

The Relationship Between Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancies and Life Crafting

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Abstract. Family plays an important role in shaping a person's career path. However, differences between an individual's career goals and their parents' expectations can create psychological pressure that hinders life crafting. According to Self-Determination Theory, these discrepancies can reduce autonomy and intrinsic motivation, making it more difficult for individuals to develop meaningful goals. This study employed a correlational survey design involving 205 active undergraduate students in Indonesia (79% female, aged 18–23 years, from semesters 1–8) selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancy Scale ($\alpha = 0.866$) and the Life Crafting Scale ($\alpha = 0.834$). Spearman's rho analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between individual-parent career goal discrepancies and life crafting ($r = -0.440$, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that greater discrepancies between individual career goals and those of parents are associated with a lower ability to plan a meaningful life

Keywords: Career, Career Discrepancies, Life Crafting, Students.

1 Introduction

Higher education is an important stage in the development of academic potential, skills, and career direction. However, many students face confusion when determining their major or field of study, especially due to the differences between personal career goals and parental expectations. Data from the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education indicates that out of 2.4 million high school graduates, only 1.5 million continue on to higher education, with some of them experiencing uncertainty about their career direction [1].

There are three main factors that influence an individual's decision to continue their education beyond high school: family environment, community environment, and individual factors. The family environment plays a crucial role in shaping learning motivation. Family support can motivate individuals to plan for their future. Conversely, excessive pressure or indifference toward a child's career choices can hinder personal development. Therefore, it is important to maintain a balance between support and freedom in decision-making [2]. In addition to family, the community environment also influences educational direction through social norms, environmental expectations, and access to educational and career information. Internal factors such as motivation, interests, and the desire to develop skills in both academic and non-academic fields also play an important role [2].

One of the main challenges students face in choosing a major and faculty is the mismatch between personal desires and parental expectations. Many students hesitate to choose a major due to the discrepancy between their personal interests and family expectations [3]. Differences in career goals between individuals and their parents can create psychological pressure that hinders personal development. There are three main dimensions to this discrepancy: ability discrepancies (the mismatch between ability and parental career expectations), choice discrepancies (differences in career choices), and enthusiasm discrepancies (low motivation to pursue the career goals set by parents) [4].

Many students experience stress and even depression due to parental pressure to continue their studies in a particular major or university [5]. This condition can negatively impact mental well-being, especially if individuals feel they have no control over major decisions in their lives [6]. Such pressure can also cause discomfort due to the numerous demands that must be met to fulfill parental expectations [7]. Excessive involvement in decision-making can potentially trigger significant psychological pressure. Individuals facing constant demands from their parents tend to experience psychological pressure, fear of failure, and a loss of interest in activities they previously enjoyed [7].

One approach that has the potential to help alleviate this pressure is life crafting, which is a conscious process of building meaning in life through changing perspectives (cognitive crafting), seeking social support, and challenges seeking to encourage personal development [8]. Life crafting interventions have been shown to improve academic performance by 22%, even without explicitly setting academic goals [9]. According to Self-Determination Theory, external pressure that hinders autonomy can reduce intrinsic motivation, thereby obstructing individuals from engaging in the life crafting process [10].

However, research on the relationship between differences in individual-parent career goals and life crafting behavior in the context of Indonesian students remains limited. This research gap is important to address, given Indonesia's collectivist culture, which places family as a dominant factor in career decision-making.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the relationship between differences in individual-parent career goals and life crafting behavior among students. The proposed hypothesis is: there is a significant negative relationship between differences in individual-parent career goals and life crafting behavior among students.

2 Literature Review

Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) explains that career development is influenced by the interaction between personal factors, such as self-efficacy and outcome expectations, and contextual factors, such as social support or environmental barriers [9]. In the context of the relationship between students and parents, a mismatch in career goals can serve as a factor influencing the formation of self-beliefs related to career interests. This factor has the potential to influence students' behavior in directing, adjusting, or engaging in life crafting.

Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancies

Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancies refer to the differences between students' career aspirations and their parents' expectations [4]. These discrepancies encompass several aspects, including an individual's belief in their ability to meet their parents' career expectations (ability), differences between the career choices of individuals and those of their parents (choice), and low motivation among individuals to pursue their parents' career expectations (enthusiasm).

Life Crafting

Life crafting is defined as a conscious effort to shape a meaningful life by adjusting one's perspective, building social support, and seeking challenges that encourage personal growth [7]. Life crafting encompasses several aspects, including an individual's ability to rearrange the meaning and perspective of life (cognitive crafting), the actions taken by individuals to seek support in achieving personal goals (social support seeking), and the pursuit of challenges as an active effort to hone one's abilities through learning experiences (challenge seeking).

Based on this theoretical foundation, this study aims to examine the correlation between individual-parent career goal discrepancies and life crafting behavior among university students, positing that differences in career goals can influence students' strategies in life crafting.

3 Method

This study involved 205 active undergraduate students in Indonesia who were enrolled in semesters 1 to 8. The respondents consisted of 162 women (79.0%) and 43 men (21.0%), aged 18–24 years, from various majors. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with the criteria being active undergraduate students in Indonesia in semesters 1–8.

Data collection was conducted in March 2025 using an online questionnaire via Google Forms. The questionnaire link was shared through social media platforms such as X, Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp. Participation was voluntary, and the number of responses was monitored daily to ensure representation from various majors and semesters.

Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancies were measured using a scale constructed by the authors based on the framework of Sawitri et al. [4], covering three dimensions: ability, choice, and enthusiasm. The assessment was conducted using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), with unfavorable items receiving reverse scores. An example of a favorable item is, "I feel I lack the ability in the field determined by my parents," while an example of an unfavorable item is, "I believe that the major chosen by my parents is the right choice for me." The reliability of the scale in this study was $\alpha = 0.866$.

Life crafting was measured using a scale also constructed by the authors based on the indicators from Chen et al. [7], which include cognitive reframing, seeking social support, and seeking challenges. This scale consists of 25 items (11 favorable and 14 unfavorable) with a 5-point Likert format (1 = never to 5 = always), where unfavorable items are reverse-scored. An example of a favorable item is, "I can accept changes in my life with a more open and positive attitude," while an example of an unfavorable item is, "I feel that my life has not changed even though I have tried to improve it." The reliability of this scale is $\alpha = 0.834$.

Both scales were constructed following the psychological scale construction procedure according to Azwar [10], which includes determining the measurement objectives, operational definitions, developing a grid, writing items, expert judgment, testing, and item selection.

Normality testing was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Since the data were not normally distributed, the relationships between variables were analyzed using Spearman's rho correlation test. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 at a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

4 Result

This study involved 205 respondents, consisting of active undergraduate students (S1) from various universities in Indonesia. The characteristics of the respondents were grouped based on gender, semester, and choice of major, as shown in the table:

Table 1. Respondent characteristics

Category	Subcategory	n	Percentage
Sex	Male	43	21 %
	Female	162	79%
Semester	1 – 2	6	2.9 %
	3 – 4	13	6.4 %

	5 – 6	33	15.6 %
	7 – 8	147	72.2 %
	Other	6	2.9 %
Suitability of Major	Chosen by Parents	135	65.8 %
	Chosen by Oneself	70	34.2 %

Data analysis was conducted to determine whether the data from each variable was normally distributed. This test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method. The results of the normality test are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Normality test

	N	Sig	Description
Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancies	205	0.003	Not normal distributed
Life Crafting	205	0.000	Not normal distributed

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicates that the data for the Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancies variable are not normally distributed ($p = .003$), nor are the data for the life crafting variable ($p < .001$). With a large sample size ($N = 205$), even small deviations from normality can be detected significantly. Therefore, the analysis of the relationship between the variables was conducted using Spearman's rho correlation test, which is appropriate for non-parametric data. The results of the correlation test are presented in the following table:

Table 3. Spearman's rho correlation test

Correlation			
Spearman's Correlations			
		Spearman's rho	P
Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancies	Life Crafting	-0.44	< .001
* $p > .01$ ** $p < .001$			

Note: The values shown are Spearman's correlation coefficients (ρ). $p < .001$. A correlation of $-.44$ indicates a moderate effect (11).

The results of the Spearman correlation analysis show a significant negative relationship between Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancies and life crafting (Spearman $\rho = -.44$, $p < .001$). This indicates that as Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancies increase, the tendency for individuals to engage in life crafting decreases.

5 Discussion

The results of the study indicate a significant negative correlation between Individual-Parent Career Goal Discrepancies and life crafting ($\rho = -0.44$, $p < 0.05$). This means that the greater the discrepancy between an individual's career goals and their parents' expectations, the lower the individual's tendency to engage in life crafting.

This finding can be explained through Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the fulfillment of basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness [12]. External pressures, such as parental demands that are inconsistent with personal aspirations, can reduce feelings of autonomy and ultimately decrease intrinsic motivation. Additionally, according to Learned Helplessness Theory, prolonged goal mismatch can lead individuals to feel they have no control over the outcomes of their efforts [13], thereby hindering active engagement in life crafting, particularly in aspects related to seeking social support and challenges.

These findings align with previous research showing that the greater the discrepancy between students' and parents' career goals, the higher the stress levels experienced by students, especially those who lack clarity about their career goals [4]. Other studies also indicate that parental pressure in choosing a major can trigger psychological stress, fear of failure, and a decline in interest in previously enjoyable activities [5], [6].

Practically, these findings highlight the importance of the role of family and educational environments in providing autonomy support to students. Encouraging open communication between students and parents, as well as giving students the space to design their own career goals, may help enhance adaptive life crafting behavior.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample only included active undergraduate students in Indonesia, so the results may not be generalizable to a broader population. Future research is recommended to involve a more diverse sample, including students from various social and cultural backgrounds. Second, this study used a quantitative approach with questionnaires, which may introduce bias in the interpretation of participants' responses to the questionnaire items. Future research should explore other factors influencing students' academic achievement, as well as the role of family dynamics in supporting the life crafting process. A longitudinal approach could also provide deeper insights into how the gap between individual career goals and parental expectations evolves over time. Additionally, it is important to investigate how social support from family, friends, and the surrounding environment can help individuals overcome career goal gaps and build a more meaningful life overall.

6 Conclusion

The results of the Spearman correlation test in this study revealed a significant negative relationship between individual-parent career goal discrepancies and life crafting. The correlation coefficient value of $r = -0.440$ ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the greater the discrepancy between students' career goals and their parents' expectations, the lower their ability to find meaning and direction in life through life-crafting behaviour. Conversely, when the discrepancy is smaller, students tend to be more motivated and have greater clarity of life direction, allowing them to undergo the life crafting process more optimally. These findings confirm the importance of support and alignment between parents' expectations and students' personal goals in self-development and future planning.

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