

Effectiveness of the career calm booklet in increasing self-efficacy and reducing anxiety

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Abstract

Final-year students often experience career anxiety due to pressure in planning their future. Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in reducing such anxiety, yet effective self-help interventions remain limited. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the booklet "Career Calm: 30 Days to Improve Your Self-Efficacy" in increasing self-efficacy and reducing career anxiety. The research employed a one-group pretest-posttest design with a quantitative quasi-experimental approach. Thirty final-year university students in Surabaya experiencing career anxiety participated in a 30-day intervention. Results from the paired sample t-test showed a significant increase in self-efficacy and a decrease in career anxiety after the intervention ($p < 0.001$). However, correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between the two variables. These findings suggest the booklet is effective independently, though other mediating variables such as motivation or hope may influence the relationship. The booklet has potential as a self-help intervention tool in career counseling programs.

Keywords: career anxiety; self-efficacy; final year student; booklet

INTRODUCTION

The final semester is a critical transition for college students before entering the workforce. Final-year students face multiple demands, including completing academic requirements, preparing for employment, and planning their future (Hasmawati et al., 2021). This stage requires students to evaluate their career plans to achieve their desired occupations (Kleine et al., 2022). Failure to conduct this evaluation effectively can lead to career anxiety due to pressure related to job searching and career development tasks (Ebner et al., 2021). Unmanaged career anxiety can hinder effective career planning, which is a key developmental task for final-year students (Agung et al., 2024). Final-year students are also transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, a period characterized by high expectations, instability, optimism, autonomy, and self-focus (Arnett, 2014).



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Career anxiety refers to negative emotional responses that hinder career decision-making due to confusion, uncertainty, and hesitation in choosing a career path (Zahra & Kinayung, 2023). Career decision difficulties are common among final-year students and can hinder optimal career outcomes (Noviyanti, 2021). In Surabaya, a study by Rosanti et al. (2025) found that 153 (68.6%) out of 223 students, with an average age of 22 years, exhibited very high levels of career anxiety. Siregar (2021) found that among 115 final-year students, 40% reported moderate anxiety and 32.2% reported high anxiety. Anxiety often arises from fear that outcomes will not match expectations or aspirations.

Career anxiety also reduces students' ability to make decisions, weakens commitment to career choices, and delays job applications, which increases the risk of unemployment (Jannah & Cahyawulan, 2023). Data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS, 2024) show that 11.28% (842,378 individuals) of university graduates were unemployed. According to the Minister of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia (Taufiqurrahman, 2024), this unemployment is partly caused by a mismatch between academic specialization and labor market demands, as well as low confidence in personal competence. According to Lent et al. (1994), career anxiety arises from individuals' outcome expectations regarding their perceived capabilities, reflected in the relationship between "Can I do this?" and "If I do this, what will happen?". Furthermore, the limited availability of job opportunities that align with graduates' fields of study contributes to increased unemployment among bachelor's degree holders, which is further exacerbated by low self-efficacy in pursuing careers outside their academic disciplines. In summary, unemployment among bachelor's graduates is associated with limited job alignment with their expertise and low self-efficacy when considering alternative career opportunities.

Preliminary research was conducted using interview methods to observe the urgency of this issue. Interviews were conducted with two final-semester students who were active in organizations and two final-semester students who focused solely on academics. Both groups reported career anxiety and expressed low confidence in facing workplace competition, challenges, and pressure. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy influences individual choices, effort, resilience, and persistence when facing workplace challenges or failures. Individuals with low self-efficacy tend to experience greater anxiety because they perceive workplace demands as threatening. Therefore, self-efficacy is essential for final-year students preparing to enter the workforce (Wahyuni et al., 2023).

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks and achieve desired outcomes across various situations (Chen et al., 2001). It is closely associated with career anxiety. Pertapa et al. (2025) found that stronger self-efficacy is associated with lower career anxiety. Similarly, Sofyanty et al. (2024) reported a significant negative relationship between self-efficacy and workplace anxiety. Their research recommended improving students' hard and soft skills through academic and organizational activities, but did not propose intensive interventions to address career anxiety. Husna et al. (2023) also found that higher self-efficacy is associated with lower anxiety levels. Their intervention involved training and counseling through the Career Development Center (CDC) program for final-year students before entering

the workforce. These findings highlight the importance of institutional support in providing career-related interventions. However, not all universities offer accessible counseling and training services, which limits students' ability to manage career anxiety. Therefore, this research focuses on an independent intervention using a booklet designed to increase self-efficacy and reduce career anxiety among final-year students.

Self-efficacy is acquired, transformed, and enhanced when individuals engage in a combination of four sources of experience, consistent with Bandura's theory (Putri & Fadhilah, 2024). Bandura (1977) identified four sources of self-efficacy formation: Mastery Experience, Vicarious Experiences, Social/Verbal Persuasion, and Emotional/Psychological States. The application of these four sources is combined in activities aimed at enhancing final-year students' cognitive understanding of self-efficacy, adaptive mindsets, and developing mental resilience in facing future career challenges and dynamics. A SWOT analysis is included to assess an individual's potential and performance, enabling them to gain deeper self-awareness, which aids in future planning and action (Vráblík et al., 2017). The theories that the researcher discovered were used as intervention materials and to complement existing research.

The researcher designed the booklet "Career Calm: 30 days to improve your self-efficacy" based on self-efficacy theory and SWOT analysis. This research determined the effectiveness of the booklet as an intervention tool to increase students' self-efficacy in reducing career anxiety. The researcher will use the Career Anxiety Scale by Tsai et al. (2017) and the New General Self-Efficacy Scale by Chen et al. (2001) as the basis for the pre-test and post-test questionnaires in analyzing the effectiveness of the booklet. This research is useful for educators and career guidance centers on campuses as an intervention tool for final year students. The researcher suspects that the booklet intervention has a significant effect on increasing self-efficacy and decreasing career anxiety in final year students. This effect is thought to be caused by the relationship where high levels of self-efficacy will reduce career anxiety in final year students. Therefore, the intervention booklet was created using the theory of self-efficacy sources as an intervention effort.

RESEARCH METHOD

Data were collected in Surabaya using purposive sampling based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2024). Participants were selected by distributing a preliminary questionnaire using the Career Anxiety Scale (Tsai et al., 2017) and New General Self-Efficacy (Chen et al., 2001) scales for reliability testing. These questionnaires were administered randomly to final-year students in Surabaya to identify potential participants with moderate to very high career anxiety scores, based on the norms established by the researchers. The sample size was determined using Roscoe's guideline of at least 30 participants for experimental studies (Roscoe, 1975). The final sample consisted of 30 participants, including 15 males and 15 females in their 7th or 8th semester. Informed consent was included in the pretest questionnaire to confirm participants' voluntary agreement to participate in the research.

This research employed a quantitative quasi-experimental design. Participants were assigned based on specific criteria rather than randomization (Hastjarjo, 2019). This approach was selected because the research did not include a control group and focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the Career Calm booklet before and after the intervention. A one-group pretest–posttest design was employed, where participants had completed a pretest to measure baseline conditions, before the Career Calm booklet was applied. After the intervention, participants completed a posttest to assess changes resulting from the treatment (Wiliam & Hita, 2019).

This research used the Career Calm booklet as an intervention instrument to reduce participants' career anxiety. The booklet was developed based on Bandura's 4 sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). This booklet includes structured activities to strengthen students' understanding of self-efficacy, promote adaptive thinking, and enhance psychological readiness to face workplace challenges. It also incorporates a SWOT analysis framework introduced by Humphrey (2005), which helps students identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This process improves self-awareness and supports more effective career planning and decision-making (Vráblík et al., 2017).

Table 1. Blueprint

Mastery Experience	Vicarious Experience	Social/Verbal Persuasion	Emotional/ Psychological states	SWOT
Day 6: Achievement s jar	Day 8: LinkedIn challenge	Day 5: Letter to myself: dealing with career anxiety	Day 9: Explore your career	Day 1: SWOT (Strength)
Day 7: Achievement s dissection	Day 11: Mirror motivation (Inspirational figures)	Day 18: Collect the quotes	Day 16: Interview challenge	Day 2: SWOT (Weakness)
Day 10: Career mapping	Day 12: Mirror motivation (relational figures)	Day 19: Post-it positivity	Day 17: Grow up 1	Day 3: SWOT (Opportunity)
Day 13: CV challenge	Day 20: Study case	Day 24: Self affirmation & meditation	Day 21: Grow up 2	Day 4: SWOT (Threat)

Day 14: Rewrite the narrative	Day 23: Growth mindset	Day 28: Bingo 5x5 (career anxiety)	Day 22: Public speaking challenge I
Day 15: Skill transfer challenge	Day 25: LinkedIn review	Day 30: Reply letter day 5 & future self letter	Day 26: Grow up 3
			Day 27: Public speaking challenge II
			Day 29: Words search puzzle

An expert review was conducted by two experts, a psychologist specializing in industrial and organizational psychology and a Visual Communication Design lecturer. The review from the psychologist identified several sections that did not fully align with self-efficacy theory, requiring revisions to make the activities and instructions more appropriate and clearly structured. The researchers also developed a design layout to guide design professionals in producing the final version. The design was reviewed by a Visual Communication Design lecturer, who recommended improving font consistency, layout alignment, and visual style across pages. The color selection was considered less suitable for a self-help context, and additional visual elements were needed to strengthen the booklet’s psychological message. After comprehensive revisions, the finalized booklet was distributed to participants. Participants received instructions on its purpose and use, then completed a pretest before beginning the Career Calm booklet. The intervention lasted 30 days, the researchers monitored progress through daily reminders and Google Forms where participants submitted daily evidence of their booklet activities shared via a WhatsApp group. After 30 days, participants completed a posttest to evaluate the effectiveness of the Career Calm booklet.

The career anxiety variable was measured using the Career Anxiety Scale (CAS) developed by Tsai et al. (2017), which consists of 25 items and each item uses a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Self-efficacy was measured using the New General Self-Efficacy (NGSE) scale developed by Chen et al. (2001), which assesses general confidence in handling various tasks and situations. The NGSE is unidimensional reflecting overall belief in one’s competence (Novrianto, 2019). NGSE consists of 8 items using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Reliability testing was conducted with 30 respondents using Cronbach’s alpha to determine the consistency of the instrument within the sample selected by the researchers. For the CAS, Cronbach’s alpha values were 0.971 for Personal Ability (8 items), 0.923 for Irrational Beliefs (8 items), 0.938 for Employment Environment (5 items), and 0.910 for Professional

Education Training (4 items). For the NGSE scale, Cronbach's alpha was 0.970 (8 items). The Cronbach's alpha values for the four dimensions of the CAS and the NGSE were all above 0.7, and can therefore be considered reliable (Setyaedhi, 2024). Furthermore, the researchers adopted the CAS validity results conducted by Tsai et al. (2017), the CFA analysis shows values of GFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.047, and IFI = 0.90 indicating construct validity. Consequently, this scale is deemed to possess strong construct validity and excellent reliability, with no items being excluded. Thus, the scale is said to have good validity and reliability.

The research hypotheses were tested using a paired-sample t-test in JASP version 0.18.1. This technique compares pretest and posttest scores from the same group to assess changes following an intervention (Field, 2021). It was selected to evaluate the effectiveness of the Career Calm booklet by determining whether there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores (Lakens, 2022). In addition, Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and career anxiety

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 2. Respondents' Characteristics

Characteristics	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	15	50%
	Female	15	50%
Age	20	6	20%
	21	19	63.3%
	22	5	16.67%
	6	14	46.7%
Semester	7	13	43.3%
	8	3	10%

30 students were included as participants as all criteria were fulfilled. The sample consisted of 50% males and 50% females, with ages ranging from 20 to 22 years (Mean age = 20.9; Standard deviation = 0.607). Table 2 shows the semester levels, 14 respondents were in the 6th semester, 13 in the 7th semester, and 3 in the 8th semester.

Table 3. Normative Category

Scale		Mean	SD Ideal	Categories	Score
Career Anxiety	Highest Score (4)			Extremely Low	$25 \leq X < 43.75$
	Lowest Score (1)	62.5	12.5	Low	$43.75 \leq X < 62.5$
	Total Items = 25			High	$62.5 \leq X < 81.26$
				Extremely High	$81.26 \leq X \leq 100$
Self Efficacy	Highest Score (5)			Extremely Low	$8 \leq X < 16$
	Lowest Score (1)	24	5.33	Low	$16 \leq X < 24$
	Total Items = 8			High	$24 \leq X < 32$
				Extremely High	$32 \leq X \leq 40$

Table 4. Number of Participant Categories

Variable		N	Categories
Career Anxiety Scale	Pre-test	13	Extremely High
		14	High
		3	Low
	Post-test	1	Extremely High
		27	High
		2	Low

New General Self - efficacy	Pre-test	6	Extremely Low
		24	Low
	Post-test	5	High
		25	Extremely High

Based on the criteria established by the researcher in Table 2, the researcher categorized the participants according to their levels of career anxiety and self-efficacy in Table 3. It was found that 90% of participants were classified in the low career anxiety category, and 83.3% were classified in the very high self-efficacy category after completing the Career Calm booklet.

Table 5. Results of the Paired Sample T-Test CAS and NGSE

Scale		Mean	SD	t	df	p	Effect Size
CAS	Pre-test	3.069	0.522	8.716	29	<.001	1.59
	Post-test	2.259	0.202				
NGSE	Pre-test	1.992	0.401	-20.159	29	<.001	-3.68
	Post-test	4.412	0.545				

Note: CAS = Career Anxiety Scale; NGSE = New General Self-efficacy

Table 4 shows significant differences in career anxiety ($t(29) = 8.72, p < .001$) and self-efficacy ($t(29) = -20.16, p < .001$). There was a significant decrease in the mean score of career anxiety from pre-test ($M = 3.07$) to post-test ($M = 2.26$) following the administration of the Career Calm booklet. Conversely, mean self-efficacy scores increased from pre-test ($M = 1.99$) to post-test ($M = 4.41$).

Table 6. Correlation Test Results

Variable	M	SD	Pearson's r CAS	Pearson's r GSE	95% CI
Career Anxiety	2.26	0.20	-		
Self-efficacy	4.41	0.55	-.035	-	Upper -.39 Lower 0.33

The Pearson correlation results in Table 5 indicate no significant relationship between CAS

and GSE post-test scores, $r(28) = -.035$, $p = .855$, 95% CI[-0.390, 0.330]. The near zero correlation coefficient suggests that there is virtually no linear association between the two variables.

Discussion

Researchers hypothesized that the booklet intervention would increase self-efficacy and reduce career anxiety among final-year students. The pretest and posttest results confirmed that independently completing the Career Calm booklet increased self-efficacy and reduced career anxiety. These findings are consistent with Isnaini et al. (2021), who found that booklet-based interventions improved self-efficacy, although the effect was not significantly different from Motivational Interviewing (MI). MI is a person-centered counseling approach that enhances motivation by exploring ambivalence, expressing empathy, and strengthening self-efficacy (Isnaini et al., 2021).

The lower career anxiety may be explained by the booklet's focus on self-reflection and career preparation. Completing the booklet encouraged participants to focus on self-development and future career planning. This finding aligns with Indrasari et al. (2025), who reported that independently completed booklets or e-modules significantly improved career planning and supported informed career decisions, which can reduce anxiety.

The booklet also included SWOT analysis activities that promoted self-reflection and helped participants understand their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and limitations. Previous research has shown that SWOT analysis is effective in career guidance because it increases self-awareness and supports career decision-making (Rahmawati & Setiawan, 2024). One participant stated, "I was confused about identifying my strengths because I usually focus on my weaknesses. After writing my strengths, I felt more motivated and realized I had positive qualities to develop. I also recognized opportunities from my campus and relationships. Now, I feel clearer about the steps I can take toward my future career." This response shows that the SWOT activity helped participants recognize their strengths and opportunities, improving confidence and clarity in career planning.

Bandura's self-efficacy theory identifies mastery experience as the most influential source of self-efficacy. Kleppang et al. (2023) found that mastery experience contributed 10.7% to self-efficacy development, exceeding the influence of age, gender, and social support. Mastery experience strengthens confidence by allowing individuals to recognize their achievements and capabilities. This was reflected in a participant's statement: "The most memorable part was completing the achievement tasks, because I realized how far I had progressed. The career planning section made me feel calmer and more motivated to pursue my desired career. These tasks helped me understand my current abilities and what I need to prepare." This response shows that reflecting on past successes strengthened participants' confidence and clarity. The Career Calm booklet facilitated mastery experience through structured reflection activities, which contributed to increased self-efficacy and reduced career anxiety.

Social or verbal persuasion also plays an important role in strengthening self-efficacy by encouraging positive thinking and motivation (Kleppang et al., 2023). Supportive feedback helps

individuals face challenges and reinforces confidence through repeated success. Self-efficacy is influenced by sociocultural context and environmental support, including encouragement from peers, lecturers, and counselors (Chao et al., 2022). One participant stated, "I used to feel pessimistic and lacked confidence. A lecturer told me I had potential in public speaking and that my voice was suitable for podcasts. That support made me feel calmer and more optimistic about my future career." This shows that verbal encouragement increased participants' confidence and motivation in career planning.

Vicarious experience contributed to reducing anxiety by allowing participants to learn from others' experiences and achievements (Putri & Fadhilah, 2024; Rahmadani & Rusli, 2023). Observing others' success can increase motivation and confidence in achieving similar goals (Reswara, 2025). Participants reported that the Mirror Motivation activity was particularly meaningful: "This activity helped me realize that successful people also experienced career confusion. It made me understand that my struggles are part of the process. If they succeed, I believe I can too."

The Physiological and Emotional State component in the Career Calm booklet includes challenging activities designed to elicit adaptive physical and emotional responses (Bandura, 1977). Challenging activities encourage individuals to explore their abilities and reduce avoidance behavior when facing difficult tasks (Gunawan & Oriza, 2022). Emotional responses arise from cognitive interpretations of physiological reactions (Rigotti et al., 2020). When individuals interpret physiological arousal as a sign of incompetence, avoidance increases and self-efficacy declines. In contrast, interpreting these responses as signs of readiness or growth strengthens self-efficacy. The booklet's activities help participants reinterpret emotional and physiological reactions as opportunities for development rather than threats, which supports confidence and reduces career anxiety.

The correlation test results indicated a lack of a significant relationship between the two variables. This finding contradicts previous studies which suggest that higher self-efficacy levels lead to lower career anxiety and vice versa (Pertapa et al., 2025; Husna et al., 2023). Although self-efficacy increased and career anxiety decreased following the intervention, the absence of a direct correlation suggests the potential presence of a third variable as a mediator. Circir et al. (2023) found that self-efficacy contributes to building optimism or hope, which helps individuals perceive a brighter career outlook, thereby reducing career anxiety. Hope Theory (Circir et al., 2023) explains that individuals with higher optimism are better able to identify various paths toward their career goals that shifts the perspective toward the belief that the future is controllable and that career uncertainty is no longer perceived as a threat, which subsequently lowers the level of career anxiety.

Motivation and self-efficacy simultaneously influence anxiety in career preparation. Self-efficacy strengthens constructive motivation, which helps individuals manage career challenges and reduces anxiety. In contrast, motivation without strong self-efficacy can increase fear of failure and career anxiety (Chuang et al., 2022). Therefore, motivation functions as a reinforcing mechanism that strengthens self-efficacy and supports more adaptive emotional responses in

career decision-making.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the 30-day Career Calm booklet intervention was effective in reducing career anxiety among most participants. Pretest and posttest results showed that 27 of 30 participants experienced decreased career anxiety scores after the intervention, with a significant difference and large effect size. The intervention also significantly increased self-efficacy in all participants, as reflected in General Self-Efficacy scores. However, Pearson correlation analysis showed no significant relationship between changes in self-efficacy and career anxiety, indicating that improvements in these variables occurred independently. The booklet's activities, based on self-efficacy theory and SWOT analysis, helped participants strengthen self-confidence and develop clearer career strategies. Future research should examine potential mediating variables that explain the relationship between self-efficacy and career anxiety. Researchers are also encouraged to use a true experimental design with a control group to better evaluate the intervention's effectiveness. Career development services may consider implementing the Career Calm booklet as part of career preparation programs, as it can help students recognize their strengths, limitations, and career potential.

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