

The Lax Parent? Examining Permissive Parenting's Impact on Career Choices in Adolescent

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is an important period of career decision-making, often faced with challenges. Permissive parenting from parents who lack direction can exacerbate these difficulties. This study hypothesized a negative relationship between permissive parenting and career decision-making in middle adolescents. The subjects of the study were 144 adolescents aged 14-18 years. Data were collected using the Permissive Parenting Scale and the Career Decision Making Scale. This quantitative research uses product moment analysis. Based on the results of the analysis, the correlation coefficient was obtained ($r = -0.391$). These results indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between permissive parenting and career decision making in middle adolescents. The hypothesis is accepted with a coefficient of determination (R-square) of 0.153, meaning that permissive parenting contributes 15.3% to career decision making, while 84.7% is influenced by other.

Keywords: career decision making, permissive parenting style, middle adolescents

Introduction

Each stage of life has its own characteristics that distinguish it from other developmental stages. Adolescence, for instance, is distinct from childhood, adulthood, and old age. It represents a transitional phase marked by various physical, emotional, and social changes (Jannah, 2017). Middle adolescence, which spans the ages of 14 to 18, is characterized by the development of more advanced cognitive abilities, enabling adolescents to exhibit greater self-direction. During this period, they begin to demonstrate mature behavior, learn to control impulsiveness, and make initial decisions regarding education and future careers (Agustiani, 2006).

According to Havirgust (as cited in Sumanto, 2014), one developmental task of middle adolescence is to accept one's physical condition and utilize it effectively, as well as to choose and prepare for a career. However, Gati and Levin (as cited in Fadhillah & Yudiana, 2020) note that adolescents often experience anxiety when faced with career decision-making. Tiedeman and O'Hara (as cited in Ahmad & Mustakim, 2022) define career decision-making as a process in which individuals consciously and thoughtfully consider their personal identity and life circumstances. This process includes four stages: exploration, where individuals gain an understanding of the consequences of their decisions; crystallization, where alternatives become clearer; selection, where individuals focus on relevant goals; and clarification, where they review and refine their decisions through reflection and adjustment (Tiedeman, 1978).

Research highlights that many adolescents face difficulties in career decision-making. For example, Arjanggi and Suprihatin (2023) found that 24.49% of adolescents reported significant difficulty in making career decisions, while 46.94% experienced moderate difficulty. Similarly, Agnia and Dasalinda (2022) reported that 8.4% of individuals scored low in career decision-making, 77.7% scored moderately, and 14% scored high. These findings align with Pahlevi and Novianti (2024), who reported that 31.48% of participants experienced difficulties, 63.43% faced moderate challenges, and 5.09% encountered no difficulties in career decision-making.

Several internal and external factors influence career decision-making (Hastuti, as cited in Kasan & Ibrahim, 2022). Internal factors include life values, intelligence, special talents, interests, personality traits, knowledge, and physical condition (Anggriana, Kadafi, & Trisnani, 2018). Meanwhile, external factors, such as parental support and parenting styles, have been shown to exert a strong influence on adolescents' career choices (Mahista, Rakhmawati, & Maulia, 2022). Among various parenting styles, permissive parenting has been identified as a significant factor. Kholifah (2022) highlights that permissive parenting and self-regulation jointly affect adolescents' career planning and choices.

Permissive parenting can be described as an approach characterized by minimal enforcement of rules, acceptance of children's desires, and a lack of discipline (Bern, 2012). This style often results in limited parental control over their children's behavior, leading to a less positive parent-child relationship (Fatwati & Fakhruddin, 2018). Adolescents raised in permissive households may face challenges in career decision-making due to the lack of guidance and boundaries.

Given the above, this study aims to investigate the correlation between permissive parenting styles and career decision-making among middle adolescents. The research question posed is: What is the relationship between permissive parenting and career decision-making in middle adolescents?

Methods

The study involved 144 middle adolescents aged 14–18 years. Data were collected using two scales:

1. Career Decision-Making Scale – This scale, originally developed by Tiedeman (1978), was adapted and revised by Anggraina (2024) and further modified by the researchers for this study. It demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.867.
2. Permissive Parenting Scale – Developed by Bern (2012) and adapted by the researchers for the purpose of this study. It demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.834.

The relationship between permissive parenting and career decision-making was analyzed using product-moment correlation analysis to evaluate the association between the two variables.

Results

Based on the categorization table, 93 participants (64.58%) were classified as having high career decision-making levels, 51 participants (35.42%) were classified as moderate, and none were classified as low.

Tabel 1. Categorization of Career Decision-Making Variable

No.	Norm	Score Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	$X \geq (\mu + 1.\sigma)$	$75 \leq X$	High	93	64,58%
2.	$(\mu - 1.\sigma) \leq X < (\mu + 1.\sigma)$	$55 \leq X < 75$	Moderate	51	35,42%
3.	$X < (\mu - 1.\sigma)$	$X < 55$	Low	0	0,00%
Total				144	100%

Tabel 2. Categorization of Permissive Parenting Style

In the permissive parenting variable, the categorization table revealed that 2 participants (1.39%) scored high, 61 participants (42.36%) scored moderate, and 81 participants (56.25%) scored low.

No.	Norm	Score Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	$X \geq (\mu + 1.\sigma)$	$34 \leq X$	Tinggi	2	1,39%
2.	$(\mu - 1.\sigma) \leq X < (\mu + 1.\sigma)$	$25 \leq X < 34$	Sedang	61	42,36%
3.	$X < (\mu - 1.\sigma)$	$X < 25$	Rendah	81	56,25%
Total				144	100%

Normality Test

A normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov method showed that both variables were normally distributed. The permissive parenting scale yielded a significance value of $p=0.200$ ($p > 0.05$), and the career decision-making scale yielded a significance value of $p=0.051$ ($p > 0.05$).

Linearity Test

The linearity test results showed a significant linear relationship between the two variables ($F_{\text{linearity}}=25.986, p=0.000$), indicating a linear association between permissive parenting and career decision-making.

Hypothesis Testing

A product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to test the research hypothesis. The results showed a significant negative correlation between permissive parenting and career decision-making ($r=-0.391, p<0.01$). This indicates that higher levels of permissive parenting are associated with lower levels of career decision-making among middle adolescents. Conversely, lower levels of permissive parenting correspond to higher levels of career decision-making.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.153$) indicates that permissive parenting contributes 15.3% to the variance in career decision-making, while the remaining 84.7% is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study.

Discussions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between permissive parenting style and career decision-making among adolescents. The findings confirmed the proposed hypothesis, revealing a negative correlation between permissive parenting and career decision-making. Specifically, the results of the product-moment correlation test indicated that higher levels of permissive parenting were associated with lower levels of career decision-making abilities, whereas lower levels of permissive parenting correlated with higher decision-making capabilities.

The study involved 111 female and 33 male participants, primarily aged 16–17 years, representing diverse regions and ethnic backgrounds across Indonesia. These findings align with prior research by Kvasková et al. (2022), which suggested that the negative relationship between permissive parenting and career decision-making stems from a lack of clear guidance or boundaries during upbringing. This deficit may hinder the development of independence and the ability to navigate career challenges effectively. Similarly, research by Liang, Zhou, and Chan (2023) highlighted the detrimental effects of permissive parenting on adolescents' exploration and role development, suggesting that inconsistent environments created by permissive parenting styles can impede adolescents' ability to make informed decisions.

Interestingly, while permissive parenting offers adolescents the freedom to make decisions early on, which can foster adaptability, this autonomy may also come at the cost of inadequate supervision. Adolescents raised in permissive households are often given opportunities to experiment, make mistakes, and learn from those experiences without strict parental oversight. Although this dynamic can promote confidence and autonomy, it may simultaneously weaken their capacity to navigate structured or demanding career-related challenges.

The categorization of career decision-making abilities in this study indicated that 63.89% of participants demonstrated high decision-making skills, 36.11% moderate skills, and 0% low skills. In contrast, the categorization of permissive parenting styles revealed that 1.39% of participants fell into the high category, 42.36% into the moderate category, and 56.25% into the low category. These findings suggest that the majority of adolescents in this study were subject to lower levels of permissive parenting.

The R-square value of 0.153 indicates that permissive parenting accounted for 15.3% of the variance in career decision-making, while the remaining 84.7% can be attributed to other factors outside the scope of this study. In terms of parental acceptance, permissive parents often allow their children the freedom to choose their own career paths. While this approach

encourages adolescents to explore their interests and talents, excessive freedom without guidance can hinder emotional intelligence development during critical stages of adolescence, as suggested by Wischerth et al. (2016).

Regarding the avoidance of control, parents who minimize control over their children without offering guidance may inadvertently disrupt the process of identity formation. Adolescents who experience such permissiveness may be more susceptible to peer influence, which can lead to career choices misaligned with their abilities and interests. Muhliawati (2023) similarly observed a negative correlation between permissive parenting and the development of a healthy identity, with adolescents in such environments often struggling with identity confusion and career direction.

Finally, in the aspect of avoiding strict rules, permissive parenting typically lacks firm boundaries, even as adolescents navigate emotionally charged developmental phases. While permissive parenting may provide room for exploration, it often fails to instill self-control or the ability to delay gratification, as noted by Li et al. (2023). These limitations may negatively affect adolescents' capacity to engage in structured decision-making processes, particularly in career planning.

This study had several limitations. The reliance on self-reported data collected via Google Forms distributed through personal chats and social media may have introduced response biases. Furthermore, the inability to control for the honesty of responses could have led to data distortion and less accurate findings.

In conclusion, this study found a significant, negative relationship between permissive parenting and career decision-making among adolescents. While permissive parenting has some benefits in fostering autonomy, it may also impede the development of essential skills for effective career decision-making. Given these findings, parents are encouraged to adopt parenting practices that balance freedom with guidance to support adolescents in making informed career choices. Further research should explore additional factors influencing career decision-making to build a more comprehensive understanding of this developmental process.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that there is a negative relationship between permissive parenting and career decision-making among individuals. This indicates that the higher the level of permissive parenting, the lower the career decision-making ability. Conversely, the lower the level of permissive parenting, the higher the career decision-making ability.

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