teacher. With the dual role of counselling teachers, it is difficult to play an optimal role. It's obvious that there needs to be role assistance and strategic improvement from school parties, such as homeroom teachers or other teachers, who provide career guidance activities routinely, planned and sustainable to empower students to determine choices after graduating from school.

4.4. Result of Career maturity Among Students of SMK PGRI 1 Balaraja

The dimensions of career maturity refer to the Career Maturity Inventory Form C (CMI Form C) by *Crites & Savickas (2011)* consisting of 4 Cs (concern, curiosity, confidence, consultation) measured based on 24 questions for respondents as respondents. The output of this 4C measurement tool is able to define the career maturity of SMK students as the adaptability of career readiness and decisions and job choices after graduating from school. Overall, the career maturity of SMK PGRI 1 Balaraja students is in the moderate category represented by 20 students or 60.61%, indicating that SMK students already have adequacy in these 4 dimensions of career adaptation (see Table 5).

Tabel 5. Number, Percentage and Category of Career Maturity of Vocational Students

Dimension	Very High		High		Middle		Low		Very Low		Score	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	Σ	%
Curiosity	1	3,03	4	12,12	14	42,42	10	30,30	4	12,12	33	100
Concern	0	0,00	4	12,12	5	15,15	9	27,27	15	45,45	33	100
Confidence	0	0,00	1	3,03	2	6,06	4	12,12	26	78,79	33	100
Consultation	20	60,61	9	27,27	3	9,09	1	3,03	0	0,00	33	100
Career Maturity	0	0,00	1	3,03	20	60,61	12	36,36	0	0,00	33	100

Description: n = number (people/students), % = percentage, Σ = number (people)

Source: processed from primary data research (2025)

However, if specified according to each dimension, different categories will be obtained. The curiosity dimension is in the medium category with 14 students or 42.42% of respondents feeling that they care enough about plans after graduating from SMK and starting to think about jobs according to their expertise, interests and talents so that they feel it necessary to prepare themselves early to enter the world of work. In contrast to the dimensions of concern and confidence which are in the very low category. 15 students or 45.45% of respondents have not prepared a plan, especially thinking about a job according to their expertise, interests and talents, after graduating from school. Meanwhile, 26 students or 76.79% of respondents have low confidence to make steady decisions and find difficulty making decisions. Respondents had difficulty making decisions because there was a tendency to get bored easily, not to persevere, and often experienced changes in choices. The only dimension that ranked in the very high category was consultation where 20 students or 60.61% of respondents considered it necessary to approach others for help, by asking directly or seeking out help online, to make decisions about careers after school.

Adolescents, or vocational students in this study, need self-confidence to determine career. Self-factors significantly affect career maturity, such as self-efficacy, based on Santrock (2007), is someone's belief in the ability to control situations and generate something profitable so that when students are confident in their abilities, it will affect career maturity by 50% compared to other factors (Aminah et al., 2021). Self-confidence can be obtained and measured through 6 aspects of Career Decision Making Self Efficacy (CDMSE), namely self-assessment, information gathering, goal selection, planning, problem solving, and social affirmation (Laily & Naqiyah, 2025). 3 of the 6 aspects of CDMSE are believed to increase the confidence and concern of adolescents which is proportional to the career decisions of vocational students. One interesting finding in this mixed-method research indicated other factors that have significant potential to affect the career maturity of vocational students. This factor is not derived solely from vocational students' effective communication with peers. One student admitted:

“Biasanya kalau saya ngobrol dan curhat sama teman, seringnya tentang kegiatan di sekolah, hobi, makanan, film, dan percintaan. Jadi jarang bicara masalah persiapan setelah lulus.” (SL, 19 tahun).
 "Usually when I chat and confide in friends, it is often about activities at school, hobbies, food, films, and romance. So we rarely talk about problems of preparation after graduation." (SL, 19 years old).

The result corroborates that self-factors significantly influence students' career maturity more than effective communication with peers. In addition, SMK students also admitted that they prefer to talk about careers with other sources, such as counselling teachers, rather than with peers or parents.

4.5. Result of The Influence of Counselling Teacher Communication on Career Maturity of Vocational School Students

The presence of counselling teachers in schools aims to assess students' strengths, weaknesses, and interests through provision of advice and counselling which plays an important role in guiding students to find a career path that is suitable for their characteristics and personality (Audrey et al., 2023). The students' needs are so diverse and varied that Guidance and Counselling programs, including counselling teachers, require a comprehensive data-based approach designed by considering students' academic, career, social and personal needs (Sukamadiningsih & Herdi, 2025), in order to be key and significantly impact vocational students. The influence of communication between counselling teacher and vocational students is reflected in the data from the correlation and regression results as in the Table 6 below:

Table 6. Results of Regression Analysis of Communication between Vocational Students and Counselling Teacher on Career Maturity of Vocational Students

Metric / Term	Value	Notes / Interpretation
Multiple R	0.354864	Weak positive correlation between X and Y
R Square	0.125928	12.59% of variance in Y explained by X
Adjusted R Square	0.096792	Adjusted for sample size (n = 32)
Standard Error	8.600.095	Average prediction error
Observations	32	Total data points used
F-statistic	4.322.122	Model test statistic
Significance F (p-value)	0.046268	Model is statistically significant at 5% level
Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error
Intercept	3.475.377	3.943.168
X Variable	13.25	0.313024

Source: processed from primary data research (2025)

Students' communication with counselling teacher has the largest R multiple value of 0.35 but with a significance value below 0.05, at 0.46. Meaning that even though student's communication with the

counselling teacher is weak, it has significant influence where students still trust the counselling teacher to provide input and counselling related to career maturity. Communication interventions with career guidance and counselling services of counselling teachers are believed to improve students' career maturity (Lindawati et al., 2022) because students consider that counselling teachers have the experience to provide advice to advance the careers of vocational students. At SMK PGRI 1 Balaraja, the only counselling teacher admitted that she often received students' stories and confessions about career choices, but interpersonal communication with students was less effective due to the double job of teaching.

“Anak-anak memang suka cerita ke saya tentang rencana pilihan karier, justru di akhir-akhir mau lulus sekolah, beberapa dari mereka masih bingung menentukan pilihan setelah lulus nanti” (Guru BK, 42 tahun)

"[Students] do like to tell me about their career choice plans, at the end of the school year, some of them are still confused about their choices after graduating" (Counselling Teacher, 42 years old).

The influence of counselling teacher communication with students on career maturity indicates the presence of counselling teachers at SMK PGRI is not yet optimal in providing effective communication and influencing students' career maturity. Career guidance services can help students plan careers and make their own decisions by understanding the capabilities, potential, achievements, interests, talents and personalities of students. The school, as a service provider, can help students obtain the success they expect through identifying their potential so that students are determined and well prepared to make career choices after graduating from school

4.6. Discussion

The four dimensions of career maturity (Curiosity, Concern, Confidence, Consultation) according to career construction theory Savickas (2005) have particular approaches to one's career choice (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011). Career Curiosity refers to the initiative to learn about the world of work through searching for information. The results (Table 3) showed that only 1 student showed a very high level of curiosity, and 4 students showed a high level of curiosity. On average, 14 students had a medium level of curiosity, and there remained 10 students in the low curiosity level and 4 students in the very low curiosity level. The 28 students who are in the middle, low and very low levels of curiosity require special attention to be addressed and guided about their future orientation after graduating from school. Lack of curiosity has an impact on the reflection of a person who does not accurately reflect himself. Students with medium, low and very low levels of career curiosity may still be confused about their career goals after school.

Career Concern refers to the feeling of the importance of preparing the future and orientation towards the future. In this dimension (Table 3), only 4 students were at a high level of career concern, and 5 students were at a medium level. Noteworthy, 15 students were at a very low level of concern, and 9 students were at a low level of concern. Low career concern reflects uncertainty and pessimism about the future. Counselling teacher plays an important role in providing direction and guidance to the students to find out the reasons behind the low level of career concern after graduating from school.

Career Confidence refers to the anticipation of successfully solving complex problems in career decision-making and job choice. In this dimension of confidence (Table 3), 26 students felt that their career confidence was at a very low level, and 4 students were at a low level. There is only one student whose career confidence is at a high level, and 2 students are at the middle level. Students require confidence to act on their interests and aspirations, therefore a lack of confidence can be a career inhibitor. Counselling teachers can be a supporting factor to increase students' confidence to determine their future and career maturity after graduating from school.

Career Consultation measures the extent to which a person seeks help to make career decisions. Twenty students showed a very high level of career consultation behaviour (Table 3), nine students were at a high level for consultation, and one student was at a medium level for consultation. There is only one student who is at a low level for career consultation. This gap can be filled by counselling teacher to be

more intensive in providing guidance and mentoring so that students can be more curious, concerned and confident in making career maturity after graduating from school.

For the Concern, Curiosity, and Confidence Scale, high score reflects more advanced development. While the Consultation scale can be interpreted by considering cultural identity and counselling relationships similar to family conversations (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011). Consequently, the improvement of these four dimensions affects students' career control, which means that a person feels responsible for building a career in decisive, assertive, and conscientious actions. Lack of career control can result in indecision through expressions of confusion and procrastination. Researchers consider the need for effective communication to vocational students to improve career maturity.

The low career maturity of students, though at the medium level, is a problem in the world of education because students are considered hesitant about careers and the future (Kamil & Daniati, 2016). If seen from the results of regression analysis (Table 4) where students choose to ask and consult about careers by communicating with counselling teachers, therefore career counselling and guidance services are considered effective communication between counselling teachers and vocational students.

As seen from the dimensions of effective communication; openness, empathy, and supportiveness factored (Table 2) the most respondents at the lowest level. From 33 respondents, 25 students indicated very low levels of openness with the counselling teachers because they felt uncomfortable, unsettled, and less free to talk with the counselling teachers which made students reluctant to consult.

The highest score seen in the empathy dimension, 27 students feel very low empathy with the counselling teacher. The empathy score relates to openness score because students still find it difficult to be open with the guidance counsellor because they feel that the guidance counsellor does not understand or empathise with the feelings experienced by students. The openness and empathy dimensions then affect the equality dimension which is at a low level, students feel that equality is low because students and counselling teachers have not been open and empathetic to each other, so recognition and mutual respect are still relatively low between the two parties.

Communication effectiveness can be seen from all dimensions with high scores, but career counselling conducted openly and in groups can create warm, permissive, open and intimate relationships (Kamil & Daniati, 2016). The characteristics of effective interpersonal communication can be integrated with the three stages of friendship development: contact, involvement, close and intimate friendship (DeVito, 2016). From interviews and observations in the field, students need more intensive time to talk more openly with counselling teachers about career choices after graduating from school. The number of students who are still confused about making choices indicates that the factors of the closest environment, peers and parents, are not enough to dissolve the confusion of reinforcing students' career maturity. Effective communication with the closest environment is not enough to help students make career choices and consolidate career maturity. On one side, students feel that they can talk more openly with peers, but on the other hand students realise if talking about career choices is better with someone who has experience, the counselling teacher.

5. CONCLUSION

Career maturity of SMK PGRI 1 Balaraja students lies in the moderate category, referring to the fact that students already have enough knowledge to prepare for their careers after graduating from school. However, the school should pay attention to the students' Self-Confidence and Concern, which need to be improved because these dimensions are in the very low category. The low dimensions of Confidence and Concern allow students to still doubt, or only at the stage of preparing rather than being ready to face new journeys and mature career plans after graduating from school.

Correlation and regression analyses assessed the need to improve the effectiveness of communication between counselling teachers and vocational students on students' career maturity due to the significant influence of communication between vocational students and counselling teachers. Although communication has not been effective, students consider consulting with counselling teachers as a career decision that significantly influences career maturity. Therefore, counselling teachers and

schools can maintain more intensive communication with students in order to understand students' problems, explore the causes of problems, seek problem solving, conduct evaluations, and provide continuous guidance activities. Intensive and optimal communication interactions are believed to be effective in increasing the career maturity of vocational students who are ready with the career path that will be pursued after graduating from school and preparing early.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was not required for this study.

Informed Consent Statement

This research did not require informed consent.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, PV., and SL; methodology, SL., and PV; validation, SL., and PV; formal analysis, PV., and SL; resources, SL.; writing the original draft, PV., and SL; writing the review and editing, PV.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflicts of interest were reported by the authors.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author for privacy reasons.

Funding

This study received no external funding.

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