

# Students' Career Decision-Making Difficulties: A Comparative Study Based on Ethnic Background in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

Career decision-making is influenced by cultural context, impacting students' choices and the challenges they face. This study investigates factors contributing to career decision-making difficulties among students from different ethnic backgrounds in Indonesia. A survey was conducted among 601 students from three Indonesian universities, spanning cohorts from 2020 to 2023. Data was collected using a validated career decision-making scale based on the taxonomy of career decision-making difficulties. Analysis was primarily descriptive, focusing on factors that hinder effective career choices. The findings indicate that indecisiveness and dysfunctional beliefs are key factors affecting career decision-making difficulties across ethnic groups. Indecisiveness, characterized by delaying decisions due to anxiety and uncertainty, and dysfunctional beliefs, encompassing unrealistic assumptions about career paths, emerged as significant barriers. While differences in ethnic backgrounds contributed to varying levels of difficulty, high motivation was consistently observed across all groups, indicating an absence of motivational issues. The results underscore the need for culturally responsive counseling in universities. Understanding that ethnic background influences career decision-making challenges can guide counselors in providing tailored support. Ethnically sensitive approaches may address the specific difficulties faced by diverse groups, improving career counseling outcomes. This study highlights the role of cultural factors, particularly ethnic differences, in shaping career decision-making difficulties among Indonesian students. Future research should expand to include a broader range of ethnic groups to deepen understanding of Indonesia's cultural diversity in career decision contexts.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Securing suitable employment post-graduation is a primary goal for many higher education students. However, a significant number of graduates face challenges in achieving this goal. For many students, choosing a career is a complex process that can lead to indecision, which can have long-term adverse effects on their professional, personal, and social lives (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou et al., 2012; Walsh & Osipow, 1988). University life is a transitional period, and students have difficulty making career decisions (Ran et al., 2022). Career decision-making is choosing between two or more options, including seeking a career direction by understanding, weighing, and evaluating oneself in the work world through selecting a particular major, career, or job (Leong, 2008).

Decision-making is about increasing awareness of career-related opportunities and one's identity and understanding the relationship between the two (Brown & Lent, 2013). The literature on career decision-making includes career decisions, career commitment, and career decision-making self-efficacy (Leong, 2008). In Super's vocational maturity, a student must know how to make career decisions by using knowledge and thinking to make a career plan (Sharf, 2013). The concept explicitly states that the ability to make career decisions is an absolute must-have for students. Some career counselors also need help assessing decision-making skills (Brown & Lent, 2013).

Gati's (1996) classification of career decision difficulties is based on decision theory and includes three main difficulty categories, subdivided into 10 specific difficulty categories (Amir & Gati, 2006). The first major category, lack of readiness, consists of three indicators of difficulties: (a) lack of motivation to participate in the process of career decision-making, (b) general indecisiveness about any decision, and (c) dysfunctional beliefs about career decisions. The second category, lack of information, includes four indicators: (a) lack of knowledge about the steps in the process of career decision-making, (b) lack of information about oneself, (c) lack of information about different careers, and (d) lack of information about how to obtain additional information. The third category, consistency of information, includes three indicators of problems in information use: (a) unreliable information, (b) internal conflicts, and (c) external conflicts.

Theoretically, a person's career decision-making process is influenced by four factors (Patton & McMahon, 2001): an individual's genetics and special abilities, including gender, ethnicity, appearance, abilities or disabilities, and other characteristics; environmental conditions; learning experiences; and ability to complete tasks. Previous studies on college students' career choices have found an exciting finding: Male students have more difficulty choosing a career than female students (Fatimah, 2020). Other research on the factors of learning experience that influence the career decision-making process has been reviewed by Yihan (2020), Chinese students abroad, and it was found that the study abroad experience positively impacted international students' career decision-making.

Most prior research in the last ten years has led to a correlation analysis between career decision-making and other variables. Among them is the relationship between career decision-making and family support (Jemini-Gashi & Kadriu, 2022; Neuenschwander & Hofmann, 2022; Parola & Marcionetti, 2022), school and peer support (Jemini-Gashi & Kadriu, 2022), negative emotional state of the individual (Anghel & Gati, 2021), competency flexibility and interest flexibility (Leung et al., 2021), and positive and negative personality traits (Duru et al., 2021).

Studies on career decisions have produced various results. For young people, it has been shown that family support is necessary for the career decision-making process (Álvarez-Justel & Ruiz-Bueno, 2021; Neuenschwander & Hofmann, 2022), and schools should develop programs to help students make decisions in education and career (Álvarez-Justel & Ruiz-Bueno, 2021). Following the findings, adolescents' career decisions are greatly influenced by academic experience and self-efficacy, and the influence of parents, teachers, and peers (Chinyamurindi et al., 2021), as well as a proactive personality and low levels of work stress (Zhou et al., 2021).

Other studies have identified sources of career difficulties, such as the impact of a proactive personality on the process and students' difficulties in career decision-making (He et al., 2021). Difficulties in career decision-making have also been linked to self-efficacy, career decision-making, and career

interests (Natia & Nino, 2020). However, no direct relationship has been found between academic achievement and career decision-making, and developing academic self-concept may help students decide on their career path (Zaini et al., 2021).

Career decision-making difficulties correlate with expectations of self-efficacy and personality traits among high school students (Duru et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the career problems experienced by university students can be transition problems from university to work (Pordelan & Hosseinian, 2020). As is the case with ordinary students, the study results show that the thinking style correlates with the self-efficacy of career decision-making in students with special needs who are deaf (Cheng & Sin, 2021). Graduate students have specific career needs and, regardless of their country of origin, experience difficulties making career decisions, especially in the decision-making stage and dealing with internal and external sources of conflict (Mills et al., 2020). Furthermore, anxiety is highly correlated with negative career thoughts and dimensions of decision confusion and commitment anxiety (Hayden & Osborn, 2020).

Culture is essential in how individuals make career decisions (Lent et al., 2000; W.-C. Mau, 2001). The study of culture and decision-making examines why people from different cultures sometimes make various decisions (Yates & de Oliveira, 2016). Several previous studies have investigated the differences in career decision-making styles of American and Taiwanese students (W. C. Mau, 2000), differences in career decision-making difficulties among white, African, Hispanic, and Asian American high school and university students in U.S. schools (W. C. J. Mau, 2004), differences in the career decision-making profiles of American and Chinese students (Guan et al., 2015), and the differences in career decision-making in American and Chinese students (Ye et al., 2018).

Unlike previous studies, this study attempts to identify factors that influence the career decision-making difficulties of students from different ethnic backgrounds in Indonesia and examine the differences in career decision-making difficulties based on different ethnic backgrounds. The findings are intended to serve as a reference for university counselors. Counselors must be aware of cultural differences when making career decisions to provide services that fit each student's cultural characteristics.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Research Design

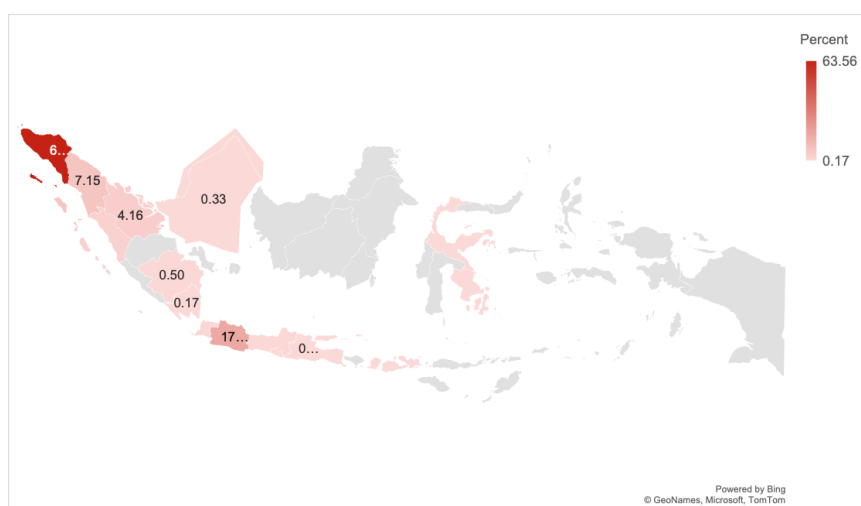
This survey was conducted using a survey research design. This survey was conducted to identify the career decision-making difficulties among university students. The survey was conducted at three universities in Indonesia: Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh, Aceh Province, Indonesian University of Education in Bandung, West Java Province, and Riau University in Riau Province. The survey has been conducted for seven months, from September 2023 to February 2024.

### 2.2 Participants

This study involved students from three universities—a total of 601 students from the class of 2020 to 2023 from various ethnic and provincial backgrounds. Convenience sampling is used as a sampling technique. Convenience sampling is a non-probability method in which samples are taken from the most accessible and available parts of the population. The researchers used participants who were easy to contact, obtained participation, and did not apply inclusion requirements. The survey of students in Indonesia in this study is a pilot study, so practical sampling (convenience sampling) can be used. However, the study results cannot be used to generalize the population of university students in Indonesia. Figure 1 and Table 1 illustrate the demographics of the research sample.

**Table 1.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

No	Characteristics	N	(%)
1	Class of		
	a. 2020	204	(33.95)
	b. 2021	112	(18.64)
	c. 2022	167	(27.79)
	d. 2023	118	(19.63)
2	Ethnics		
	a. Aceh	274	(45.59)
	b. Sunda	100	(16.64)
	c. Jawa	66	(10.98)
	d. Batak	48	(7.99)
	e. Minang	46	(7.65)
	f. Melayu	35	(5.82)
	g. Gayo	25	(4.16)
	h. Bugis	7	(1.16)

**Figure 1.** Sample Distribution Based on Province in Indonesia

### 2.3 Data Collection

Data was collected using a career decision-making scale adapted from the taxonomy of career decision-making difficulties (Gati, 2011). The constructed item has been validated through expert judgment and has been tried out to obtain a valid instrument. This career decision-making scale has been tested for validity and reliability with a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.91. Factors influencing career decision-making difficulties were measured through 33 items using the Likert scale with five answer choice options: (1) strongly inappropriate, (2) inappropriate, (3) hesitant, (4) appropriate, and (5) very suitable for favorable items. Each number of answer choices becomes the score for the item in question. As for the unfavorable items, it is the opposite, starting from a score of 5 for very inappropriate and a score of 1 for very suitable.

Data collection is carried out in two ways: online and offline. Online data is collected through Google Forms and disseminated through WhatsApp. Offline data is collected with the help of lecturers at each university. Lecturers at all three universities help spread Google Form links and ask for students' willingness to fill out research instruments in their offline classes. Students who wish to participate voluntarily in this study will be asked to sign a consent form.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis used descriptive statistics of percentages presented with graphs using crosstabulation between ethnicity and indicators of factors influencing career decision-making difficulties. Categorization based on a mean of response was carried out to determine the categories (very high, high, moderate, low, and very low) on each indicator of factors that affect the difficulty of making career decisions. Following the scale used in the choice of answers to the research instrument (1 to 5), in the very high category, the average response obtained was 4.21 to 5.00, the high category 3.41 to 4.20, the moderate category 2.61 to 3.40, the low category 1.81 to 2.60, and the very low category 1.00 to 1.80.

Since the data analysis only uses descriptive statistics with categories, percentages, and mean of responses, no hypothesis was tested in this study. So, the study results cannot be generalized to a broader population. The results of this study can be preliminary data to illustrate the difficulties of student career decision-making at the three universities that are the subjects of this study.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Findings

Theoretically, three factors affect students' difficulty in making career decisions: readiness, information possessed, and consistency of information. In terms of readiness, the results of data analysis show that most students have adequate motivation (high and very high, 57.91%) to make career decisions. However, most students still have career indecisiveness (high and very high are 58.40%) and dysfunctional beliefs (high and very high are 53.91%). Both of these things can lead to difficulties in career decision-making.

In terms of information owned, the results of the analysis show that 35.44% of students are at a high level and 23.79% of students are at a low level for indicators of students' knowledge of how to make wise decisions, 38.94% of students are at a high level and 28.12% of students are at a low level for indicators of personal information owned, 36.27% of students are at a high level and 24.96% of students are at a low level for indicators employment information, and 44.42% of students were at a high level and 28.95% of students were at a low level for knowledge indicators on how to obtain additional information. These results show that more than 20% of students have difficulty making career decisions related to their information, and more than 35% of students already have information they do not have difficulty making career decisions.

Regarding information consistency, the study results show that 35.61% of students have reliable information supporting career decision-making, and 25.12% still experience difficulties because they get unreliable information. In the conflict indicator, 41.27% of students did not face difficulties making career decisions because they experienced low internal conflicts, and 20.8% of students experienced high internal conflicts in career decision-making. Similarly, in external conflicts, 48.59% of students have a low level of external conflict, and 26.45% of students have a high level of external conflict.

The calculation of high and low in the percentage presented in the previous paragraph is a combination of high and very high and low and very low. Table 2 below contains more specific percentages in five categories (very high, high, medium, low, and very low) for each indicator of student career decision-making difficulty.

**Table 1.** Percentage of Category on Aspect and Indicators of Career Decision-Making Difficulties among University Students (N=601)

Aspect and Indicators	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
<b>Readiness</b>					
a. Motivation	32.45	25.46	29.28	8.15	4.66
b. Indecisiveness	20.63	37.77	32.45	7.99	1.16
c. Dysfunctional Beliefs	17.14	36.77	36.61	8.49	1.00
<b>Information</b>					
a. Knowledge of how to make wise decisions	16.47	18.97	40.77	13.64	10.15
b. Personal information	16.81	22.13	32.95	16.81	11.31
c. Employment information	15.97	20.30	38.77	14.14	10.82
d. Insights on how to obtain additional information	16.47	27.95	26.62	19.63	9.32
<b>Information consistency</b>					
a. Information reliability	11.98	23.63	39.27	17.97	7.15
b. Internal conflicts	6.82	13.98	37.94	22.63	18.64
c. External conflicts	7.65	18.80	24.96	28.29	20.30

The following finding is a descriptive comparison based on the mean of response (min 1, max 5) for each ethnicity on each indicator of career decision-making difficulties. These findings have been summarized in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2.** Mean of Response of Career Decision-Making Difficulties Indicators among Students in Different Ethnic

The description below briefly describes the findings visualized in Figure 2, following the three aspects that affect the difficulty of career decision-making (readiness, information, and information consistency). The readiness aspect in career decision-making contains three indicators: motivation, indecisiveness, and dysfunctional belief.

### 3.1.1 Readiness

Readiness, a critical aspect of career decision-making difficulties, encompasses three key indicators: motivation, indecisiveness, and dysfunctional belief. These indicators provide insight into the factors influencing students' ability to make informed and confident career decisions, highlighting variations across ethnic groups.

**Motivation:** Respondents from diverse ethnicities displayed high levels of motivation toward making career decisions, indicating that this factor does not contribute significantly to their career decision-making difficulties. Notably, students from Bugis, Acehnese, and Malay ethnicities reported the highest average motivational responses. This suggests that despite challenges in other areas, motivation remains a strong point across these groups, underscoring their willingness to actively engage in career-related choices.

**Indecisiveness:** In contrast to motivation, indecisiveness emerged as a common challenge among students of various ethnic backgrounds. High levels of indecision were reported across all respondents, reflecting a pervasive struggle in making career decisions. Ethnic groups such as Bugis, Batak, and Javanese exhibited the highest levels of hesitancy, suggesting that cultural or contextual factors may contribute to this uncertainty. This indecisiveness might stem from a lack of career guidance or insufficient exposure to career opportunities, which warrants further exploration.

**Dysfunctional Belief:** The prevalence of dysfunctional beliefs, characterized by irrational or unrealistic expectations about careers, varied among respondents. Six ethnic groups displayed high levels of dysfunctional beliefs, while two groups showed moderate levels. The Minang, Batak, and Sundanese ethnic groups were identified as having the most pronounced dysfunctional beliefs. Such beliefs could hinder effective career planning by fostering unrealistic goals or self-limiting attitudes. Addressing these beliefs through targeted interventions, such as cognitive restructuring and career counseling, could significantly alleviate career decision-making difficulties.

These findings suggest that while motivation is not a hindrance, the widespread indecisiveness and presence of dysfunctional beliefs among students necessitate strategic interventions. Tailored career counseling programs and culturally sensitive approaches can help address these challenges, equipping students with the tools and confidence to navigate their career paths effectively.

### 3.1.2 Information

The information aspect in career decision-making encompasses four key indicators: knowledge of making wise decisions, self-awareness, employment information, and insight into acquiring additional information. These indicators provide a comprehensive understanding of the informational readiness of individuals across different ethnic groups, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

**Knowledge of Making Wise Decisions:** Among the eight ethnic groups analyzed, respondents from the Bugis ethnicity exhibited the highest level of knowledge in making wise decisions, categorizing them in the "high" knowledge category. This suggests that Bugis respondents possess strong decision-making frameworks, potentially due to cultural or educational factors emphasizing critical thinking and structured decision-making. In contrast, respondents from other ethnicities fell into the "moderate" category, indicating a need for enhanced guidance and training to improve their decision-making competencies.

**Self-Awareness (Personal Information):** Respondents from the Malay ethnicity demonstrated the highest levels of self-awareness, placing them in the "high" category. This indicates that Malay respondents have a well-developed understanding of their interests, strengths, and career preferences, which can facilitate more informed and confident career choices. In comparison, respondents from the other ethnic groups were in the "moderate" category, highlighting a need to promote self-reflective practices and tools, such as personality assessments or career aptitude tests, to foster self-awareness.

**Employment Information:** Across all ethnic groups, respondents demonstrated a "moderate" level of knowledge about employment opportunities and career paths. However, Malay, Acehnese, and Gayo respondents stood out for having the most comprehensive employment information, reflecting a better understanding of job market trends, industry requirements, and potential career trajectories. This disparity suggests that localized or community-specific initiatives, such as career fairs or partnerships with employers, may be more accessible in certain regions, benefiting these groups.

**Insight into Acquiring Additional Information:** Descriptive analysis revealed that respondents across all ethnicities displayed "moderate" levels of insight into how to seek additional information for career decision-making. This indicates that while respondents have a foundational understanding of how to expand their knowledge, they may lack the skills or resources to actively and effectively pursue further information. Introducing training programs focused on research skills, digital literacy, and networking could empower students to proactively gather the information they need to make well-informed career decisions.

Overall, the findings highlight both strengths and gaps in the informational readiness of students across ethnic groups. While certain groups, such as Bugis and Malay, demonstrate strong competencies in specific areas, the moderate levels observed across most indicators suggest a need for targeted interventions. Programs designed to enhance decision-making skills, self-awareness, and access to reliable career information will be instrumental in addressing these gaps and ensuring that students from all backgrounds are well-prepared to navigate their career paths effectively.

### 3.1.3 Information Consistency

The information consistency consists of three indicators: information reliability, internal conflict, and external conflict.

**Information Reliability.** Respondents with high reliability of information based on the average response were from Bugis and Malay ethnicities. Meanwhile, six other ethnic groups are in the moderate category in the information reliability indicator supporting career decision-making.

**Internal Conflict.** The study did not find a group of respondents with high internal conflict. All ethnic groups have internal conflicts in career decision-making in the moderate category. However, respondents from Bugis, Gayo, and Malay ethnicities are three ethnic groups with low internal conflict, so this indicator is not an obstacle to their career decision-making.

**External Conflict.** As with internal conflicts, no groups of respondents are in the high category in external conflicts. Respondents from Bugis and Malay ethnicities are a group of respondents with low external conflict, while other ethnicities are in the moderate category.

## 3.2 Discussions

The traditional view that career decisions are made only once in a lifetime is replaced by the view that they are an ongoing, iterative process that involves creating a career narrative (Di Fabio & Bernaud, 2018; Walsh & Osipow, 1988). Dillard (Abdullah, 2019) lists self-knowledge (knowledge characterized by knowledge of talents and potentials, interests, and personality traits), information about the professional environment (knowledge about the chosen professional environment), and acceptance of responsibility (knowledge related to the professional decision).

The first indicator of readiness aspect in career decision-making difficulties is motivation. Students with high motivation will tend to be excited to determine their career direction in the future. The study results show that all respondents from various ethnicities are highly motivated to make career decisions, especially those of Bugis, Acehnese, and Malay ethnicities. Because career decision-making is a complex process, when students only have high motivation, it is not the only factor that students do not have difficulties making career decisions. However, problems can occur before and during the career decision-making process (W. C. J. Mau, 2004). Issues before the career decision-making process usually arise from a lack of preparation in one or more personality-related areas: Lack of motivation, indecisiveness, internal and external conflicts, and lack of information about oneself. Problems that arise during the decision-making process may be due to a lack of information about oneself, the job, or how to obtain information, unreliable information, or inconsistent information due to internal or external conflicts (Martincin & Stead, 2015).

The next factor in the aspect of readiness is indecisiveness and dysfunctional belief. Such thoughts and beliefs refer to distorted career thinking, unrealistic expectations, various career myths, and pessimistic assessments of personal behavior and careers, which affect each person's ambitions and actions and lead to self-harm (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou et al., 2012). On the contrary, the absence of negative and dysfunctional thoughts helps an individual successfully combine knowledge about himself and the world of work.

The lack of information students own is also one obstacle in career decision-making. Lack of information about oneself or because one does not know one's interests and talents, and lack of information about jobs, alternative options, and how to obtain information are difficulties accompanied by doubts in choosing a job (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou et al., 2012). Additionally, a lack of accurate information about the job market can lead to confusion. Conflicts caused by personal factors, third-party pressure, or external factors often disrupt an individual's efforts to make a particular career decision (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou et al., 2012).

Some social, educational, and professional circumstances and planned or unplanned events influence a person's career decisions (Sharf, 2013). In this case, culture and social environment affect a person's career decision-making. Cultural values produce certain attitudes and behaviors that can build the character of the nation (Fatimah & Suminar, 2022), Among others, work orientation, work improvement, and future life orientation (Sjamsulbachri & Tarsidi, 2018). The following paragraph outlines the cultural values of the ethnicities in Indonesia and their relation to factors in career decision-making.

Bugis are an ethnicity, culture, language, and tradition in Indonesia that has become part of Indonesian culture and existed long before Indonesia was established. Six central values in the Bugis ethnicity are guidelines for the behavior of their people (Irwan et al., 2020; Jannah et al., 2021; Sudirman et al., 2021; Tamar, 2018), namely: (1) *Siri'na Pesse'*, consisting of two words, *Siri'* is individual values and *Pesse'* is social values. *Siri'* is the higher dignity and dignity of the individual, while *Pesse'* is a social-emotional value that is a guideline in interacting with society; (2) *Lempu'*, which is the courage to express the truth and the closest meaning is honesty, telling the truth, and identity; (3) *Acca'*, namely knowledge, intellectuality, and cognitive ability. *Acca'* is a way of appreciating the ability to think and solve complex problems; (4) *Asitinajang*, relevant to speed. It can be understood as a way to fit in with society and find the most appropriate way, attitude, or behavior to respond to others; (5) *Getteng*, which means persistence and can also be interpreted as toughness; and (6) *Akkareso*, which is similar to effort or placing consistent progress towards a goal. It may also mean doing something to achieve something in life. These six central values are the work ethic of the Bugis ethnic group.

Siri' is the fundamental motivation to succeed or motivate a person to achieve a goal (Tamar, 2018). The value of "Siri" symbolizes the self-respect that must be upheld in the Bugis Makassar community, the value of "Pacce" represents responsibility and tolerance, and the value of "Reso Temmangi" represents the hard work, perseverance, and tenacity of the people of Bugis Makassar (Jannah et al., 2021). From the results of this study, it appears that students from the Bugis ethnicity have internalized Bugis cultural values in making career decisions, especially in motivation in making career decisions. This study found that Bugis students are more motivated to make career decisions than other ethnic groups. This motivation comes from applying Bugis's local wisdom values, such as the motivation to travel, entrepreneurship, and work hard (Tamar, 2018). Ultimately, the contribution of Bugis' cultural values affects motivational values, shapes the Bugis work ethic, and ultimately positively impacts his career. In addition, the study results showed that the Bugis ethnicity had the lowest internal and external conflicts compared to other ethnicities that were respondents.

The next ethnicity is Aceh. As one of the provinces in the westernmost tip of Indonesia, Aceh has a rich cultural tradition reflected in language, food, art, dance, and customs (Ibrahim & Usman, 2021). Acehnese proverbs have many values: reliability, helpfulness, patience, persistence, constancy, discipline, responsibility, and gratitude (Ibrahim & Usman, 2021). They are used not only as advice and warnings but also as guidelines for the life of the Acehnese people. *Hadih maja* (Acehnese proverb) reveals that *Meu-ék ta ayôn ngon ta antôk, in bak jôk ji teubit nira*, which informs about doing a job consistently, professionally, and patiently to produce good results. *Hadih maja* in Acehnese culture influences the attitudes and personalities of the Acehnese people, including motivation in making career decisions, as shown in the results of this study.

Next is the Sundanese ethnicity, which geographically refers to the people who live around the western part of Java, including the provinces of West Java and Banten. A Sundanese proverb mentions *Tina Peurih Jadi Peurah*, who is legendary among the Sundanese and means that hard work brings the best results (Angelina & Dewi, 2022). Generally, ancient parents used these words to encourage their children to approach everything enthusiastically, including achieving their dreams. Sundanese cultural values regulate the way Sundanese people must live their lives and livelihoods, namely "*Kudu ngukur ka julur*" (must adjust to ability) and "*Tong sok ketas harupateun*" (do not take rash steps) (Fatimah & Suminar, 2022). These values influence the way career decisions are made.

The Javanese proverb reads: *Suku jaja teken janggut*. This saying means doing something challenging but still enthusiastic (Angelina & Dewi, 2022). There is a Javanese proverb that reads *ngundhuh wohing pakarti, swaying bawana*. This means that everyone will suffer the consequences of their behavior. This saying teaches about responsibility for the choices made (Angelina & Dewi, 2022). However, the study results show that the Javanese tribe is one of the tribes that has relatively high doubts compared to other tribes. In addition, there are stereotypes attached to the Javanese tribe, namely Javanese culture with a delicate and polite character, as well as weak and unable to be frank in conveying a message (Zuhdi & Nuqul, 2022). This character strengthens the study results that the Javanese ethnicity is among the tribes with the lowest internal and external conflicts among other research respondents.

The study results show that Batak respondents have irrational greed and indecision in career decision-making, which are relatively higher than respondents from other tribes. This is related to the habits of Batak parents toward their children. In contrast, in a Batak family, parents control their children's behavior but still provide independence to choose the field the child will pursue or achieve (Parinduri et al., 2020). Parents' affirmation to their children revealed that the roof of the Batak house is higher than the back. It means that the child must be higher/more successful than his parents, which in Batak philosophy is called *panangkohon ma ianakhon sian natorasna*. In another sense, it indicates that

children must be prioritized to be more advanced in living their lives to make their parents proud, which in Batak philosophy, the term is *anak do sipajoloon sibuan sangap tu natuatuana*.

The Malay ethnicity is an ethnic group that inhabits most of the island of Sumatra. The study results show that the Malay ethnicity is one of the tribes with low internal and external conflicts compared to other ethnicities. The results of this study are supported by the findings of previous research on the personality of the Malays, which are formed from the demands of the norms and customs contained in the Malay society (capital personality), including the nature of peaceability or tolerance, which is shown by quickly establishing cooperation, not chatty or talkative, simple traits that are calm, not in a hurry, not greedy and not greedy (Suciati & Agung, 2016). In addition, the Malays would prefer to avoid rather than fight if something was not suitable.

Meanwhile, the Minang ethnicity is an ethnic group that is highly motivated to live in continuous competition to achieve glory, intelligence, and wealth (Suciati & Agung, 2016). This characteristic affects motivation in making career decisions. However, based on the study results, the Minang ethnicity is a tribe with internal and external conflicts that tend to be higher compared to other tribes that are research respondents. This follows the characteristics of the Minang ethnicity, which is more daring to show their existence in the environment so that they will indirectly feel more dominant and bolder in the minority group (Suciati & Agung, 2016).

The Gayo ethnicity is one of the ethnicities that inhabit the Gayo highlands in Aceh. The Gayo community has several values that are the basis of the personality of its people, including Setie (loyalty, commitment, or firm stance), referring to an attitude that does not give up easily to fight for the truth that is believed. In other expressions, it is mentioned that "*ike jema musara ate, ungske terasa gule, ike gere musara ate, pom-poms terasa bangke*", which means that if the heart has agreed, no matter how heavy the challenge is, it is easy to solve. Still, on the other hand, if there is no mutual commitment, then even minor problems can cause significant problems (Marhamah, 2014). These values also influence the career decision-making of respondents from the Gayo ethnicity.

The ethnic diversity spread across all provinces in Indonesia has not been able to be fully represented in this study. Based on the Central Statistics Agency census 2010, Indonesia has 1,340 ethnic groups. Therefore, the respondents of this study have not been able to represent the profile of the difficulty of making career decisions for Indonesian students. This is a weakness of this study. However, this study can be a pilot study for similar studies in the future. The results of this study are expected to provide an overview of the difficulties of student career decision-making at each university, which can later be used as a basis for preparing career guidance programs that are appropriate to the needs to help overcome the difficulties of student career decision-making.

The results of this study have practical implications for how university counselors work. Counselors need to recognize cultural differences in career decision-making. The causes of difficulty in making career decisions may differ between ethnic groups, so they require different approaches. Students considered hesitant in career decision-making may become "normal" in their cultural environment.

Career counselors can play an essential role in this challenging transition stage by assisting high school students in making informed career decisions (Maree & Magere, 2023). When students experience difficulties during career decision-making and lack help in overcoming these difficulties, the quality of performance, life satisfaction levels, and overall well-being can be disrupted (Maree & Magere, 2023), because the primary purpose of career counseling is to facilitate the decision-making process, specifically to help individuals overcome the difficulties faced when navigating the transition of career choices.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results showed that all respondents from various tribes had high motivation in making career decisions. Bugis, Batak, and Javanese are the three ethnicities with higher career indecision compared to other ethnicities. At the same time, respondents from Minang, Batak, and Sundanese have higher dysfunctional beliefs than different ethnicities. Differences in ethnic backgrounds give diverse colors to the difficulty of making career decisions. Future researchers may consider this study's weaknesses to develop a more comprehensive and complete profile of career decision-making difficulties representative of students across Indonesia. This study can be regarded as a preliminary study on the review of the difficulties of student career decision-making in eight ethnicities in Indonesia. Indonesia has more than 1000 other ethnicities that need further exploration. Therefore, the results of this study invite future researchers to continue their studies on the difficulties of making career decisions for students from various other ethnicities in Indonesia.

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