CARE INDONESIA
CARE JOURNAL OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING
e-ISSN: xxxx-xxxx
Homepage: https://carejournals.id/index.php/jipc/index

Sources Of Career Aspirations Among High School Students: Meaning-Making Of Careers From The Perspective Of Career Construction Theory

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Received:
30 May 2026
Accepted:
30 June 2026
Avaliable online:
31 July 2026

ABSTRACT

Career aspirations among senior high school students are often understood as final occupational choices. This perspective may overlook the developmental processes and students' subjective meaning-making regarding their future careers. This study aims to explore the sources of career aspirations among senior high school students by examining students' subjective experiences and the perspectives of school counselors within the framework of Career Construction Theory (CCT). A qualitative approach was employed using thematic analysis of in-depth interview data collected from two senior high school students (one male and one female). Data analysis followed the stages of data familiarization, coding, initial theme generation, theme review, theme naming, and report writing. The findings indicate that students' career aspirations are constructed through the interaction of academic interests, life values, learning and organizational experiences,inspirational figures, as well as social support and expectations. From the perspective of CCT, these findings underscore that inconsistency, uncertainty, and the presence of alternative choices should not be viewed as weaknesses in career aspirations, but rather as integral components of the career meaning construction process.

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Keywords: *Career aspirations; Career construction theory; Career meaning;*

ABSTRAK

Aspirasi karir pada siswa SMA sering dipahami sebagai pilihan pekerjaan yang bersifat final. Perspektif ini berpotensi mengabaikan proses perkembangan dan pemaknaan subjektif siswa terhadap masa depan karirnya. Penelitian yang dilakukan bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi sumber aspirasi karir siswa SMA pengalaman subjektif siswa dan perspektif guru BK dalam kerangka *career construction theory*. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis tematik terhadap data wawancara mendalam pada dua siswa SMA (laki-laki dan perempuan). Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan familiarisasi data, *coding*, pencarian tema awal, peninjauan tema, penamaan tema, dan penulisan laporan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa aspirasi karir siswa dibentuk melalui interaksi antara minat akademik, nilai hidup, pengalaman belajar dan organisasi, figur inspiratif, serta dukungan dan ekspektasi sosial. Melalui perspektif CCT, temuan ini memberikan penegasan bahwa ketidakkonsistenan, keraguan, dan keberadaan alternatif pilihan bukan merupakan kelemahan dalam aspirasi karir, melainkan sebagai bagian dari proses konstruksi makna karir.

Kata kunci: Aspirasi karir, *Career construction theory,* Pemaknaan karir

How to cite: Yani, I., & Ramadhani, A. R. (2026). Sources of career aspirations among high school students: Meaning-making of careers from the perspective of career construction theory. Journal of Guidance and Counseling (CJGC , 1(1), https://carejournals.id/index.php/cjgc/index

INTRODUCTION

The senior high school years represent a critical developmental phase during which individuals form their identities, including their career identities. During this period, students face various developmental demands, such as determining their pathways to further education and making decisions about their future careers. These demands often lead to

career-related uncertainty among senior high school students (Akbar, Subhan, & Yulharti, 2025). Previous research indicates that career uncertainty manifests not only in fluctuating interests and a tendency to follow other people's choices but also in anxiety and fear of making inappropriate decisions regarding future educational and occupational pathways, limited self-confidence, and insufficient parental support (Setiawan & Musslifah, 2023). These phenomena suggest that the formation of career aspirations among senior high school students is a complex process involving multiple interacting dynamics.

From a contemporary perspective, career planning is no longer conceptualized as a one-time decision-making process. Rather, career is understood as an ongoing process of meaning construction that evolves throughout an individual's life. Individuals are required to actively construct and reconstruct their careers by integrating past experiences, present realities, and future aspirations into meaningful life themes (Savickas, 2005; Savickas, 2013). Accordingly, career planning can be understood as a subjective and reflective process that requires individuals to develop an understanding of themselves and their life experiences.

This perspective is consistent with the framework of Career Construction Theory (CCT), which views careers as the outcomes of individuals' meaning-making processes through vocational behaviors and their work- and learning-related experiences. Within the CCT framework, career development is explained through three fundamental constructs: *vocational personality, life themes,* and *career adaptability* (Savickas, 2005). *Vocational personality* reflects individuals' preferences for particular occupational fields, shaped by evolving adaptive resources, including interests, values, and abilities. *Life themes* represent the meanings individuals attribute to their lives, as articulated through career narratives, thereby explaining the subjective reasons underlying the direction of their career aspirations. Meanwhile, *career adaptability* refers to individuals' readiness to cope with developmental tasks, career transitions, and career-related uncertainties through four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Yohanes, 2023).

Understanding career as a process of meaning construction highlights the influence of the social environments in which students grow and develop on the formation of their career aspirations. Families, schools, learning experiences, and role models can serve as sources of meaning that shape students' career narratives. In the context of Indonesian society, which is widely characterized by collectivistic cultural orientations, the consideration of social experiences and cultural values further underscores the role of the

social environment in adolescent career development (Sawitri & Creed, 2017; Hifsy, Daharnis, & Iswari, 2022). Thus, careers are not constructed solely through individual processes but also through interpersonal interactions and self-reflection mediated by language and culture (Savickas, 2005).

Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of career-related practices and research continue to emphasize the assessment of interests and aptitudes. Consequently, these approaches tend to focus on what individuals possess while paying less attention to how individuals interpret and utilize their personal resources in constructing their careers (Savickas, 2005). As a result, the subjective, narrative, and contextual foundations of career aspirations have yet to be fully explored.

In light of these considerations, research is needed to explore the sources of senior high school students' career aspirations through an approach that emphasizes meaning, narratives, and life contexts. A qualitative approach employing thematic analysis within the framework of Career Construction Theory is therefore particularly relevant to understanding how students construct their career aspirations through the interplay of personal experiences, social environments, and continuously evolving adaptive processes.

Previous studies on adolescent career aspirations have predominantly conceptualized career aspirations as outcomes of individual-level variables, including interests, self-efficacy, personality, and career maturity. In Indonesia, research on senior high school students' careers has likewise generally focused on measuring career maturity, career planning, or the relationships between psychological factors and students' career choices (Partino, 2006; Budiati, Suhendri, & Rohastono, 2024). Although these approaches have made important contributions to understanding the factors influencing students' career readiness, they tend to overlook the developmental processes and subjective meaning-making underlying career aspirations.

In contrast, Career Construction Theory (CCT) emphasizes that careers are the outcomes of dynamic, contextual, and narrative-based meaning-construction processes, developed through the interaction of *vocational personality, life themes,* and *career adaptability* (Savickas, 2005; Savickas, 2013). However, studies conducted in Indonesian secondary education contexts that have adopted CCT have largely focused on the quantitative measurement of *career adaptability*, without sufficiently exploring how students interpret and construct the meanings of their career aspirations through personal narratives and life experiences.

Building on this discussion, the present study not only examines students' subjective experiences but also connects these experiences to the role of school guidance and counseling teachers as facilitators who support students' processes of career reflection, adaptation, and meaning-making. Furthermore, this study highlights the influence of interpersonal relationships on career construction. Accordingly, the study is expected to contribute theoretically to the enrichment of CCT scholarship within the Indonesian cultural context and practically to the development of career guidance and counseling services in secondary schools.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using thematic analysis as its data analysis technique. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing data aimed at identifying patterns and generating themes from the data collected by researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved six phases. The first phase was familiarization with the data, which involved repeatedly reading and listening to the collected data to develop an initial understanding. This was followed by generating initial codes, either manually or with the assistance of software, to produce descriptive and interpretive insights relevant to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The codes were then actively grouped into potential themes relevant to the research objectives and subsequently reviewed to ensure their consistency and adequate representation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The emerging themes were further reviewed against the entire dataset, allowing for the reclassification or removal of themes, as well as recoding, to maintain coherence and the validity of their interpretations. The next phase involved defining and naming the themes through the development of analytical narratives. Finally, the findings were presented in the research report, supported by relevant data extracts and quotations.

The exploration involved two senior high school students, comprising one male student and one female student, selected through random sampling. In addition, one school guidance and counseling (GC) teacher participated as an informant to provide a professional perspective and facilitate triangulation of the findings obtained from the students. Data from the students and the GC teacher were analyzed separately to preserve the integrity of meaning within each perspective. The findings were subsequently compared at the conceptual level to enrich the interpretation of students' career aspirations within the framework of Career Construction Theory (CCT).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews designed to explore in depth the sources of students' career aspirations and their processes of career meaning construction. Interviews with students focused on exploring the Career Style Interview (CSI) developed by Savickas (2005), which aims to elicit personal meanings associated with individuals' vocational behaviors. The interviews also included questions concerning career adaptability and its four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Meanwhile, the interview with the GC teacher focused on obtaining professional observations regarding the dynamics of students' career aspirations and the role of career guidance services in the school context. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to provide the primary dataset for thematic analysis. Following transcription, the data were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and develop themes relevant to the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Career Construction Theory (CCT), developed by Savickas (2013), conceptualizes career as a process through which individuals develop their self-concepts and direct their career development by emphasizing the importance of constructing life meaning through career experiences. Career choices are viewed as outcomes of individuals' own construction processes, through which they adapt to and build their careers across different stages of career development (Hidayat et al., 2019). CCT comprises three fundamental pillars that collectively explain how individuals construct the direction and meaning of their career aspirations within their life contexts: *vocational personality, life themes,* and *career adaptability* (Savickas, 2005; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

The first pillar, *vocational personality*, refers to individuals' interests, values, and abilities in relation to the world of work. This pillar reflects what individuals prefer in terms of career choices and serves as an initial foundation for developing career aspirations through self-understanding. It is particularly important for understanding how senior high school students evaluate their personal potential, identify potential career fields, and formulate goals that align with their individual interests and values.

The second pillar, *life themes*, concerns the meanings individuals attribute to their lives, as consolidated within their career narratives. This pillar also represents a significant career dimension that encompasses both subjective and objective understandings articulated through self-narratives and dialogue within a career construction framework (McIlveen,

2011). Life themes encompass meaningful experiences, personal values, and individual stories that provide the context and motivation underlying career trajectories. This pillar addresses the question of "why" students choose particular career directions. Thus, it provides an interpretive framework for understanding students' aspirations not merely as preferences but also in relation to their life stories and personal identities.

The third pillar, *career adaptability*, refers to individuals' readiness and capacity to cope with career-related developmental tasks, transitions, and unexpected changes. This pillar encompasses four dimensions that reflect how students manage their career construction processes: concern (awareness and consideration of their future careers), control (a sense of responsibility for managing their own career development), curiosity (willingness to explore the world of work), and confidence (belief in their ability to overcome career-related challenges and make decisions) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). These dimensions are particularly relevant to adolescent career aspirations because they illustrate how students move beyond merely having career preferences toward making decisions, seeking information, and developing confidence in their ability to navigate career choices.

Career Construction Theory seeks to explain interpersonal processes, particularly how individuals construct their identities and direct their behaviors toward career development, while also providing a perspective for understanding students' views of career counseling (Hou et al., 2014). This theory offers specific insights that can assist individuals in making career decisions and enhancing job satisfaction (Savickas, 2005). In the context of senior high school students, career aspirations can be understood as emerging from the interaction between internal dimensions (*vocational personality* and *life themes*) and evolving adaptive capacities (*career adaptability*). Students construct their aspirations through reflection on personal interests and values, meaningful experiences, and their responses to the challenges and opportunities they encounter.



Figure 1. Conceptual Diagram of the Thematic Analysis Findings

Following the processes of familiarization, coding, theme and subtheme identification, and categorization, the thematic analysis proceeded to the development of the research findings. The thematic analysis of the two senior high school student participants revealed that career aspirations can be interpreted as a dynamic and context-dependent process shaped by the interaction of personal interests, learning experiences, life values, inspirational figures, and social support and expectations. Although both participants were at the same developmental stage, the findings revealed differences in their patterns of career meaning-making, potentially reflecting variations in career maturity and the ways in which they construct meanings about their futures.

During the initial coding phase, the researcher identified codes and symbols from the participants' interview responses. These codes were subsequently developed into categories and formulated into themes or concepts. The initial codes derived from the male participant's responses are presented below.

Table 1. Initial Coding of the Male Participant

Interview excerpts	Codes
"I want to enroll in an institute or a government service academy... preferably in engineering or the natural sciences."	Clarity of career direction
"I feel that I am capable."	Perceived self-competence
"I am confident, but not entirely confident."	Partial confidence
"Many things are beyond my control."	Awareness of uncertainty
"Being the student council president... having a busy schedule."	Leadership role
"I enjoy it even though it is exhausting."	Satisfaction with role engagement

"I admire people who are able to bring about change."	Transformational values
"My parents are realistic; they ask what kind of job I will have in the future."	Family pressure and pragmatism
"The school counselor is someone I can consult."	School-based support
"I would feel ashamed if I did not make an effort."	Motivation shaped by family expectations

For the male participant, career aspirations were characterized by a relatively well-defined career direction, which had already emerged by Grade 11. The participant understood that career development was not merely about choosing an academic major but also involved a long-term project requiring planning, psychological readiness, and adaptability. He explicitly expressed his career orientation toward science and engineering, particularly through pathways involving specialized institutes and government service academies: "Actually, I want to enroll in an institute or a government service academy... because my academic background is purely in the natural sciences, I am more inclined toward engineering or science." This clarity of direction was reinforced by his active exploration of university programs and institutions, including UNDIP, UPN, ITB, STAN, and STIS, as well as his specific interest in mechanical engineering, geology, and geodesy. His strong academic interests in biology and physics served as the basis for his perceived compatibility with these fields.

Nevertheless, his confidence in achieving his career goals was not absolute. The participant demonstrated a form of realistic self-confidence, characterized by optimism accompanied by an awareness of personal limitations and external factors beyond his control: "I am actually confident, but not entirely confident... because many things are beyond my control." This awareness encouraged him to remain committed to learning and preparation, including attending tutoring sessions and preparing for university entrance examinations, despite having to manage demanding responsibilities in other areas of his life.

Furthermore, organizational experiences played a central role in shaping the participant's identity and career readiness. His involvement as student council president and participation in city-level student council forums were perceived as opportunities to develop leadership, time management, and social responsibility: "It is exhausting, yes, but I enjoy it... if nothing is moving forward, then someone has to step up and take responsibility." These experiences were not perceived as burdens but rather as integral to his personal development and preparation for future demands.

In addition, the male participant's career aspirations were influenced by inspirational figures who represented transformational values. Public figures whom he admired were

perceived as individuals capable of initiating significant change, taking risks, and remaining committed to their principles: "I admire them because they are capable of making significant changes... that is what makes them remarkable." The values of courage, adaptability, and strategic thinking that he identified in these figures became important foundations for his career planning.

Within his social context, the family served as both a source of motivation and a source of adaptive pressure. High expectations from his extended family generated an internal drive to achieve: "I am not ashamed in front of other people, but rather of myself... so I have to make an effort. And I am also the eldest child." Meanwhile, the school, particularly the guidance and counseling teacher, was perceived as an important facilitator who provided opportunities for career reflection and consultation: "The school counselor is someone we can talk to, consult with, or simply share our plans for the future." Overall, the male participant demonstrated relatively high career maturity, characterized by clear goals, strong self-regulation, leadership experiences, and the ability to balance confidence with realistic awareness.

The initial codes derived from the female participant's interview responses are presented below.

Table 2. Initial Coding of the Female Participant

Interview excerpts	Codes
"My intended major is environmental engineering."	Clarity of academic major choice
"I do not yet have a clear understanding of the employment prospects."	Uncertainty about occupational prospects
"It comes from the school subjects I am interested in."	Academic interests as a basis for career choices
"I have also taken an aptitude test, and my interests are in science."	Awareness of interests and aptitudes
"Organizational activities help develop communication skills."	Organizational involvement as soft-skill development
"I have not participated in a career expo yet."	Limited career exploration
"I want to be successful and make my parents proud."	Family-oriented success values
"I am disciplined and rarely postpone my assignments."	Self-discipline
"I am not very good at understanding myself."	Awareness of limited self-awareness
"If it is not environmental engineering, I could pursue something else."	Flexibility in career choices

In contrast to the male participant, the female participant demonstrated career aspirations that remained at an exploratory stage. Although she had identified a relatively

clear academic major, namely environmental engineering, this choice was not yet accompanied by a concrete understanding of potential occupations: "My intended major is environmental engineering... but I do not yet have a clear understanding of the employment prospects." Her choice of major was primarily based on her academic interests in science, which had developed through previous learning experiences and were further supported by the results of an interest and aptitude assessment: "Initially, it came from the school subjects I was interested in... my interests are in the field of science."

Beyond academic interests, the female participant's career aspirations were also shaped by personal values and social concerns, particularly environmental issues. This was reflected in her statement: "I see that waste management in Indonesia is still inadequate... so I am interested in thinking about what kinds of policies could address this issue." Furthermore, her career choices were associated with the value of success, particularly her desire to make her parents proud: "I want to become a successful person and make my parents proud."

Her preference and desire to make her parents proud also motivated her to make career decisions collaboratively with them. Family support was perceived as a reinforcing factor, while the final decision remained a matter of personal choice: "What I want is communicated with my parents, and eventually things become more directed." Nevertheless, the female participant also reflectively acknowledged that her self-understanding was still developing and that she therefore needed perspectives from others. She described herself as someone who was disciplined and identified discipline as one of her personal strengths: "I am not very good at understanding myself... but I know that I am disciplined and interested in science."

This awareness was accompanied by flexibility in viewing her future, as reflected in her willingness to consider alternative career options and her belief that success does not necessarily have to be achieved through a single pathway: "Success does not have to come through just one way... if it is not environmental engineering, I could pursue something else." Overall, the female participant's career aspirations reflected an active exploratory process centered on academic interests, values associated with social contribution, and the search for personal identity. Although she had not yet developed a specific occupational vision, she demonstrated positive psychological resources, including self-discipline, reflectiveness, family support, and openness to various future possibilities.

These findings indicate that the sources of senior high school students' career aspirations emerge from a combination of personal and social factors, although the patterns differ between the male and female participants. The male participant demonstrated relatively higher career maturity, characterized by clear goal orientation and adaptive readiness, whereas the female participant reflected an exploratory career development process characterized by value reflection, flexibility, and an evolving understanding of herself.

The Guidance and Counseling Teacher's Perspective on Students' Career Aspirations



Figure 2. Conceptual Diagram of the Thematic Analysis Findings

Following the processes of familiarization, coding, theme and subtheme identification, and categorization, the thematic analysis proceeded to the preparation of the research findings. During the initial coding phase, the researcher identified codes and symbols from the guidance and counseling teacher's interview responses. These codes were subsequently developed into categories and formulated into themes or concepts. The initial codes derived from the guidance and counseling teacher's responses are presented below.

Table 3. Initial Coding of the Guidance and Counseling Teacher

Interview excerpts	Codes
"Career guidance services are delivered through classroom-based services, individual counseling, and collaboration with homeroom teachers and parents."	Forms of career guidance services
"We collaborate with psychology professionals to conduct assessments using the RIASEC instrument."	Use of interest and aptitude assessments
"The assessment results are explained to students, and then we explore whether they feel that the results match their interests or preferences."	Assessment as a basis for career exploration

"We do not immediately impose the assessment results."	Flexibility in the use of assessments
"It often happens that assessment results indicate a suitability for social fields, whereas the student's actual interest is in the arts."	Discrepancies between assessment results and personal interests
"We use the assessment as material for discussion."	Assessment as a counseling discussion tool
"We explore students' life experiences and family backgrounds."	Exploration of students' life experiences
"Every student has different characteristics."	Individual uniqueness
"I am not very good at understanding myself."	Awareness of limited self-awareness
"Assessment is only an initial support tool."	Assessment is not an absolute determinant
"We discuss life meaning and future aspirations."	Reflection on life meaning
"The most common difficulty is that students have not yet understood themselves."	Students' limited self-understanding
"It is not because they lack ability, but because they have never been encouraged to think that far ahead."	Limited stimulation for career planning
"We ask reflective questions about life goals."	Reflective approach in counseling
"We often explore students' role models."	Use of role models in counseling
"Some students admire their parents, older siblings, or community figures."	Diversity of role models
"Public figures and the media also have a considerable influence."	Media influence on career aspirations
"Role models help students envision their futures."	Role models as a means of future visualization
"Their aspirations need to be guided so that they align with their personal abilities."	Aligning aspirations with personal capabilities
"Some students hesitate because of family pressure."	Family pressure in career choices
"Others are afraid of making the wrong choice."	Decision-making uncertainty
"We provide a safe space for discussion."	Safe counseling environment
"We help students build their self-confidence."	Strengthening self-confidence
"Career choices do not have to be perfect from the beginning."	Career flexibility and adaptability
"The school develops the P5 activities."	School programs supporting exploration
"Students are trained in various skills and given opportunities to practice them."	Exploration of interests and potential
"Parents have the greatest influence on career choices."	Dominant parental influence
"We encourage students to continue expressing their own wishes."	Negotiation between students and parents

The interview findings from the guidance and counseling teacher indicate that career planning among senior high school students is understood as an evolving process rather than

a decision that must be finalized from the outset. The teacher explained that most students do not yet have a clear career vision, not because they lack the necessary abilities, but because they have not been encouraged to reflect on their future directions. This perspective was reflected in the following statement: "The most common difficulty is that students have not really understood themselves. Many students do not yet have an idea of what they want to become, not because they lack the ability, but because they have never been encouraged to think that far ahead." This perspective suggests that career uncertainty is perceived as part of students' developmental processes and therefore requires gradual guidance appropriate to their developmental stages.

Furthermore, the guidance and counseling teacher explained that interest and aptitude assessments are used as initial tools to help students recognize their personal tendencies, rather than as the sole basis for determining career choices. According to the informant, assessment results are positioned as material for further discussion through counseling services: "We use the assessment as material for discussion." The informant further emphasized in a separate response: "Assessment is only an initial support tool." In practice, discrepancies between assessment results and students' subjective interests are relatively common. Such discrepancies are not immediately regarded as problems but rather as starting points for exploring students' life experiences and personal values: "Some students appear, based on their assessment results, to be suited to social fields, but their personal interests are actually in the arts or entertainment. In such situations, we do not impose the assessment results; instead, we use them as material for discussion."

The findings also revealed several challenges experienced by students, including career uncertainty accompanied by hesitation and fear of making mistakes when choosing academic majors or future occupations. The guidance and counseling teacher explained that these concerns arise from both internal factors and pressures within students' social environments. The teacher stated: "Some students feel uncertain because of family pressure, while others are afraid of making the wrong choice. They worry that these decisions will have long-term consequences for their futures." Such uncertainty is also associated with students' limited exposure to career exploration opportunities. According to the teacher, many students have not been sufficiently exposed to various career alternatives, which makes it difficult for them to make choices when asked to determine their future directions.

The findings further highlighted the influence of social environments on the formation of students' career aspirations. The guidance and counseling teacher identified

families, particularly parents, as having a substantial influence on students' career choices, especially because of their financial support and family expectations. The teacher explained: "Parents have the greatest influence. Many students eventually follow their parents' wishes because their parents are the ones financing their education." Beyond the family, role models also serve as important sources of inspiration that help students envision their future careers. These role models are not limited to family members but also include individuals from outside the family, such as public figures and personalities encountered through the media. The teacher stated: "Role models have a considerable influence. Some students admire their parents, older siblings, community figures, and even public figures they encounter through the media."

In addition, the guidance and counseling teacher described their role as a facilitator who supports students' reflective processes in career planning. In providing this support, the teacher also poses reflective questions intended to encourage students to connect their school experiences with their future aspirations. The teacher explained: "We usually ask questions such as, 'Have you established your life goals yet?' or 'What do you think is the purpose of your education?' so that they begin to connect their schooling with their future." When working with students who experience uncertainty and low self-confidence, the teacher seeks to provide encouragement and emphasizes that career choices do not have to be perfect from the outset: "We help strengthen students' self-confidence and emphasize that career choice is a natural process that can be adjusted over time.

Interpreting Career Aspirations from the Perspective of CCT

From the perspective of Career Construction Theory (CCT), the career aspirations of senior high school students are not understood as final and static occupational choices but rather as evolving life narratives shaped by identity formation, contextual experiences, and individuals' adaptive capacities (Savickas, 2005; Savickas, 2013). The findings of this study support this perspective by demonstrating that students' career aspirations can be understood as dynamic, reflective, and context-dependent processes rather than merely rational decisions made at a particular point in time.

The career aspirations expressed by the two participants illustrate processes of meaning construction emerging through the interaction of *vocational personality, life themes,* and *career adaptability*. For the male participant, career aspirations appeared more structured and oriented toward relatively clear long-term goals. However, this clarity did not imply rigidity or an unwillingness to consider change. His confidence, accompanied by

an awareness of uncertainty, as expressed in the statement "confident, but not entirely confident," reflects a form of realistic self-confidence. Within the CCT framework, this can be understood as an adaptive capacity to plan for the future while acknowledging personal limitations and external factors that cannot be entirely controlled (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Accordingly, career aspirations do not function as fixed end goals but rather as planning directions that may be revised in response to individual development.

Meanwhile, the female participant demonstrated career aspirations that were more exploratory and open-ended. Her relatively clear choice of an academic major, which had not yet been accompanied by a concrete understanding of potential occupations, indicates that career aspirations during the senior high school years are still in the process of emerging rather than being fully established. From the CCT perspective, this condition reflects a phase of career construction in which individuals actively interpret their interests, values, and future possibilities while developing a more coherent understanding of themselves (McIlveen, 2011). The female participant's career aspirations can also be understood as part of a broader search for identity during adolescence. Her openness to alternative possibilities should therefore be viewed as a potential source of adaptive strength rather than an indicator of career immaturity.

These findings indicate that inconsistencies in career aspirations, such as uncertainty, changing interests, or the presence of alternative choices, should not necessarily be interpreted as failures in career decision-making. Instead, within the CCT framework, such inconsistencies constitute part of the career construction process itself. Savickas (2005) emphasizes that individuals construct their careers through ongoing interactions between themselves and their environments. Accordingly, changes in career aspirations may represent adaptive responses to new experiences, self-reflection, and evolving social demands. This is particularly evident in the female participant, who reflectively acknowledged her limited self-understanding while remaining open to exploring various career possibilities.

Furthermore, students' career aspirations in this study also functioned as a mechanism for assigning meaning to learning experiences, social roles, and personal values. Organizational experiences, inspirational figures, and family expectations did not merely function as external influences but were also internalized into students' career narratives as components of their *life themes*. This finding is consistent with Hou et al. (2014), who suggest that career construction involves both interpersonal and intrapersonal processes

through which individuals understand who they are and how they wish to contribute through their occupational roles. Thus, career aspirations reflect how students interpret their futures and their prospective positions within society.

The findings are also relevant to previous studies emphasizing the importance of career aspirations in individuals' psychosocial development. Career aspirations have been associated with well-being, self-efficacy, and perceptions of personal capabilities in navigating the transition to adulthood (Olenik-Shemesh et al., 2018; Forstenlechner et al., 2014). In this context, senior high school students' career aspirations serve not only as representations of desired occupations but also as sources of motivation, self-regulation, and life orientation. Individuals with more clearly defined aspirations tend to demonstrate greater engagement in career exploration and planning activities (Creed et al., 2013; Fugate et al., 2004), as illustrated by the male participant.

Taken together, this discussion emphasizes that, from the perspective of Career Construction Theory, senior high school students' career aspirations should be understood as continuously developing narratives rather than final decisions that must be established prematurely. Inconsistency, uncertainty, and flexibility in career aspirations are natural aspects of the career construction process during adolescence. This perspective has important implications for school guidance and counseling services, particularly the need to facilitate students' reflection on their experiences, interpretation of personal meanings, and development of adaptive capacities, rather than demanding premature certainty regarding their career plans.

The Relationship Between Students' and Guidance and Counseling Teachers' Perspectives

The findings indicate that senior high school students' career aspirations are shaped by complementary factors, particularly students' subjective experiences and the guidance facilitated by school guidance and counseling teachers. Career aspirations in this study did not emerge solely from students' individual reflections but were also shaped by support from the school environment. This is consistent with Career Construction Theory, which emphasizes that career meaning-making is a dialogical process between individuals and their social contexts (Savickas, 2005; Savickas, 2013).

From the students' perspectives, career aspirations were subjectively constructed through learning experiences, personal interests, life values, and inspirational figures encountered in their everyday lives. The findings from both the male and female participants

demonstrate that career aspirations help students interpret their present experiences and envision their future possibilities. These processes involve uncertainty, flexibility, and openness to change, indicating a reflective process that does not necessarily follow a linear trajectory. Within the CCT framework, these subjective experiences represent individuals' efforts to construct *life themes*, namely, meaningful narratives that connect the past, present, and future in a coherent manner (Savickas, 2005; McIlveen, 2011).

From the guidance and counseling teacher's perspective, students' career aspirations were understood within a broader structural and developmental context. The teacher positioned themselves as a facilitator who assists students in understanding themselves, managing barriers, and connecting their school-related and personal experiences with their future aspirations. In practice, this guidance begins with the use of career assessments as preliminary support tools and a basis for subsequent discussions. This process is complemented by reflective questioning and ongoing guidance, emphasizing the evolving nature of career development. The teacher's role is consistent with the function of career counselors within CCT, namely, as *co-constructors of meaning* who assist clients in developing their career narratives with greater awareness and adaptability (Savickas, 2011). The interaction between students' subjective experiences and the guidance provided by the teacher is complementary in nature. The guidance and counseling teacher does not replace students' own career meaning-making processes but rather facilitates their development. The findings further suggest that the teacher serves as a mediator between students' subjective aspirations and social demands, particularly family expectations. In collectivistic cultural contexts such as Indonesia, children's career aspirations are often shaped not only by personal preferences but also by considerations concerning family values, expectations, and social norms. Damas and Kurniawati (2025) found that, within collectivistic cultures, parental involvement through support, guidance, and participation significantly influences students' career aspirations, self-efficacy, and career decision-making processes. Furthermore, Damas and Kurniawati (2025) explain that cultural values also contribute to the complexity of career aspiration formation, self-efficacy, and career decision-making, while excessive parental control may constrain individual autonomy. Therefore, guidance and counseling teachers play an important role in helping students balance respect for their families with personal autonomy. This process reflects the dimensions of *career adaptability*, particularly control and concern, through which students learn to take responsibility for their futures without disregarding their social contexts.

In addition, findings from both students' and the guidance and counseling teacher's perspectives indicate that challenges such as career uncertainty, fear of making inappropriate choices, and limited opportunities for exploration should not be regarded merely as individual deficits. Rather, they indicate the need for more comprehensive guidance and support for students. Thus, the relationship between students' and the guidance and counseling teacher's perspectives demonstrates that the construction of career aspirations is a collaborative process involving individuals and their supportive environments. These findings further underscore the importance of comprehensive school-based career guidance services that enable students to construct meaningful, adaptive, and contextually grounded career narratives.

CONCLUSION

Senior high school students' career aspirations originate from life experiences that are subjectively interpreted through the interaction of academic interests, personal values, learning and organizational experiences, and social influences. Career aspirations are not fixed or final but rather constitute evolving narratives that develop alongside students' identity formation and adaptive capacities. Career Construction Theory (CCT) provides a relevant framework for understanding the dynamics of senior high school students' career aspirations, as it explains the processes of meaning construction, inconsistency, and flexibility in career choices as natural aspects of career development. In this context, school guidance and counseling teachers play an important role as facilitators who support students in reflecting on their experiences, mediating between students' subjective aspirations and social demands, particularly family expectations, and developing their adaptive readiness to construct their career directions. Furthermore, the construction of career aspirations represents a collaborative process between individuals and their supportive environments.

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