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# The Relationship Between Self-Concept and Decision Making in High School Alumni Undergoing a Gap Year

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#### ABSTRAK

Gap year merupakan kurun waktu yang digunakan para alumni Sekolah Menengah Atas untuk mempersiapkan diri karena akan melanjutkan pendidikan ke jenjang perguruan tinggi. Persaingan yang tidak mudah untuk masuk ke perguruan tinggi membuat gap year menjadi pilihan yang digunakan untuk mempersiapkan diri. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan konsep diri dan pengambilan keputusan pada alumni Sekolah Menengah Atas yang menjalani gap year. Metode penelitian yang digunakan ialah kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional Pearson's Product Moment. Penelitian ini melibatkan 103 alumni SMA seluruh daerah di Indonesia yang menjalani gap year dengan teknik snowball sampling. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan skala psikologis sesuai dengan variabel yang kemudian disebar secara daring dengan google form. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis korelasi product moment oleh Karl Pearson. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa, variabel konsep diri dan pengambilan keputusan berkorelasi positif dengan tingkat kekuatan signifikansi yang lemah dengan nilai (r = 0,211 dan sig. = 0,016). Dapat disimpulkan bahwa, konsep diri merupakan salah satu faktor yang dapat meningkatkan kemampuan pengambilan keputusan pada alumni SMA yang menjalani gap year. Informasi terbaru pada penelitian ini berimplikasi pada pembentukan konsep yang baik oleh para alumni SMA agar lebih optimis dalam melakukan pengambilan keputusan untuk menjalani masa gap year.

#### ABSTRACT

Gap year is a period of time used by high school alumni to prepare themselves for continuing their education at university level. The competition that is not easy to get into college makes a gap year an option for preparing yourself. This research aims to analyze the relationship between self-concept and decision making in high school alumni who are undergoing a gap year. The research method used is quantitative with a Pearson's Product Moment correlational design. This research involved 103 high school alumni from all regions in Indonesia who underwent a gap year using the snowball sampling technique. Data collection was carried out using a psychological scale according to the variables which was then distributed online using a Google form. Data were analyzed using product moment correlation analysis by Karl Pearson. The results of this study show that the variables of self-concept and decision making are positively correlated with a weak level of significance with value (r = 0.211 and sig. = 0.016). It can be concluded that self-concept is one of the factors that can improve the decision-making ability of high school alumni who are undergoing a gap year. The latest information in this research has implications for the formation of good concepts by high school alumni to be more optimistic in making decisions about undergoing a gap year.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Gap Year Association defines gap year as a period of time when an individual takes a break from learning to deepen their academic and professional abilities. This period is done after completing high school (SMA) or before entering the workforce. Gap year is done by individuals to take time for themselves to develop themselves. The gap year period is carried out for approximately 12 months, but this gap year period is flexible and is not tied to the length of time used by the person taking the gap year. High school (SMA) alumni are the group that usually takes the most gap years. Based on data accessed from the official LTMPT (Official Higher Education Entrance Institution) website, to enter state universities, alumni from Senior High Schools (SMA) can take part in selections that are divided into two

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types, namely Achievement-Based National Selection (SNBP), Test-Based National Selection (SNBT), and independent exams. However, several previous studies have stated that there are still many alumni who graduated from Senior High Schools or SMA who do not continue their education to college (Lutfi, 2018; Maliha, 2023). There are several reasons why high school alumni do not want to continue their education to the next level. In fact, Education has an important role in improving human resources (Atun et al., 2023; Lestari & Nuryanti, 2022; Yudhaputri, 2020; Ansori, 2015). Likewise, getting an education at a university is also very important to do (Lubis et al., 2022; Yunus et al., 2021).

According to data collected by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2020, out of 3.6 million high school graduates, only around 1.3 million students continued on to college. This is due to the phenomenon of increasing population dominated by individuals of productive age in Indonesia, so competition is also higher. High competition is because there are more people of productive age than non-productive age, which indirectly tightens the university entrance selection for prospective students. However, there are also groups of high school graduates who choose to take a gap year before continuing on to college to increase their chances of being accepted at state universities. Based on the results of the initial data collection, the researcher concluded that the decision to take a gap year was made with considerations such as determining the goals to be achieved during the gap year. The choices that high school students have after graduating are not only continuing their education to college or taking a gap year, but there are also many other alternatives such as applying for a job, being unemployed, or getting married. These choices are the most common options taken by students who have graduated from high school.

Engkoswara in several studies defines decision making as the process of determining the best alternative in facing or handling problems (Huliatunisa et al., 2023; Sinaga, 2023). Therefore, decision making cannot be done hastily. Decision making should consider the best alternatives to deal with existing problems. Good decision making must also be done by high school graduates. The decision to continue to college made by the student is also inseparable from the role of self-concept. Self-concept is defined as a person's perception of himself (Mardikaningsih & Putra, 2021; Pribadi et al., 2021; Irawan, 2017; Widiarti, 2017). Self-concept can be formed through interactions carried out by the person (Asri, 2020; Nurhaini, 2018; Ananda & Sawitri, 2015). A student has a self-concept consisting of a negative self-concept and a positive self-concept. An individual who has a positive self-concept will tend to be able to accept their situation, be more confident in their ability to overcome a problem, have the awareness that not everyone will have the same feelings, and be able to develop the potential that is within them. Meanwhile, individuals with a negative self-concept will tend to be too sensitive to criticism of themselves, have a pessimistic nature, and always feel that many people do not like them (Rezi, 2022; Seo et al., 2019).

Based on several existing studies, it has been known how important a good self-concept is for high school students. Previous studies have also revealed that there is a positive relationship between students' cognitive work systems and self-concepts which will have an impact on each individual's decision-making (Mutmainah & Muslikah, 2023; Aar et al., 2019). Research by Mutmainah and Muslikah clearly shows that decision making has a significant positive relationship with an individual's self-concept, but there are other factors such as optimism that act as intermediaries before students can make decisions. Judging from several studies, external and internal factors outside of self-concept will influence decision making. However, in this study the researcher will focus on the relationship between self-concept and decision making.

There are not many studies discussing the phenomenon of high school alumni who undergo a gap year, so researchers are interested in studying this phenomenon further. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relationship between self-concept and decision-making in high school alumni who undergo a gap year. The latest information in this study is expected to provide information on how alumni who undergo a gap year form a positive self-concept, so that they choose to do a gap year before continuing their education to higher education.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a quantitative method with a correlational design to analyze the relationship between self-concept (independent variable) and decision making (dependent variable). Participants in this study consisted of 103 alumni of Senior High Schools (SMA) throughout Indonesia who underwent a gap year. The participant demographic table can be presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Participant Demographics Table

No	Participant Classification	Information	Frequency	Percentage
1	Candan	Man	42	41%
1	Gender	Woman	61	59%
		Total	103	100%

No	Participant Classification	Information	Frequency	Percentage
_	D	Java Island	95	92.2%
2	Domicile	Outside Java Island	8	7.8%
		Total	103	100%

The research data were collected using a psychological scale according to the variables which were then distributed online with a google form. During the filling process, participants will be directed to fill out an informed consent before filling out the questionnaire. The psychological scale questionnaire used in this study is the self-concept scale and the decision-making scale. Self-concept is measured using the Self-Concept Questionnaire which is based on five aspects, namely: contentment and worthiness, attractiveness and approval by others, determinism, confidence and value of existence, and resilience.

The self-concept scale was translated into Indonesian by the researcher by adjusting the research context which was then validated by expert judgment. The number of self-concept scale items in this study was fifteen favorable items and five unfavorable items using the Likert model where there would be five answers, namely: Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS). The results of the item discrimination test showed that all items passed with a total correlation score ranging from 0.364 to 0.698 and a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.897.

Decision making was measured using the Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire which uses four main aspects, such as vigilance, hypervigilance, buck-passing, and procrastination. Then, the decision-making scale was translated by the researcher into Indonesian which was adjusted to the context of the research which was validated by expert judgment. The decision-making scale consists of 13 items using the Likert model, namely Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS). The results of the item discrimination test conducted on the questionnaire showed that all items passed and met the criteria with a total item correlation score ranging from 0.316 to 0.608 and a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.839. Based on the data that has been obtained, the next stage will be processed using product moment correlation analysis by Karl Pearson so that the relationship between self-concept and decision making can be known. The data analysis process will be carried out with the help of SPSS Statistics 24 for Windows software.

#### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

Based on the results of descriptive statistical data, it was found that 103 participants had a minimum score range of 30 to a maximum score of 74 in the self-concept variable with a standard deviation of 9,181 and an average of 54.15. In the descriptive statistical table of decision making, it was found that 103 people had a minimum score of 28 to a maximum score of 46 with a standard deviation of 3,307 and an average of 37.39. Further explanation regarding the results of descriptive statistical data can be presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Self Concept	103	54.15	9.181	30	74
Decision-making	103	37.29	3.307	28	46
Valid N (litwise)	103				

Based on the data above, the level of self-concept of 103 participants is divided into 3 categories, namely low, medium, and high. A total of 4 participants (4%) are in the low category, 69 participants (67%) are in the medium category, and 30 participants (29%) are in the high category. Thus, it is known that the level of self-concept of most participants is in the medium category. Based on the available data, the level of decision-making of a total of 103 participants is divided into 3 categories, namely low, medium, and high. There are no participants (0%) in the low category, 71 participants (69%) are in the medium category, and 32 participants (31%) are in the high category. Thus, it is known that the level of decision-making of most participants is in the medium category. The categorization of research variables can be presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The Categorization of Research Variables

Self Concept Interval	Category	N	Percentage
20 ≤ x ≤ 40	Low	4	4%
$40 \le x \le 60$	Currently	69	67%
$60 \le x \le 80$	Tall	30	29%

Amount		103	100%	
<b>Decision Making Interval</b>	Category	N	Percentage	
$13 \le x \le 26$	Low	0	0%	
$26 \le x \le 39$	Currently	71	69%	
$39 \le x \le 52$	Tall	32	31%	
Amount		103	100%	

Based on the results of the normality test, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z value was obtained as 0.065 with a sig. = 0.200 (p>0.05), this shows that the self-concept variable is normally distributed. Meanwhile, the results of the normality test on the dependent variable, namely decision making, obtained a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z value of 0.079 with a sig. = 0.115 (p>0.05) which shows that the decision-making variable is also normally distributed. The results of the one-sample kolmogorov smirnov normality test can be presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov Normality Test

Variables	KSZ	Significance
Self Concept	0.065	0.200
Decision-making	0.079	0.115

Based on the results of the linearity test, the value obtained was  $F_{hitung}$  of 5.410 with sig. = 0.023 (p<0.05). This shows that self-concept and decision-making in high school alumni who undergo a gap year are linear. The results of the linearity test can be presented Table 5.

**Table 5.** The Linearity Test

Parameters	F	Significance		
Linearity	5.410	0.023		

Based on the results of the correlation test, it was obtained that the self-concept and decision-making variables had a correlation coefficient value of 0.211 with a significance value of 0.016 < 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant positive relationship between the self-concept and decision-making variables. The correlation coefficient value of 0.211 indicates that the relationship between the self-concept and decision-making variables has a positive level of relationship strength, but has a weak correlation. In addition, an effective contribution was also obtained between the self-concept and decision-making variables, which was 4.45%. The significance value between self-concept and decision-making can be presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Significance Value

Correlation	r	Significance
Self Concept - Decision Making	0.211	0.016

#### Discussion

Self-concept is the way individuals view and respond to themselves through experiences that involve interactions with the external environment, such as the circle of friends, family, and work. In order to find an individual's view of themselves, individuals tend to assess themselves by looking at the individual's condition when behaving through the character they have in relating to others (Lodi-Smith & DeMarree, 2018; Ranny et al., 2017). This is related to the explanation of several studies which state that self-concept is divided into two types, namely positive self-concept and negative self-concept (Juliyanti & Pujiastuti, 2020; Octaviani & Kartasasmita, 2017). Judging from this research, in line with their self-concept, it can be understood that high school alumni choose to take a gap year. Gap year is a phase that cannot be done in a short time because of the many considerations and challenges to go through it. Therefore, with a positive self-concept, alumni of Senior High School (SMA) will be optimistic in making the decision to undergo a gap year, while on the other hand, alumni of Senior High School (SMA) with a negative self-concept will tend to be pessimistic in making the decision to undergo a gap year.

This study found that participants had a moderate level of self-concept, meaning that high school alumni who chose to take a gap year had a fairly good self-concept, such as having good control over emotions. In addition, participants also had a strong desire, namely they understood that events in their lives were under the consciousness of decisions made by themselves and could also be consistent with decisions that had been taken. This is supported by previous research which revealed that a good self-concept of an individual can help strengthen decisions that have been taken (Robert & Vandenberghe,

2021). However, this research is not in line with previous research which revealed that self-concept has a relationship with decision making through an intermediary variable, namely optimism (Mutmainah & Muslikah, 2023).

Viewed from the aspect of self-concept, namely Contentment and Worthiness, that the feeling of worthiness and emotional state of individuals who are in good condition have a relationship with decision making, this can be understood from alumni of Senior High School (SMA) who are dedicated in undergoing the decision to take a gap year. The uneasy situation raises doubts among Senior High School students and alumni in making decisions (Bell & Brooks, 2018). With the good mental and emotional condition of the individual, it will be easier for the individual to make decisions. Thus, it can be said that a high state of contentment and worthiness will encourage high school students who have graduated to make decisions that have a positive impact.

The attractiveness and approval by others section show that individuals will see themselves as attractive when they can get acceptance from others, this can be seen from the positive character they have and becomes an attraction for themselves and the external environment. The desire to be accepted by an individual will help in every decision that will be made, especially when it comes to something that can determine how society ultimately views individuals in their social environment. Individuals who have positive characters become an attraction for others, so that the feeling of being accepted can strengthen the individual's desire to make and carry out the decisions taken (Balyer, Ozcan, & Yıldız, 2017). Therefore, the role of the surrounding environment in accepting individuals because of their character and attractive appearance will make it easier for them to make the decision to do a gap year.

Previous research has shown that individuals who learn from their experiences will produce good understanding or make it easier for them to make decisions (Parsons et al., 2017; Yacoubian, 2018). A good perspective on education can be obtained by individuals through education provided by schools so that alumni who will continue their education in college can have an overview of the majors at the university. Therefore, it can be understood that this determinism is related to decision making, namely individual behavior when choosing to undergo a gap year. Of course, an understanding of the decision has been had, so that an overview of the problems or other possible obstacles that will arise can be anticipated.

In the confidence and value of existence section, individuals who have the view that everything that happens in their lives is still under their control through the decisions they make. Previous research shows that individual decision making is related to the individual's perspective on their existence or contribution to a group or environment (Amri, 2018; Johari et al., 2018). This can be seen from individuals who choose to take the decision to take a gap year, namely the feeling of worthiness that arises to be able to complete the process is reinforced by the belief that the serious problems that hinder can be solved through hard work.

In the resilience section, it was found that there is a relationship with decision making. This can be seen through individuals who can be relied on when having to overcome a problem. The way individuals prevent possible future problems by making a plan is related to their capacity as wise decision makers (Shin & Kelly, 2015). To be able to have good decision-making instincts, resources are needed in the form of experience in such conditions, both personally and through observing others, as well as the ability to manage personal thoughts and feelings (Brewer et al., 2019).In addition, in this aspect, it can be understood that alumni who are enthusiastic when facing obstacles have good enough abilities to be able to rise from adversity during their gap year.

The results of this study indicate a positive relationship between self-concept and decision-making in alumni of Senior High Schools (SMA) who underwent a gap year. This explains that the research hypothesis is accepted. Based on the results of the correlation test, a correlation coefficient of r=0.211 was obtained with a significance level of 0.016 (p <0.05). This means that the higher the level of self-concept, the higher the decision-making ability of alumni of Senior High Schools (SMA) who underwent a gap year. The results of this study are in accordance with previous studies which explain that self-concept has a relationship with increased decision-making ability in alumni of Senior High Schools (Adam et al., 2018).

The latest information in this study has implications for the formation of a good concept by high school alumni to be more optimistic in making decisions to undergo a gap year. The limitation of this study is the difficulty in knowing the exact location of alumni from High School (SMA), especially those who are undergoing a gap year. This is also due to the limited information that can be found about gap years in Indonesia. Another problem that is an obstacle is the difficulty in getting informants who can help find subjects without charging a large fee. In addition, the researcher's hope regarding this study is that there is a strong correlation between self-concept and decision making, but it turns out that the strength of the relationship between them is still quite strong. Further research can decide on a more effective method in finding subjects in order to better know the exact location of high school alumni who are undergoing a gap year.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be seen that there is a significant positive relationship between the variables of self-concept and decision-making in alumni of Senior High Schools (SMA) who undergo a gap year. The latest information in this study explains that the two variables have an important relationship. Understanding self-concept helps high school students who will continue their education to college to determine the major they will choose to pursue. Therefore, a supportive environment from the family or the place where they hone their knowledge to take the college entrance exam can provide clarity when determining the choice of university and its major. High school alumni who undergo a gap year certainly face challenges and pressures, both from their peers and family. This is also what can ultimately influence them in making decisions during the gap year. This is because there are factors such as self-confidence and resilience that play an important role in surviving during the gap year and help provide clarity regarding goals afterward. Awareness of positive values within oneself can be built by being around the right people, so that negative feelings that arise when circumstances are less favorable can be reduced. With a good understanding of themselves, high school alumni who undergo a gap year can confidently make choices and can reduce regrets due to wrong choices made.

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