

# Career-Related Predictors of Life Satisfaction of Indonesian Youth

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## CAREER-RELATED PREDICTORS OF LIFE SATISFACTION OF INDONESIAN YOUTH

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### ABSTRACT

Using the social cognitive career theory of well-being, we examined the relationships between adolescent–parent career congruence, career decision-making self-efficacy, career exploration, and life satisfaction of 367 Indonesian undergraduate students (mean age = 20.07 years; standard deviation = 1.08; 77.7% female). The hypothesized structural model demonstrated good fit statistics: Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) (122,  $N$  = 367) = 223.74,  $p$  < .001,  $\chi^2/df$  = 1.83, comparative fit index = .96, goodness-of-fit index = .94, Tucker–Lewis index = .95, and root mean square error of approximation = .05. Structural equation modeling demonstrated that combined career decision-making self-efficacy and career exploration; and career exploration alone, partially mediated the relationship between adolescent–parent career congruence and life satisfaction. We also observed that career decision-making self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between adolescent–parent career congruence and career exploration, whereas career exploration mediated the relationship between career decision-making self-efficacy and life satisfaction. The findings reveal the important roles of adolescent–parent career congruence in young people’s career decision-making self-efficacy, career exploration, and life satisfaction.

**Keywords:** congruence, self-efficacy, career exploration, life satisfaction, SCCT

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## INTRODUCTION

Are people who are congruent with their parents regarding career matters more satisfied with their lives? In individual cognitive appraisal of one's life, life satisfaction is one aspect of positive subjective well-being (Diener & Diener, 1995). Individuals will be more satisfied when they fit in their environment (Swanson & Fouad, 1999), and fitting in with their parents should lead to the increased life satisfaction of individuals from most cultural backgrounds (Oishi & Sullivan, 2005).

Being congruent with parents regarding career matters reflects a state where individuals have career aspirations, interests, and show career progress that correspond with parental preferences. Such congruency also reflects the adolescents' perceived capability to make their parents happy, proud, or satisfied and feel that their parents support them at the level they require (Sawitri, Creed, & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2013).

Differences between individual performances and preferences and parental expectations in career and other life domains noticeably disrupt the career decision-making process and well-being (Leung, Hou, Gati, & Li, 2011; Wang & Heppner, 2002). Additionally, the congruence between individuals and their parents regarding career issues has been found to be associated positively with life satisfaction in collectivistic settings (e.g., Sawitri et al., 2013). In collectivistic communities such as Indonesia, individuals belong to "in groups" that take care of each other in exchange for absolute loyalty. Additionally, Indonesia is characterized by a large "power distance," where exertion of power is accepted (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

Previous career studies have focused on various dependent variables: career decision-making self-efficacy (e.g., Mau, 2000; Shin, Steger, & Lee, 2014), career decision-making difficulties (Fan, Cheung, Leong, & Cheung, 2014; Mau, 2000; Wilner, Gati, & Guan, 2015), career exploration (e.g., Choi & Kim, 2003; Fan, Cheung, Leong, & Cheung, 2012), vocational interest (e.g., Fouad, Hansen, & Galicia, 1989), career decision-making (e.g., Guan et al., 2015; Moriano, Gorgievski, Laguna, Stephan, Zarafshani, 2012), career maturity (e.g., Hughes, 2011; Lee, 2001), and career commitment (e.g., Noordin, Williams, & Zimmer, 2002). However, limited research reported life satisfaction in the career area in collectivistic contexts (i.e., Douglass, Duffy, & Autin, 2015). Life satisfaction refers to the cognitive appraisal of one's life based on one's standards and is a component of subjective well-being (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Life satisfaction also relies on how individuals determine what a fulfilling life is and includes both global and domain-specific cognitive appraisals of their happiness (Diener, 2009; Suldo, Shaffer, & Riley, 2008).

Undergraduate students deal with a range of developmental tasks during their study. Most of these responsibilities connect and overlap, and interactions with the

students' abilities to cope with these problems frequently lead to psychological distress (Fouad et al., 2006). Success in academic and career pursuits is an important goal among undergraduate students (Pina-Watson, Jimenez, & Ojeda, 2014), and career development theory has frequently identified that successful vocational development has positive effects on life satisfaction (e.g., Herr, 1989; Spokane, 1989). Positive career orientation and better career preparation were shown to prevent problem behavior, promote well-being, and decrease distress (Skorikov, 2007). For example, career strategies buffer the negative effects of compromise on life satisfaction of Australian first-year university students (Creed & Hughes, 2013).

Lent (2004) proposed a unifying perspective on subjective and psychological well-being, in which cognitive, behavioral, social, and personality/affective variables jointly determine domain-specific and global life satisfaction. Domain-specific support, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal progress can affect life satisfaction. The theory has been used widely to explain the antecedents of undergraduate college students' life satisfaction in individualist countries (e.g., Lent et al., 2005; Lent, Taveira & Lobo, 2012; Pina-Watson et al., 2014) (Figure 1).

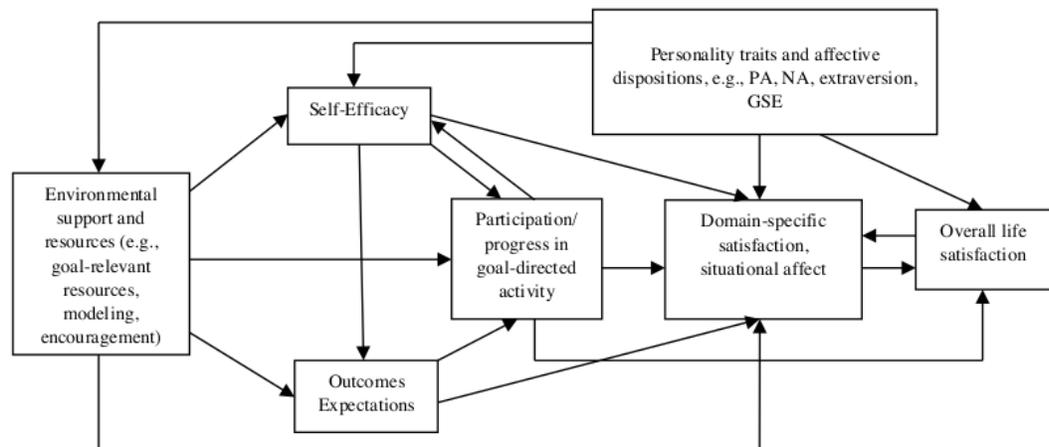


Figure 1. An integrative model depicting personality, contextual, and social cognitive contributors to well-being under normative life conditions. PA, positive affectivity; NA, negative affectivity; GSE, generalized self-efficacy. From Lent (2004, p. 500).

Several researchers responded to Sheu and Lent's (2009) suggestion to examine the social cognitive well-being model in groups with different cultural backgrounds, especially in Asian samples. For example, Sheu, Chong, Chen, and Lin (2014) tested the cross-national validity of the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) well-being model in Singaporean and Taiwanese college students. They discovered differential routes by which the antecedent variables associate with life satisfaction. Additionally, Kim, Ahn, and Fouad (2015) examined the relationships between family influence, career decision-making self-efficacy, outcome expectations, career preparation behavior, career preparation satisfaction, and college students' life satisfaction in a collectivistic context (e.g., South Korean) using the SCCT well-being model.

#### Adolescent–parent career congruence and life satisfaction

11 Oishi and Diener (2001) noted that pursuing goals to please parents and friends increased the benefit of goal attainment for the life satisfaction of Asian Americans, whereas it showed no such effect on European Americans. Further, Kwan, Bond, and Singelis (1997) observed that relationship harmony is a stronger predictor of life satisfaction than self-esteem among Hong Kong students (i.e., collectivistic) but not among US students (i.e., individualistic). Maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships makes individuals in collectivistic cultures not only feel good about their lives but also feel better about themselves (Kang, Shaver, Sue, Min, & Jin, 2003). Therefore, fitting in with parents should result in positive feelings for individuals (Oishi & Sullivan, 2005). For example, Wang and Heppner (2002) examined 99 Taiwanese university students and observed that the degree to which individuals lived up to their parents' expectations functioned as a better predictor of reduced psychological distress than perceived parental expectations alone. However, no study has examined the consequences of adolescent–parent career congruence on individual life satisfaction in the SCCT well-being model (e.g., Sawitri et al., 2014).

#### Adolescent–parent career congruence, self-efficacy, and career exploration

The influence of parent-related variables on young people's career development is essential in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Whiston & Keller, 2004). Previous cross-cultural studies have also demonstrated the relationships among family-related factors, such as parenting style and career development (i.e., Fan et al., 2014; Hughes, 2011; Shin & Kelly, 2013; Sovet & Metz, 2014). For example, an authoritarian parenting style was associated positively with career decision self-efficacy and negatively with career decision-making difficulties in a Korean sample, whereas an authoritative parenting style was associated positively with career decision self-efficacy and negatively with career decision-making difficulties in French students (Sovet & Metz, 2014). 33 Further, previous studies have demonstrated the robust relationships between perceived career congruence of individuals and their parents and career decision-

making self-efficacy. For example, the career-related correspondence between adolescents and their parents has been found to positively affect the career decision-making self-efficacy of Filipino undergraduate students (Garcia, Restubog, Toledano, Tolentino, & Rafferti, 2012). Additionally, Sawitri et al. (2014) reported that career decision-making self-efficacy serves as a mechanism by which perceived parental career expectations and adolescent-parent career congruence exert most of their effects on career aspirations and actions. Sawitri et al. (2014) showed that the association between adolescent-parent career congruence and self-efficacy is stronger than its correlation with parental career expectations. In a longitudinal study, Sawitri et al. (2015) demonstrated that together with career aspirations, adolescent-parent career congruence predicts future career exploration. Although being congruent with parents regarding career matters plays a prominent role in the career progress of young people from collectivistic contexts, no study has investigated the effects of adolescent-parent career congruence on career decision-making self-efficacy and career exploration of young people in cross-cultural contexts (e.g., Sawitri et al., 2014).

#### Career exploration and life satisfaction

Career exploration includes collecting information relevant to an individual's career progress (Blustein, 1997; Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983) and involves self-exploration and environmental exploration (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Self-exploration allows individuals to recognize their own interests, values, and capabilities to reflect on their career choices and to better understand themselves. Environmental exploration enables individuals to investigate a variety of career choices and gather information on jobs, organizations, occupations or industries, allowing them to make more informed career choices (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Previous studies showed that proactive personalities lead to several positive outcomes; for example, engagement in career exploration activities was found to reduce career uncertainty and anxiety (Saks & Ashforth, 1996) and lead to better moods and higher satisfaction (Flum & Kaplan, 2006). However, no research has focused on the association between career action behavior (e.g., career exploration) and life satisfaction of young people in collectivistic contexts (e.g., Sawitri et al., 2014).

In conclusion, the research regarding the relationship between adolescent-parent career congruence and young people's life satisfaction in collectivistic contexts using the SCCT well-being model is lacking. Additionally, the roles of potential mediators, i.e., career decision-making self-efficacy and career exploration, have also not been explored considering the relationship between adolescent-parent career congruence and life satisfaction.

#### Hypotheses

The SCCT well-being model was used as a frame of reference. Adolescent-parent career congruence represented environmental support/resources, and career

exploration represented goal progress. We expected the following outcomes. First, career decision-making self-efficacy and career exploration would partially mediate between adolescent-parent career congruence and life satisfaction. Second, career exploration would partially mediate between adolescent-parent career congruence and life satisfaction. Third, career decision-making self-efficacy would partially mediate between adolescent-parent career congruence and career exploration. Finally, career exploration would fully mediate between career decision-making self-efficacy and life satisfaction (Figure 2).

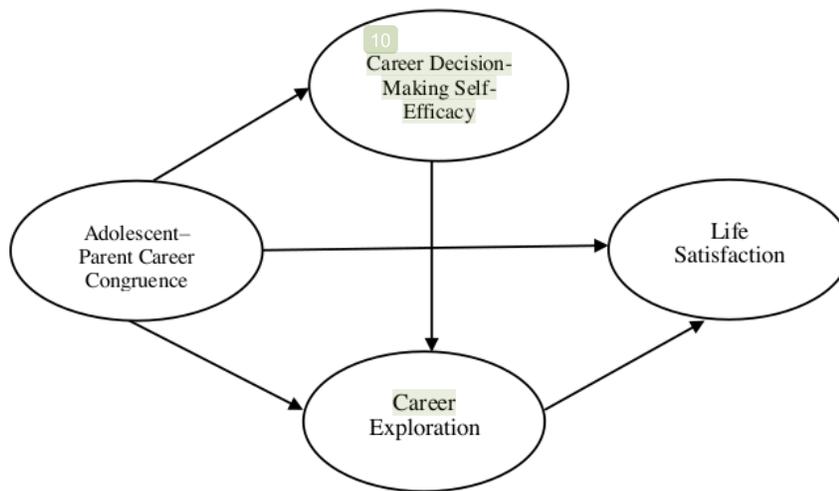


Figure 2. Hypothesis structural model

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Participants

The participants consisted of 367 undergraduate students (77.7 % female; mean age = 20.07 years; standard deviation = 1.08) from a university in Central Java, Indonesia and comprised freshmen (61.6%), sophomores (15%), juniors (36.2%), and seniors (2.2%).

### Measuring instrument

*Adolescent-parent career congruence.* We used the 12-item Adolescent-Parent Career Congruence Scale, which was developed originally by Sawitri et al (2013). This scale measures individual perceptions indicating that parents are facilitative in

the individual's career progress and are satisfied with their child's career-related actions and progress (complementary congruence; for example, "The progress I have made toward my career goals makes my parents happy.") This scale also assesses individual perceptions implying that parents have parallel career values, interests, aspirations, and plans (supplementary congruence; for example, "My parents and I have similar career interests."). We used a six-point Likert-type scale from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree (high adolescent-parent career congruence). Cronbach's alpha was reported as .89, and evidence of validity was identified by the positive significant correlations of this scale, with measures of career aspirations, mastery approach, and performance-approach goal orientation (Sawitri & Creed, 2015).

*Career decision-making self-efficacy.* We used the 25-item Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) to assess an individual's level of confidence in accomplishing career-related tasks. The participants responded using a five-point Likert-type scale from (1) not at all confident to (5) completely confident. A sample item was, "In relation to your career, how confident are you that you could determine the steps you need to take to successfully complete your chosen major?" The scale consists of five subscales: self-appraisal, occupational information, goal setting, planning, and problem solving. In a study by Shin et al. (2014), the internal consistency for the total score was .95 in the US sample and .87 in the Korean sample. Validity evidence for this scale was demonstrated by expected relationships between career decision-making self-efficacy and major incongruence, career calling, and meaningful work in both the US and Korean samples.

*Career exploration.* We used the 11 self- and environmental- exploration items from the Career Exploration Survey (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983). The participants responded using a five-point Likert-type scale from (1) almost never to (5) very often to answer five self-exploration items, such as, "I have been contemplating my past life and experiences in relation to my career." They also responded to six environmental exploration items, such as "I have sought information on specific areas of my career interest." Higher scores reflected higher levels of career exploration. Stumpf et al. (1983) reported an internal consistency of .88 for self-exploration and .83 for environmental exploration. The full scale has demonstrated reliability coefficients of .90 and .81 (Hirschi, 2011; Sawitri et al., 2014). Validity evidence has been shown by a positive correlation with career planning and a negative correlation with career concerns (Creed et al., 2009).

*Life satisfaction.* We used the five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985) to assess life satisfaction. A sample item is, "I am satisfied with my life." Oishi and Sullivan (2005) found a reliability coefficient of .71 with the US sample and .78 with the Japanese sample. Oishi and Sullivan (2005) observed a higher level of life satisfaction and self-esteem in a US sample than in the Japanese counterpart.

*Translation procedure for instruments*

We used Brislin's (1986) forward-and-backward translation technique to convert the original items into Bahasa Indonesia, Indonesia's official language. (1) Two bilingual native speakers translated the items into Bahasa Indonesia. (2) Two monolingual speakers examined the readability of the translated items, and two bilingual speakers blindly back-translated the items into English. (3) The back-translated versions were compared with the original English versions, and adjustments were made to ensure accuracy. (4) Four Indonesian undergraduate students ensured that the final Indonesian version was easily comprehensible.

**Procedure**

After the human subjects in research approval were recruited from the university, the data were collected using a paper-based questionnaire package containing the above scales and demographic questions. The participants completed the questionnaire package in the classroom at the beginning of class, inserted the completed survey in a sealed envelope, and gave the envelope to the principal investigator. We obtained 367 usable booklets (response rate = 92%).

The measurement and hypothesized structural model were assessed using latent variable analysis (maximum likelihood estimation; AMOS version 21). Five individual observed items represented life satisfaction; we created item parcels to indicate adolescent-parent career congruence, career decision-making self-efficacy, and career exploration (Landis, Beal, & Tesluck, 2000). We created latent variables using a mixture of observed items and three or four parcels to obtain a ratio of 20:1 for sample size to parameters estimated in the latent variable analysis (Hau & Marsh, 2004; Kline, 2011). We ran exploratory factor analysis to create the parcels to specify a single-factor model for each scale and rank-ordered items based on their factor loading and allocated the items into the parcels using the item-to-construct balance technique (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). We then examined a measurement model to confirm whether all latent variables were represented satisfactorily by their observed indicators. Subsequently, we assessed the hypothesized structural model (Figure 1). Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), goodness-of-fit (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used to assess model fit. As we included 14 observed variables in each model with 367 participants (Indonesian sample), an acceptable fit was indicated by a significant  $\chi^2$ , GFI values > .90, CFI and TLI values > .92, and RMSEA < .07. As  $\chi^2$  is sensitive to the sample size, we also examined  $\chi^2/df$ , with values < 3 demonstrating a good fit (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

## RESULTS

### Measurement model

The measurement model showed adequate fit statistics,  $\chi^2 (84) = 190.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.27$ , CFI = .96, GFI = .94, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .06; the factor loadings ranged from .41 to .91 ( $p < .001$ ). Table 1 displays the summarized data, zero-order correlations, and correlations among the latent variables.

Table 1

Summary data, zero-order correlations or bivariate correlations (above diagonal), and correlations among latent variables in the measurement model (below diagonal)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	$\alpha$
1. Adolescent–parent career congruence	52.65	7.57	-	.27**	.23**	.24**	.87
2. Career decision-making self-efficacy	92.62	9.21	.32***	-	.43**	.18**	.85
3. Career exploration	38.29	6.38	.26***	.47***	-	.23**	.87
4. Life satisfaction	23.09	4.23	.35***	.24***	.31***	-	.75

N = 367. \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Structural model

The hypothesized structural model demonstrated good fit statistics:  $\chi^2 (122, N = 367) = 223.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.83$ , CFI = .96, GFI = .94, TLI = .95, and RMSEA = .05. Significant pathways were found as follows: from adolescent–parent career congruence to career decision-making self-efficacy ( $\beta = .31$ ,  $p < .001$ ); from adolescent–parent career congruence to career exploration ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $p < .05$ ); from adolescent–parent career congruence to life satisfaction ( $\beta = .28$ ,  $p < .001$ ); from career exploration to life satisfaction ( $\beta = .19$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The model accounted for 9.8%, 28.8%, and 20.1% of the variances in career decision-making self-efficacy, career exploration, and life satisfaction, respectively.

Further, we used the AMOS bootstrapping procedure with 1000 samples to evaluate the standard error and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) for all direct and indirect estimates to test the mediation paths. Mediation occurs when a significant correlation exists between the predictor and outcome variables, and when a significant association exists between the mediator and both the predictor and outcome variables; the 95% CIs of the indirect effects through the mediator include no zeroes (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

We tested four potential mediation paths. First, we tested a path from adolescent–parent career congruence to life satisfaction (via career decision-

5 making self-efficacy and career exploration). When testing for the direct effect only, the path from adolescent–parent career congruence to life satisfaction showed significance ( $\beta = .39, p < .001$ ). Using 1000 bootstrapped samples and 95% bias-corrected CIs to test the direct and indirect effects simultaneously, the results showed that paths from adolescent–parent career congruence to career decision-making self-efficacy ( $\beta = .32, p < .001$ ), from career decision-making self-efficacy to career exploration ( $\beta = .42, p < .001$ ), and from career exploration to life satisfaction ( $\beta = .21, p < .001$ ) all presented significance and met all the requirements for mediation. In the presence of self-efficacy and exploration as the mediators, adolescent–parent career congruence remained significantly associated with life satisfaction ( $\beta = .29, p < .001$ ). As the indirect CI contained no zero value (CI = .02 to .11), we concluded that the path from adolescent–parent career congruence to life satisfaction were partially mediated by both career decision-making self-efficacy and career exploration.

Second, we tested the path from adolescent–parent career congruence to life satisfaction via career exploration and observed a partial mediation effect (CI = .02 to .11). Next, we tested the link from adolescent–parent career congruence to career exploration via career decision-making self-efficacy and identified a partial mediation effect (CI = .07 to .21). Then, we assessed the link from career decision-making self-efficacy to life satisfaction via career exploration and noted a full mediation effect (CI = .03 to .21).

- Insert Figure 3 here-

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

39 The findings of this study expand the range of variables that correlate with career decision-making self-efficacy (e.g., Mau, 2000; Shin et al., 2014), career exploration (e.g., Fan et al., 2012), and life satisfaction in the career domain (e.g., Douglass et al., 2015). These results also extend the validity of the SCCT well-being model in collectivistic contexts (e.g., Lent et al., 2012; Pina-Watson et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2015; Sheu et al., 2014).

In this study, we obtained results supporting all our hypotheses. Supporting Hypothesis 1, adolescent–parent career congruence was associated directly and indirectly with life satisfaction via career decision-making self-efficacy and career exploration. This finding suggests that being congruent with parents regarding career matters leads to life satisfaction, and congruence also serves as a proximal resource of self-efficacy, which is then transformed into life satisfaction through engagement in career exploration activities. This finding is consistent with the study of Sawitri et al. (2014), in which social cognitive variables mediated the relationship between adolescent–parent career congruence and career action

behaviors. Direct and indirect relationships between adolescent–parent career congruence and life satisfaction are consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) ecological systems theory. These relationships are also relevant with the person–environment fit theory, which states that individuals will be more satisfied when a fit exists between themselves and their environment; in this case, parents serve as significant others in career development (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). Fitting in with parents leads to positive feelings (Oishi & Sullivan, 2005).

Supporting Hypothesis 2, career exploration partially mediated the relationship between adolescent–parent career congruence and life satisfaction. This result suggests that career exploration activities carry the effect of being congruent with parents regarding career matters to satisfaction with life. These findings are consistent with those a recent study by Sheu et al. (2014); their research involved college students from collectivistic contexts (i.e., Singapore and Taiwan) and demonstrated that self-efficacy and goal progress mediated most of the pathways from personality and self-construed variables to life satisfaction outcomes.

Supporting Hypothesis 3, career decision-making self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between adolescent–parent congruence and career exploration. This finding was consistent with the result from Sawitri’s (2015) study, which demonstrated a partial mediation path from adolescent–parent career congruence to career exploration. The result was also relevant with Sawitri’s (2014) study, which showed a longitudinal association between congruence and career exploration in Indonesian students. These findings coincide with Lent et al.’s (2000) view that in an individualist context, the influence of significant others on individual career choices and behavior is as not as strong and direct as it is in a collectivistic context. They also confirm Shea et al.’s (2007) findings indicating that adolescents from collectivistic societies are likely to consider parents’ wishes when taking career-related actions. When individuals growing up in collectivistic cultures take a career action to satisfy their significant others (e.g., parents), the decision will likely gratify them as well (Leong et al., 2011).

We also found support for Hypothesis 4. Career exploration fully mediated the relationship between career decision-making self-efficacy and life satisfaction, showing that higher career-related confidence leads to expanded career exploration and results in a greater life satisfaction and suggesting that efficacy beliefs are important factors in the motivational functioning of individuals from both individualistic and collectivistic cultural groups (Klassen, 2004).

The findings of this study have implications for education and career-related counseling at the university level. Understanding the antecedents of Indonesian undergraduate students’ life satisfaction may help them recognize their degree of congruence with parents regarding career matters, levels of self-efficacy, and levels of engagement in career exploration activities. Career programs that include strategies to reconcile undergraduate students’ career-related capacities and their parents’ career expectations and resources, exposures to various sources of career confidence, and opportunities to engage more in career exploration will enhance

their life satisfaction. Such interventions could commence by identifying individual career interests, preferences, and goals, and parents' career expectations and potential support. The education and career-related counseling at the university also could focus on educating young people about the positive effects that being congruent with parents regarding career matter have on career decision-making self-efficacy, career exploration, and life satisfaction.

48 Our study yielded promising findings regarding the career-related antecedents of life satisfaction among undergraduate students. However, this featured several limitations. First, the data were gathered from one university, and future studies should attempt to test the relationships with a more diverse sample. Second, we obtained disproportionately more female than male students in our sample. On the other hand, other studies had found no gender differences in self-regulation, employability, and life satisfaction of students in an individualist context (e.g., Praskova et al., 2015) and in career exploration and planning of students in a collectivistic country (e.g., Sawitri et al., 2014). Finally, we could not establish causality in our research because it employed a cross-sectional approach. Therefore, longitudinal designs must be used to obtain stronger causal interpretations and to test the reverse-causation model.

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