
The Effect of Self-Efficacy and Interest on Career Decisions with Achievement Motivation as a Mediating Variable on Generation Z in Surakarta

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the influence of self-efficacy and interest on career decisions of Generation Z in Surakarta, with achievement motivation as a mediating variable. Using quantitative methods with SmartPLS analysis, this study involved 100 Generation Z respondents. The results showed that self-efficacy had a significant positive effect on career decisions, while interest had no direct effect. Achievement motivation was shown to mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and interest on career decisions. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening self-efficacy and achievement motivation so that Generation Z can make appropriate career decisions.

Keywords: *Self-efficacy; Interest; Achievement motivation; Career decisions; Generation Z; SmartPLS).*

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1. Introduction

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, has been profoundly influenced by rapid technological progress, pervasive digital connectivity, and evolving societal norms, all of which strongly affect their career choices. In contrast to older generations accustomed to conventional work structures, Gen Z highly values flexibility in time and location, favoring hybrid or long-term arrangements that provide autonomy and enhance productivity without requiring a constant presence in an office. Maintaining a balance between work and personal life is a priority, as they perceive employment not only as a source of income but also as a means to achieve a fulfilling lifestyle. Furthermore, they are selective in choosing workplaces, preferring organizations whose principles resonate with their own, especially regarding environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and ethical innovation. Growing up in a digital environment has fostered independence, information-oriented thinking, and a focus on authenticity, while also heightening awareness of social equality and mental health.

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Therefore, organizations seeking to attract and retain Gen Z talent need to implement flexible work practices, support employee well-being, and demonstrate genuine societal and environmental commitment.

According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Central Java released about eight months ago, Generation Z constitutes the largest population group in Surakarta, numbering 158,038 individuals or 29.92% of residents. This demographic prevalence underscores their significant influence across education, employment, and public service sectors, which must adapt to their unique traits and expectations. In this context, self-efficacy defined as a person's belief in their capacity to plan and execute actions to achieve goals Aisyah, (2018) is critical, as it shapes behavior, persistence, and emotional responses, directly affecting career decision-making. Career interest, referring to an individual's awareness of personal preferences and tendencies toward particular fields (N. S. Dewi & Friyatmi, 2023), also plays an essential role, as Gen Z in Surakarta tends to choose careers aligned with their interests, promoting motivation, proactive learning, and professional development. Achievement motivation, understood as the internal drive to perform efficiently and effectively (Inas Zahdiah, 2020; Maharani et al., 2024), acts as a mediator, ensuring that self-efficacy and career interest are translated into concrete actions. Without such motivation, even highly confident and interested individuals may struggle to persist and achieve career success, highlighting its importance in guiding effective career decisions among Generation Z.

Based on Kuswati, (2024), motivation is closely related to individual behavior, which is demonstrated when a person feels happy about something, as this sense of satisfaction motivates them to engage in certain activities, or when they believe they can overcome challenges, which encourages them to take action. In relation to career decision-making, Yahya et al., (2025) define it as the process of choosing between two or more alternatives regarding majors, professions, or specific jobs, which involves recognizing career options, considering them, and making personal choices about the workplace. This process is influenced by both internal and external factors, as explained in social cognitive theory (Azizah, 2025). Internal influences include emotional regulation, self-efficacy, parental expectations, and personal interests, while external factors involve family, conformity, authoritarianism, and parenting styles. Furthermore, Lambiase et al., (2013) emphasize that career exploration, understood as efforts to gather information about various jobs and careers, is essential for preparation and development aligned with one's talents, interests, and potential.

Career decision-making is a process in which individuals choose their career paths by considering multiple factors such as interests, values, skills, and labor market information (Muzakki et al., 2022). This process is often shaped by personal experiences, education, and social support. Based on these considerations, this study focuses on examining the influence of self-efficacy and interest on career decisions, with achievement motivation as a mediating variable among Generation Z in Surakarta.

2. Theoretical Background

Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to exert control over internal processes and external events. According to Bandura (2020), it is not merely about actual skills but rather a subjective conviction that shapes how people think, feel, and act. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to be more confident, persistent, and resilient in the face of challenges, while those with low self-efficacy are more likely to experience fear, doubt, and avoidance. Unlike objective ability, self-efficacy emphasizes personal beliefs and perceptions, making it a key factor influencing motivation, persistence, and performance across various domains such as education and work (Abdiyatul, 2023). It is closely tied to behavioral choices, effort, and perseverance, as people who believe in their capabilities are more willing to confront difficulties and strive toward goals, thereby increasing their chances of success. Conversely, low self-efficacy, which is still prevalent among many Gen Z individuals, can hinder career decisions, self-confidence, and recognition of personal interests and talents (Vinatan, 2023). Thus, grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy plays a critical role in shaping motivation, career development, and overall achievement

Interests (Career Decisions): Interest refers to an individual's sense of liking or attraction toward an object or activity, which encourages deeper involvement and interaction. Slameto defines interest as a preference or attraction toward something without external influence, functioning as a source of motivation that drives individuals to achieve goals in work or career. Interest is characterized by generating a positive attitude toward an object and arising from something perceived as enjoyable. In the context of career, Amin et al., (2021) explains that individuals possess specific personality types Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC) that align with certain work environments. When individuals choose careers that match their personality and interests, they tend to experience greater motivation, satisfaction, and success, as strong interest enhances both career decisions and job performance.

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Achievement motivation: Research by Raudhoh, (2021) revealed that achievement motivation mediates the influence of parental involvement, support, and self-efficacy, emphasizing that external support and self-belief enhance engagement through motivation. Motivation, as described by McDonald, involves initiating changes in human energy, is marked by affective experiences influencing behavior, and is stimulated by goals linked to needs. Achievement motivation reflects the tendency to pursue success and desired outcomes with persistence and resilience (Liu et al., 2020), while Hasanah et al., (2025) confirmed its mediating role between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Popovici, (2024) defined it as the drive to outperform others, characterized by risk-taking, openness to feedback, and responsibility in problem-solving. Dewi, (2017) highlighted three behavioral aspects differentiating high- and low-achievement motivation: choice of challenging tasks, effort intensity, and persistence in adversity. High-motivation individuals typically select moderately difficult tasks, demonstrate creativity and innovation, value feedback to improve, and complete tasks efficiently, while those with low motivation prefer routine, structured work, avoid risk, neglect feedback, and often delay task completion.

Efficacy Has a Positive Influence on Career Decisions: Self-efficacy significantly influences career decision-making, as it reflects an individual's belief in their ability to achieve goals and overcome challenges. Individuals with high self-efficacy demonstrate greater confidence in exploring career options, setting realistic goals, and taking action toward professional success. Empirical studies support this relationship: Rahmania et al., (2025) found a positive link between self-efficacy and career decision-making, while Yusuf, (2023) emphasized that individuals with strong self-belief are more capable of determining and planning careers aligned with their interests and life goals. Thus, *H1: Self-efficacy has a positive effect on career decision-making.*

Interest has a positive influence on career decisions: Interest is defined as a deep attraction toward a particular activity, career field, or skill, which, when aligned with career choices, enhances motivation, enthusiasm, and job satisfaction. Empirical studies support this view: Pignault et al., (2023) found that interest significantly influences Generation Z's career decisions, as strong interest in a field increases confidence in making career choices; Astuti & Ilfiandra, (2019) identified career interest as a key variable affecting decision-making; and Zhou et al., (2021) showed that individual interest strongly shapes career preferences, even surpassing the influence of social and economic factors. Therefore, *H2: Interest positively influences career decision-making.*

Self-efficacy has a positive effect on achievement motivation: Achievement motivation is an internal drive that pushes individuals to strive for excellence, master skills, and attain optimal results in various aspects of life, particularly in academics and the workplace. Putri, (2025) found that self-efficacy and achievement motivation are mutually influenced through perceived social support, where higher self-efficacy enables individuals to gain greater social support, which in turn strengthens their

achievement motivation. Based on this, *H3: Self-efficacy has a positive effect on achievement motivation.*

Interest has a positive influence on achievement motivation: High interest in a particular field has been shown to enhance individuals' intrinsic drive to achieve better performance (Savira et al., 2022). Recent studies confirm that students with strong interest in specific subjects demonstrate higher achievement motivation compared to those with lower interest (Babel, 2021). Similarly, Pham et al., (2024) found that learning interest among Generation Z significantly influences their achievement motivation, indicating that those with greater interest are more motivated to attain strong academic outcomes and engage in independent learning. Therefore, *H4: Interest has a positive effect on achievement motivation.*

Achievement motivation has a positive influence on career decisions: Achievement motivation has a significant positive influence on individual career decisions, indicating that those with higher achievement motivation tend to make more deliberate and well-planned choices. Adigun, (2020) found a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy, achievement motivation, career planning, and career decision-making, suggesting that individuals with strong achievement motivation are more mature in making career-related decisions. Similarly, Fajriani et al., (2023) revealed that achievement motivation positively and significantly affects work readiness, implying that individuals with higher achievement motivation are better prepared to enter the workforce. Thus, *H5: Achievement motivation has a positive effect on career decision-making.*

Achievement motivation mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and career decisions; Research by Handoyo, (2025) revealed that self-efficacy positively influences achievement motivation among students, indicating that those with higher self-efficacy tend to demonstrate stronger motivation to achieve, which in turn affects their career decisions. Similarly, Salim, (2021) found that individuals with higher self-efficacy exhibit greater achievement motivation, positively impacting the quality of their teaching and subsequently influencing their future career choices. These findings suggest that *achievement motivation plays a mediating role in the relationship between self-efficacy and career decision-making (H6).*

Achievement motivation mediates the relationship between interests and career decisions: Previous studies consistently highlight the mediating role of achievement motivation in the relationship between interest and students' career decision-making. Salim et al., (2023) found that students with higher levels of interest tend to exhibit stronger achievement motivation, which positively influences their career choices. Similarly, Murisal et al., (2022) confirmed that achievement motivation significantly mediates the link between interest and career decisions, indicating that students with strong interest are more motivated to achieve and, consequently, make more effective career decisions. Thus, *H7: Achievement motivation mediates the relationship between interest and career decision-making.*

3. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach to analyze Generation Z in Surakarta and fresh graduates, focusing on self-efficacy and interest as independent variables, career decision as the dependent variable, and achievement motivation as the mediating variable. Respondents were selected through non-probability sampling with criteria such as age (12–27 years), residency or active involvement in Surakarta, and status as high school students, university students in career planning, fresh graduates, or early-career workers. Data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires, which are widely applied in social and educational research to measure attitudes, perceptions, and opinions more accurately than binary responses (Renaldo et al., 2020). Career decision is defined as a continuous process of choosing career alternatives based on self-knowledge and planning (Wang, 2021), self-efficacy refers to belief in one's ability to achieve goals (Komalasari & Banna, 2023), interest reflects an individual's awareness and inclination toward specific fields (Wang & Hsieh, 2022), and achievement motivation captures persistence, performance improvement, and competitiveness (Tahitu et al., 2024). Data analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS, which is effective for complex models and small sample sizes (Dewi, 2018). The outer model assessed validity and reliability through convergent and discriminant validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha, while the inner model examined structural relationships, predictive relevance, and multicollinearity. Hypotheses were tested using path coefficients, bootstrapping-based t-statistics, and p-values, with results considered significant at $p < 0.05$.

4. Empirical Findings/Result

Respondent Description

Table 1.
Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	27	27%
	Female	73	73%
Age	17–20	26	26%
	21–30	73	73%
	>30	1	1%
Domicile	Surakarta	96	96%
	Outside Surakarta	4	4%
Total		100	100%

Source: Primary data processed (2025)

Table 1. shows that the majority of respondents in this study were female (73%), aged between 21 and 30 years (73%), and predominantly residing in Surakarta (96%). This indicates that the research sample is dominated by young female respondents within early adulthood who mostly live in Surakarta.

**Outer Model Analysis
Convergent and Discriminant Validity**

**Table 2.
Outer Loading Values**

Variables	A item	Self-Efficacy (X1)	Career Decision (Y)	Interest (X2)	Achievement Motivation (Z)
Self-Efficacy (X1)	X1.1	0.732			
	X1.2	0.645			
	X1.3	0.294			
	X1.4	0.611			
	X1.5	0.706			
Interest (X2)	X2.1			0.58	
	X2.2			0.63	
	X2.3			0.547	
	X2.4			0.601	
	X2.5			0.683	
Career Decision (Y)	Y.1		0.821		
	Y.2		0.592		
	Y.3		0.672		
	Y.4		0.773		
	Y.5		0.654		
Achievement Motivation (Z)	Z.1				0.74
	Z.2				0.77
	Z.3				0.656
	Z.4				0.838
	Z.5				0.661

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

Convergent validity is assessed through the loading factor of each indicator on its construct, where values above 0.7 indicate validity, although a threshold of 0.5 is still acceptable in exploratory research. The data analysis results show that all indicators of constructs X1, X2, Z, and Y exceed the minimum threshold, confirming that each indicator adequately represents its construct. For example, the item “I feel proud to be part of this organization” under construct Z effectively reflects respondents’ affective commitment. In addition, convergent validity can also be confirmed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where values greater than 0.5 indicate sufficient validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and the AVE results of all variables in this study meet this criterion:

Table 3.
Average Variance Extracted Value

Variables	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)	Information
Self-Efficacy (X1)	0.547	Valid
Interest (X2)	0.5	Valid
Career Decision (Y)	0.732	Valid
Achievement Motivation (Z)	0.542	Valid

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and cross-loading comparison. The results show that all constructs have AVE values above 0.5, indicating that the majority of indicator variance is explained by their respective constructs. Furthermore, each indicator demonstrates higher cross-loadings on its intended construct than on other constructs, confirming that the model satisfies the requirements of discriminant validity.

Reliability

Table 4.
Composite Reliability Values

Variables	Composite Reliability	Description
Self-Efficacy (X1)	0.77	Reliable
Interest (X2)	0.746	Reliable
Career Decision (Y)	0.831	Reliable
Achievement Motivation (Z)	0.854	Reliable

Source: Primary Analysis Data, 2025

Composite reliability is used to assess the internal consistency of indicators in measuring latent constructs, with the required threshold being greater than 0.7. The analysis results show that all constructs (X1, X2, Z, and Y) meet this criterion, indicating that the indicators of each variable demonstrate strong reliability in representing their respective constructs.

Cronbach's Alpha

Table 5.
Cronbach's Alpha Value

Variables	Composite Reliability	Description
Self-Efficacy (X1)	0.707	Reliable
Interest (X2)	0.877	Reliable
Career Decision (Y)	0.747	Reliable
Achievement Motivation (Z)	0.786	Reliable

Source: Primary Analysis Data, 2025

In addition to composite reliability, reliability is also assessed through Cronbach's Alpha, where values greater than 0.7 indicate acceptable reliability. The results show

that all variables meet this threshold, demonstrating high internal consistency among the questionnaire items and confirming that the measurement is dependable.

Multicollinearity Test (VIF)

Table 6.
Collinearity Statistic (VIF) Value

Variables	VIF
Self-Efficacy (X1)	1.19
Interest (X2)	1.12
Career Decision (Y)	1.46
Achievement Motivation (Z)	1.66

Source: Primary data processing (2025)

The multicollinearity test was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), where a model is considered free from multicollinearity if $VIF < 5$. The analysis results show that all indicators have VIF values below this threshold, indicating no multicollinearity among the independent variables. Thus, each indicator is unique, non-redundant, and the questionnaire demonstrates high internal consistency, ensuring the reliability of the measurement.

Inner Model Analysis Goodness of Fit Test R^2 (R-square)

Table 7.
R-Square Value

Variables	R-Square
Career Decision (Y)	0.544
Achievement Motivation (Z)	0.421

Source: Primary Analysis Data, 2025

Based on the data analysis, the R^2 value for the mediating construct (Z) is 42% and for the dependent construct (Y) is 54%, both of which fall into the moderate-to-strong category, indicating that the independent variables (X1 and X2) adequately explain the variations in Z and Y.

Q^2 (Q-square)

Table 8.
Q-Square Values

Variables	Q-Square
Career Decision (Y)	0.24
Achievement Motivation (Z)	0.21

Source: Primary Analysis Data, 2025

Based on the data processing results, the calculation results show a positive Q^2 value, so the model is proven to have good predictive power for the dependent variables.

Hypothesis Testing Path Coefficient Test

Table 9.
Path Coefficient Value (Direct Effect)

Variables	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/Stdev)	P Values	Description
Self-Efficacy (X1) > Career Decision (Y)	0.341	3.458	0.001	Positive significant
Self-Efficacy (X1) > Achievement Motivation (Z)	0.373	3.71	0	Positive significant
Interest (X2) > Career Decision (Y)	0.11	1.22	0.223	Positive not significant
Interest (X2) > Achievement Motivation (Z)	0.347	3.212	0.001	Positive significant
Achievement Motivation (Z) > Career Decision (Y)	0.398	3.976	0	Positive significant

Source: Processed primary data, (2025)

Based on the data analysis, the results indicate that self-efficacy significantly influences career decisions ($t = 3.458$, $p = 0.001$) and achievement motivation ($t = 3.71$, $p = 0.000$), thus supporting the first and second hypotheses. Interest, however, does not significantly affect career decisions ($t = 1.22$, $p = 0.223$), leading to the rejection of the third hypothesis. Conversely, interest shows a significant positive effect on achievement motivation ($t = 3.212$, $p = 0.001$), supporting the fourth hypothesis. Finally, achievement motivation significantly influences career decisions ($t = 3.976$, $p = 0.000$), thereby confirming the fifth hypothesis.

Indirect Effect Test

Table 10.
Indirect Effect Test

Variables	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/Stdev)	P Values	Description
Self-Efficacy (X1) > Achievement Motivation (Z) > Career Decision (Y)	0,148	2,612	0,009	positive significant
Interest (X2) > Achievement Motivation (Z) > Career Decision (Y)	0,138	2,396	0,017	positive significant

Source: Processed primary data, (2025)

Based on the data analysis, the results indicate that achievement motivation significantly mediates both tested relationships. Specifically, for the sixth hypothesis,

achievement motivation mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and career decision-making, as evidenced by a t-statistic of 2.612 (>1.96) and a p-value of 0.009 (<0.05). Similarly, for the seventh hypothesis, achievement motivation mediates the relationship between interest and career decision-making, supported by a t-statistic of 2.396 (>1.96) and a p-value of 0.017 (<0.05). Thus, achievement motivation plays a significant mediating role in linking self-efficacy and interest to career decision-making.

5. Discussion

The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Career Decisions

The findings indicate that self-efficacy significantly influences career decision-making among Generation Z in Surakarta. Higher confidence in one's abilities increases the likelihood of making clear and well-directed career choices. Self-efficacy provides psychological encouragement when facing various career options, enabling individuals to act with greater confidence in aligning their choices with personal potential. This emphasizes that internal belief is a crucial factor shaping the quality of career-related decisions. The results are consistent with Friyatmi, (2023), who found that self-efficacy significantly enhances clarity in students' career paths by fostering courage to explore opportunities, assess risks, and choose the most suitable direction.

Similarly, Zahdiah, (2020) revealed that students with high self-efficacy find it easier to make career decisions due to their confidence in overcoming challenges in the labor market. This highlights the role of internal factors as primary drivers despite the complexity of workplace dynamics. Strengthening self-efficacy through career guidance and personal development programs thus emerges as a relevant strategy for young people. In conclusion, self-efficacy plays a vital role in shaping Generation Z's career decisions in Surakarta, reinforcing the need to prioritize its development in education and career preparation to ensure resilience and readiness in an increasingly competitive job market.

The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Achievement Motivation

The findings reveal that self-efficacy has a significant influence on achievement motivation among Generation Z in Surakarta. Higher confidence in one's abilities leads to a stronger drive to excel in both academic and non-academic fields. Self-efficacy serves as a psychological foundation that fosters perseverance, resilience, and goal orientation, demonstrating that confidence is not only linked to decision-making but also acts as an internal force driving achievement. This result is consistent with (Maharani et al., 2024), who found that self-efficacy positively correlates with students' achievement motivation, as individuals with stronger self-belief set clearer goals and exert greater effort to accomplish them.

Similarly, Rini Kuswati, (2024) reported that self-efficacy significantly enhances students' achievement motivation, particularly in overcoming academic challenges by fostering optimism and reducing anxiety. In the context of Generation Z, self-efficacy

becomes increasingly vital given the demands of digital competence and global competition. Therefore, developing self-efficacy through soft skills training, coaching, and academic guidance is essential to strengthen achievement motivation. These results confirm that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in encouraging young people to realize their potential, compete constructively, and achieve optimal performance, underscoring its importance as a priority in education and career development.

The Influence of Asking on Career Decisions

The findings indicate that interest does not significantly influence career decisions among Generation Z in Surakarta. This suggests that while individuals may possess certain interests, these do not automatically determine their career choices. Career decisions among young people are shaped not only by personal interests but also by external factors such as job opportunities, family support, and technological advancements that continuously reshape labor market demands. This result contrasts with the common assumption that interest plays a dominant role in career decision-making. For instance, Yahya et al., (2025) found that although interest contributes to study program selection, it does not necessarily translate into actual career decisions, as Generation Z tends to be flexible and adaptive, often prioritizing economic opportunities over their initial interests.

Similarly, Azizah, (2025) revealed that the influence of interest on career decisions often weakens when individuals face limited job availability or social expectations. This highlights that interest serves more as an initial consideration, while pragmatic factors such as salary prospects, job stability, and social recommendations play a more decisive role. Thus, the findings suggest that although interest remains important for personal development, its direct impact on career decisions among Generation Z in Surakarta is relatively weak. Career guidance should therefore not only emphasize fostering personal interests but also equip young people with an understanding of labor market realities and adaptive skills to navigate the dynamic demands of the workforce.

The Influence of Interest on Achievement Motivation

The findings indicate that interest significantly influences achievement motivation among Generation Z in Surakarta. A stronger interest in a particular field fosters greater focus, enthusiasm, and persistence, thereby increasing the likelihood of success. Interest thus functions not only as a form of preference but also as a driving force that fuels motivation. This aligns with (Lambiase et al., 2013), who found that students with strong learning interest demonstrate higher persistence in facing academic challenges and possess stronger intrinsic motivation to achieve optimal outcomes. Similarly, Muzakki et al., (2022) highlight that clear academic interest encourages students to invest more effort in skill development and academic success.

Overall, these results emphasize that interest is a crucial psychological factor that promotes achievement motivation. Generation Z in Surakarta with strong interests are more likely to develop themselves, set higher goals, and engage in healthy competition. Therefore, fostering interest should be a central strategy in education and

career guidance to sustain and strengthen achievement motivation among young generations.

The Influence of Achievement Motivation on Career Decisions

The research findings reveal that achievement motivation significantly influences career decision-making among Generation Z in Surakarta. Individuals with higher achievement motivation tend to make clearer and more decisive career choices, as their orientation toward future accomplishments encourages them to select paths based on careful consideration and life goals rather than simply following trends. This aligns with Vinatan, (2023), who found that students with strong achievement motivation demonstrate greater clarity in career decisions by exploring their potential and choosing careers that match their aspirations, supported by stronger persistence in facing challenges. Similarly, Abdiyatul, (2023) showed that achievement motivation contributes significantly to career planning clarity, as students with high motivation set higher standards in life, including career selection. Thus, achievement motivation not only supports academic success but also plays a vital role in strategic career decision-making, emphasizing the need to cultivate such motivation to help young generations remain focused on long-term goals and confidently pursue careers aligned with their capacities and ambitions.

The Mediating Role of Achievement Motivation in the Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Career Decisions

The findings reveal that achievement motivation significantly mediates the influence of self-efficacy on career decision-making among Generation Z in Surakarta. High self-efficacy not only directly shapes career choices but also fosters achievement motivation, which strengthens individuals' clarity in determining their career paths. This aligns with Amin et al., (2021), who emphasized that students with strong self-efficacy tend to develop higher achievement motivation, making them more decisive in career selection, and with Hasanah et al., (2025), who found that achievement motivation reinforces the link between self-efficacy and career decisions. These results underscore that psychological factors interact rather than work linearly, highlighting the importance of both self-efficacy and achievement motivation in shaping rational and confident career decisions. Thus, career development efforts should focus not only on enhancing self-efficacy but also on strategies to foster achievement motivation, enabling Generation Z to make more mature and goal-oriented career choices.

The Mediating Role of Achievement Motivation in the Relationship between Interest and Career Decisions

The study reveals that achievement motivation significantly mediates the relationship between interest and career decision-making among Generation Z in Surakarta. While interest alone does not always directly influence career choices, the presence of achievement motivation transforms it into a driving force that shapes clearer and more decisive career decisions. Psychologically, interest sparks curiosity, focus, and enjoyment, but without achievement motivation it remains mere attraction without action. Generation Z individuals who are genuinely interested in a field tend to pursue mastery, set performance goals, and use these as references in career selection. This

finding aligns with (Dewi, 2017), who emphasize achievement motivation as the key link strengthening the effect of interest on career clarity, and with (Astuti & Ilfiandra, 2019), who show that strong interest encourages students to achieve both academically and organizationally, enhancing their confidence in choosing suitable careers. Given Generation Z's digital environment with abundant career opportunities, the absence of achievement motivation risks shifting their interest toward short-term trends rather than long-term goals. Therefore, career guidance programs should not only identify students' interests but also cultivate achievement motivation through challenges, training, or real projects, enabling them to transform interest into concrete actions. In conclusion, achievement motivation is a crucial factor that bridges interest and career decision-making, turning mere attraction into mature, realistic, and purposeful career choices, highlighting the importance of integrating interest development with achievement motivation in preparing the younger generation for future careers.

6. Conclusions

Based on the findings, this study concludes that self-efficacy significantly influences career decision-making and achievement motivation, with individuals possessing higher self-efficacy demonstrating stronger determination in both academic and non-academic contexts, which in turn directs clearer career choices. Interest, although not directly affecting career decisions, plays an important role in enhancing achievement motivation, and when combined with strong motivation, it indirectly contributes to career determination among Generation Z. Achievement motivation itself is shown to be a key mediator that strengthens the relationship between self-efficacy, interest, and career decisions. However, this research is limited to Generation Z respondents in Surakarta, employs only self-report questionnaires, and focuses on three main variables, thus lacking generalizability and potentially containing subjective bias. Future studies are encouraged to broaden the scope of respondents, include additional external factors such as family support and labor market conditions, and apply longitudinal as well as mixed-method approaches to capture long-term dynamics. Practically, fostering interest and cultivating achievement motivation are essential elements in preparing young generations for their careers, where organizations are advised to provide training, mentoring, clear career pathways, flexibility, and innovative spaces to better support and retain Generation Z talent.

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