

THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL COMPETENCY AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON GENERATION Z'S CAREER CHOICES WITH SELF-EFFICACY AS AN INTERVENING VARIABLE

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of digital competency and social media usage on Generation Z career choices with self-efficacy as a mediating variable in final year students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University. This study is motivated by the rapid development of digital technology that has changed the way Generation Z obtains information, develops competencies, and determines career choices. Amidst the increasing demands of the world of work for digital skills, students are required to have adequate digital competencies and be able to utilize social media effectively to support their career development. The method used in this study is a quantitative approach with data analysis techniques using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS). Data were obtained through the distribution of online questionnaires to 184 final year students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University who met the research criteria. The results of the study indicate that digital competency has a significant effect on self-efficacy and career choices of Generation Z. The use of social media has a significant effect on self-efficacy, but does not have a significant effect on career choices of Generation Z. In addition, self-efficacy has a significant effect on career choices of Generation Z. The results of the mediation test indicate that self-efficacy partially mediates the effect of digital competency on career choices of Generation Z, and fully mediates the effect of social media use on career choices of Generation Z. These findings indicate that increasing digital competency and effective use of social media can strengthen students' self-efficacy, which ultimately plays a role in supporting the process of determining career choices of Generation Z.

Keywords: *Digital Competency, Social Media, Self-Efficacy, Generation Z Career Choices*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed various aspects of people's lives, particularly in education, social interactions, and the workplace. Generation Z has grown up in an environment heavily influenced by technology, the internet, and social media. This makes them "digital natives", possessing distinct characteristics from previous generations in how they communicate, learn, and plan their future careers. Career choice is one of the most important decisions that determines the direction of an individual's life. This process involves not only choosing a job but also planning and establishing a professional path throughout life. Choosing the right career is increasingly important, especially with the rapid advances in science and technology, which are significantly shaping the job market worldwide, including in Indonesia. (Nwakanma, 2024).

This phenomenon becomes even more relevant when linked to Generation Z, the generation most familiar with technology. This familiarity gives them significant potential to develop innovative startups and contribute to driving the future economy. Globally, Generation Z exhibits distinct career orientation patterns compared to previous generations. Various studies have shown that Generation Z has consistent career aspirations across countries. Barhate & Dirani (2021) stated that Gen Z utilizes technology in their learning and work activities, a pattern also seen in students' active use of digital platforms for career exploration. Numerous studies have shown that social media has a substantial impact on individual career development and employment decisions (Ostic et al., 2021). Therefore, Generation Z demonstrates a high dependence on digital platforms in their career exploration process.

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In Indonesia, Generation Z faces significant challenges navigating career choices amidst the rapidly changing world of work. National journals indicate that digitalization and the transformation of Industry 4.0 have changed the competencies required by the young workforce. Furthermore, unemployment is a major challenge faced by developing countries, including Indonesia, which is still struggling to find effective solutions. The high unemployment rate among young people is not only a result of an imbalance in labor demand and supply, but is also related to how they make career decisions during their education at school or university (Basid & Nisya, 2024a). This underscores the need for a deeper understanding of how digital competencies, social media use, and self-efficacy play a role in shaping the career choices of young people in Indonesia.

Malikussaleh University (Unimal) students also face challenges similar to national and international phenomena. As part of Gen Z, who grew up in a digital environment, students rely heavily on social media and technology as sources of career information. Furthermore, based on student conditions that indicate that digital competence and digital identity significantly influence the job search process, students need to strengthen their digital skills, self-efficacy, and awareness of the importance of personal branding to improve their career opportunities. This local context indicates that the direction of students' career choices is influenced by three main factors: digital competence, social media, and self-efficacy, or the students' ability to adapt to modern career demands.

Generation Z's career choices reflect a process influenced not only by personal interests but also by the ability to systematically plan and interpret career paths. In terms of career planning, some individuals still lack a clear and structured career plan, despite having extensive access to information about the world of work through digital media. Furthermore, career illustration, the ability to imagine and visualize future career paths, is often shaped by idealistic representations of professions on social media. Furthermore, gaps are also evident in career relevance, where career choices are not fully aligned with abilities, personal values, and job market opportunities. Career assessment and evaluation processes are often limited and lack in-depth reflection on experience, potential for self-development, and changes in the work environment. This condition results in the formation of unrealistic career expectations, both regarding career path, income, and job stability. This phenomenon indicates that the quality of Generation Z's career choices is highly dependent on the individual's reflective ability and readiness to continuously assess and evaluate their career direction.

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2022 shows that the open unemployment rate in Indonesia reached 5.86%. This means that out of every 100 workers in Indonesia, approximately 5 to 6 are unemployed. Further demographic analysis shows that the 15-19 age group has the largest contribution to the open unemployment rate, with a percentage reaching 29.08% of the total unemployed. The 20-24 and 25-29 age groups have also consistently ranked among the top three groups with high unemployment since 2020. (Basid & Nisya, 2024) This fact indicates that Generation Z faces significant challenges in determining career choices that align with their competencies and job market needs. Many of them experience difficulties in career decision-making due to low self-efficacy and a lack of career information and guidance during their studies. (Basid & Nisya, 2024).

Digital competency is a crucial aspect in determining students' readiness for the world of work. Digital competency encompasses the skills needed to access, assess, and utilize digital information effectively. Students with strong digital competency tend to be more confident in exploring career opportunities, using technology for personal development, and adapting to the demands of an increasingly dynamic job market. Conversely, students with low digital skills may struggle to navigate career information and personal development opportunities. (Kang et al., 2024). Although Generation Z is known as a generation that grew up with digital technology, reality shows that their level of digital competence does not fully support mature career decision-making. In terms of digital awareness, high technology and social media use is often not balanced with an understanding of digital ethics, data security, and the impact of digital footprints on professional reputation. Furthermore, Generation Z's digital literacy still faces challenges in sorting and evaluating accurate career information amidst the rapid flow of digital information, potentially leading to misperceptions about job opportunities and competency requirements in the workplace.

On the other hand, digital skills and digital creativity have not been fully utilized as strategic assets for career development. Many individuals still use technology solely for entertainment and personal expression, without converting it into productive and economically valuable skills. This situation is exacerbated by a low level of digital critical thinking, where career decisions are often influenced by social media trends without rational reflection on interests, abilities, and job market realities. Meanwhile, social media also has a significant influence on Generation Z's career choices. Platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and YouTube serve not only as communication tools but also as sources of information on job trends, professional experiences, and career inspiration. Students who actively use social media tend to have broader insights into various professions, the ability to build a personal brand, and networks that can support future careers. However, unwise use of social media can lead to biased information or psychological stress, thus impacting the career decision-making process.

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However, the high frequency and length of time spent on social media is often more oriented towards consuming entertainment content than exploring career information, so that social media's potential as a means of professional development has not been optimally utilized. Furthermore, the level of interaction (engagement) of Generation Z on social media tends to focus on passive activities or informal social interactions, such as liking or following trends, without in-depth involvement in professional discussions or career networking. This phenomenon is reinforced by the low use of career-oriented social media, where digital platforms have not been consistently utilized to build personal branding, expand professional networks, or access relevant job opportunities.

In addition to external factors such as digital competency and social media, internal individual factors also play a significant role in determining career choices. Self-efficacy , which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to achieve certain goals, is one variable that can bridge the influence of external factors on career decisions. Students with high self-efficacy tend to be more confident in making career decisions, able to overcome obstacles, and more proactive in utilizing technology and social networks for self-development. However, in terms of self-motivation and self-determination, some individuals still have initial enthusiasm for exploring career options, but lack consistency in sustaining their efforts when faced with obstacles or job market uncertainty. This situation indicates that confidence in their ability to achieve career goals is not yet fully stable, resulting in a less focused career decision-making process that is easily influenced by external factors.

Furthermore, Generation Z's self-assessment and self-evaluation of their potential, interests, and limitations often lacks objective and sustained practice. Many individuals struggle to connect their abilities to the demands of a dynamic workplace, impacting their confidence in their chosen career orientation. This phenomenon suggests that self-efficacy plays a strategic role in bridging the influence of digital competence and social media use on the quality of Generation Z's career choices. Then, the shift in career interests is also a characteristic of Generation Z. Unlike previous generations who tended to choose formal jobs such as Civil Servants (PNS), office workers, or other traditional professions, Generation Z is more interested in professions that emphasize creativity and innovation, including jobs in the entertainment and digital fields, such as YouTubers , content creators , influencers , and other professions oriented towards creativity. This shift shows how digital competency and exposure to social media can influence their career preferences, as access to information, inspiration, and new opportunities is increasingly easy to obtain through digital platforms.

Thus, this phenomenon is interesting to study further, especially among students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University (FEB Unimal), considering that they are Generation Z students preparing to enter the workforce. Research on the relationship between digital competency, social media use, self-efficacy , and career choices is still limited in the context of Indonesian students, so this study is expected to provide empirical and practical contributions. The results of this study can serve as a reference for the development of learning programs, career guidance, and competency development strategies for students to be better prepared to face the challenges of the workforce.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Table 1 Previous Research

No	Title/Name/Year	Variables		Results
		Exogenous	Endogen	
1	Factors influencing student career choice in vocational education in Indonesia: A mediating effect of self-efficacy (Kholifah et al ., 2025)	X ₁ = Digital Competency X ₂ = Psychological Well-Being	Y = Career Choice Z = Self Efficacy	Self-efficacy (SE) significantly influences career choice (CC), with digital competency (DC) and PWB playing a significant role in enhancing SE. Furthermore, SE mediates the effects of DC and PWB on CC, although the mediation effect is relatively low, indicating the need for intensive programs to strengthen SE.
2	Social media use and job choices: the mediating role of work values and self-efficacy. Li F et al (2025)	X ₁ = Social Media Usage	Y = Career Choice Z ₁ = Work Value Z ₂ = Self Efficacy	There is a positive relationship between social media use and employment decisions, with work values and self-efficacy identified as mediating factors in this relationship. Specifically, self-efficacy was found to enhance the relationship between work values and students' employment choices.
3	Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy as a Mediator of Parental Career Support and Vocational Identity (Pratama & Muttaqin, 2024)	X ₁ = Parental career support	Y = Vocational identity Z = Career decision self-efficacy (CDSE)	CDSE was shown to mediate the relationship between parental career support and career exploration and commitment. Maternal support was more influential than paternal support. There was no significant effect on career reconsideration. Parental support indirectly influenced vocational identity through increased CDSE.

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4	Enhancing Generation Z's Role as Digital Natives and Creative Minds in Entrepreneurship Through Self-Efficacy (Sari & Soelaiman, 2025)	X ₁ Digital competence X ₂ creative personality	Y = Interest in entrepreneurship Z = Self Efficacy	Digital competence and creative personality have a significant influence on self-efficacy.
5	The Impact of Self-Efficacy on Career Choices of Generation Z: The Mediating Role of Decision-Making Difficulties in DKI Jakarta (Ananda Basid & Nisya, 2024)	X ₁ = Self-efficacy in career decision-making (career decision-making self-efficacy/CDSE)	Y = Career decisions Z = Difficulty in career decision making	Career decision-making self-efficacy has a significant positive influence on career decisions directly.
6	Self-efficacy in Relation to Career Decision-Making (Mares et al., 2025)	X ₁ = Self-efficacy X ₂ = career crafting	Y = Self-efficacy in career decisions Z = Career crafting dimension	Self-efficacy influences career decision making
7	The Influence of Digitalization and Technology on Generation Z's Career Choices .(Diyanna & Alim, 2025)	X ₁ = Digitalization X ₂ = Technology	Y = Gen Z Career Choices	The findings show that digitalization has a positive and significant impact on Generation Z's career choices; technology also positively and significantly influences their career decisions, and both factors together significantly shape career preferences.
8	Moderating Role of Peers and Social Media in Ghanaian Students' Career Choices and Aspirations (Adzovie et al ., 2025)	X ₁ = Peer influence X ₂ = Social media	Y = Career Choice	Findings suggest that early career choices can limit aspirations, but positive peer influence and career content on social media can boost aspirations. The study recommends intensifying guidance and counseling services, providing relevant career content, and peer mentoring programs in schools.

Conceptual Framework

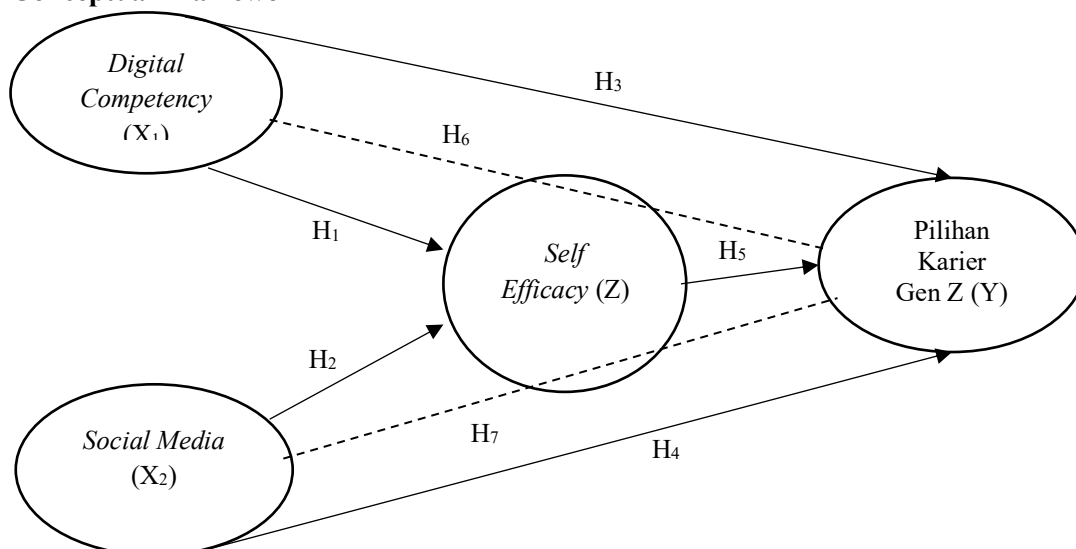


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Based on the figure above, there are two exogenous factors, one endogenous factor, and one mediating factor in this research model. The endogenous variable used in this study is Gen Z's career choice, while the exogenous variables used in this study are digital competency (X₁) and social media (X₂) mediated by self-efficacy (Z).

Hypothesis

Based on the background, problem formulation, objectives that have been written, the following hypothesis is created:

- H₁: Digital competency has a positive effect on Gen Z's self-efficacy.
- H₂: Social media use has a positive effect on Gen Z's self-efficacy.
- H₃: Digital competency has a positive influence on Gen Z's career choices.
- H₄: Social media usage has a positive influence on Gen Z's career choices.
- H₅: Self-efficacy has a positive influence on Gen Z's career choices.
- H₆: Digital competency has a positive influence on Gen Z's career choices through self-efficacy as an intervening variable.
- H₇: Social media use has a positive influence on Gen Z's career choices through self-efficacy as an intervening variable.

METHOD

The object in the research plan by the author is generation Z who are final year students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University with each variable namely digital competency, social media, and self-efficacy as well as career choices of gen Z. Meanwhile, the research location was conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University. Ghazali (2014) states that the population is the sum of all objects or individual units observed in the study. According to Sekaran & Bougie (2019), the population is defined as the entire group of people, events, or interesting things that researchers want to study. So it can be concluded that the population in this study is gen Z who are final year students in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, namely students of Class of 2021 and 2022 who are currently undergoing semester 8 and semester 10 at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University as follows:

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Table 2 Number of Active Students in the 2021/2022 FEB Class

No	Study Program	Amount
1	Management	310 students
2	Entrepreneurship	43 students
3	Sharia Economics	139 students
4	Economic development	151 students
5	Accountancy	266 students
Amount		909 students

Source: Processed primary data.

The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling . According to Sekaran & Bougie (2019) Purposive sampling is a sampling method that selects certain individuals based on certain criteria set by the researcher. The sampling criteria in this study were final year students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University. The determination of the sample size uses a formula Hair et al. (2019) that suggests that the sample size depends on the number of indicators multiplied by 5 to 10. So the sample size in this study is: Number of indicators x (5 to 10). Based on these guidelines, the maximum sample size for this study is $23 \times 8 = 184$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation of Model Fit Test (Model Fit Test)

Table 3 Model Fit Test

Parameter	Fit Criteria	Coefficient	Information
SRMR	< 0.10	0.079	Meet the fit model
d-ULS	> 0.05	0.840	Meet the fit model
dG	> 0.05	0.384	Meet the fit model
Chi Square	$\chi^2 \text{ statistic} \geq \chi^2 \text{ table}$	412,605 $\geq 24,996$	Meet the fit model
NFI	Approaching the value 1	0.739	Ideally
GoF	0.1 (small GOF), 0.25 (moderate GOF), 0.36 (strong GOF)	0.531	Strong GOF
Q ² Predictive Relevance	Q² > 0 : Has predictive relevance Q² < 0 : Lacks predictive relevance. 0.02 (Weak) 0.15 (Moderate) 0.35 (Strong)	Q ² Career Options 0.323 > 0 Q ² Self-Efficacy 0.352 > 0	Q ² strong

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Based on Table 3, the results of the model fit test indicate that the research model meets the feasibility criteria. Therefore, the model can be used to analyze the relationships between latent variables due to its good fit with the empirical data and relevant predictive capabilities.

- 1) SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual): The SRMR value of 0.079, which is smaller than the maximum limit of 0.10, indicates that the model has a good fit between the observed data and the hypothesized model. This means that the difference between the observed covariance matrix and the model covariance matrix is small, so the model is considered fit.
- 2) d-ULS (Unweighted Least Squares Discrepancy): A d-ULS value of $0.840 > 0.05$ indicates that the model structure has no significant deviations and is acceptable. This indicates that the model approaches the ideal relationship expected from the data.
- 3) dG (Geodesic Discrepancy): The dG value of $0.384 > 0.05$, indicates that the model has good global fit, and the relationship in the model does not show significant differences compared to the actual data.
- 4) Chi-Square : The Chi-Square statistical value of 412.605 is greater than the Chi-Square table value (24.996), which means the model is declared fit. This indicates that the model significantly fits the sample data, and the model structure can explain the relationship between variables well.

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- 5) NFI (Normed Fit Index): An NFI value of 0.531, which is close to the ideal value of 1, indicates that the model has a fairly good level of fit, although not optimal. This indicates that the model is still acceptable for describing the data.
- 6) GoF (Goodness of Fit): A GoF value of 0.531>0.36 indicates that the model has a very good level of global fit. This value places the model in the strong goodness of fit category , meaning the model is very suitable for explaining the relationships between latent variables in the study.
- 7) Q² Predictive Relevance : A Q² value of 0.323 for the Gen-Z career choice variable indicates very strong predictive ability, while a Q² value of 0.352 for the self-efficacy variable indicates strong predictive ability. This indicates that the model can relevantly predict latent variables based on their structural relationships.

R- Square (R²)

R-Square (R²) value is used to measure the ability of exogenous variables to explain the variability of endogenous variables in a research model. The higher the R² value, the greater the proportion of the endogenous variable variance that can be explained by the exogenous variables, thus indicating a better predictive ability of the model. In PLS-SEM, the R² value is generally categorized as weak, moderate, or strong according to the value obtained. The results of the R-Square test in this study are presented in Table 4.18 as follows.

Table 4 R-Square Values

Endogenous Variables	R-square	Adjusted R-square
Gen-Z Career Choices	0.496	0.487
Self-Efficacy	0.377	0.370

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Based on the analysis results, an R-Square value of 0.496 was obtained for the Gen-Z career choice variable, indicating that 49.6% of the variation in this variable can be explained by exogenous variables in the model, while the remaining 50.4% is influenced by other factors outside the model, so the relationship between exogenous variables and career choice can be considered very strong. Meanwhile, an R-Square value of 0.377 for the self-efficacy variable indicates that 37.7% of the variation in this variable can be explained by exogenous variables in the model, with 62.3% influenced by external factors. This value indicates a fairly moderate relationship, meaning that the model is able to explain most of the factors that influence self-efficacy, although there are still many influences from outside the model.

Effect Size (F²)

Table 5 Effect Size (F²)

Variables	Digital Competency	Social Media	Self-Efficacy	Gen-Z Career Choices
Digital Competency			0.177	0.073
Social Media			0.089	0.006
Self-Efficacy				0.287
Career Options Gen-Z				

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

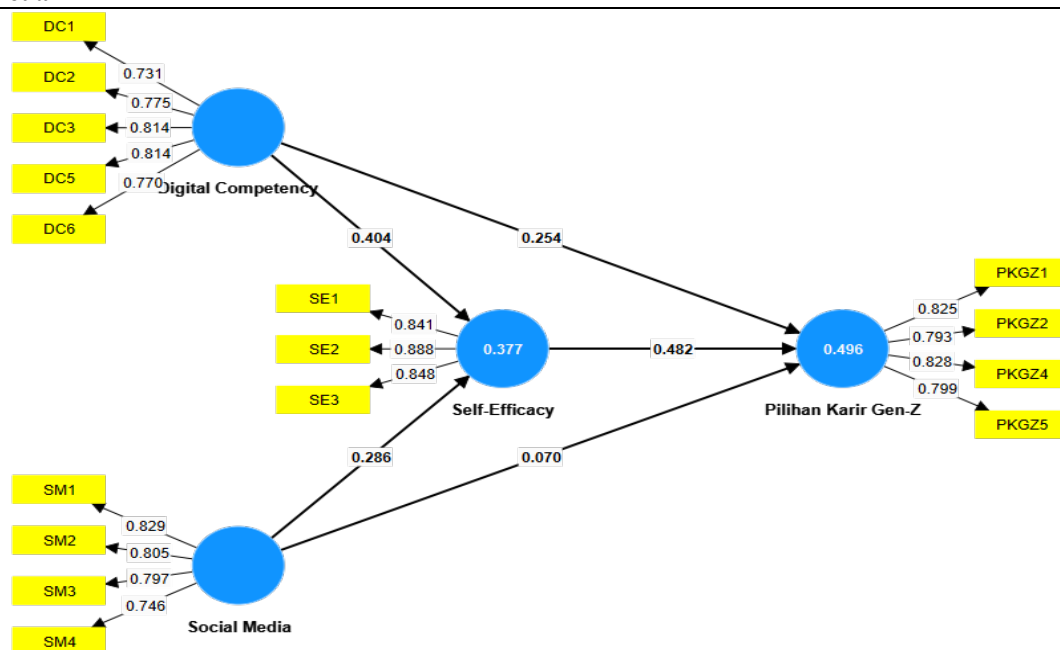
Based on the analysis results presented in Table 4.19, it can be seen that:

- 1) X1 on Z has an effect value of 0.117 or falls into the moderate influence category .
- 2) X2 on Z has an effect value of 0.089 or falls into the small (weak) influence category.
- 3) X1 on Y has an effect value of 0.073 or falls into the small (weak) influence category.
- 4) X2 on Y has an effect value of 0.006 or falls into the category of having no influence.
- 5) Z on Y has an effect value of 0.287 or falls into the moderate influence category .

Output The PLS-SEM algorithm, presented in Figure 4.2, is used to illustrate the research model and the relationships between the variables studied. This output serves as the basis for evaluating the measurement and structural models in the study.

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Direct Effect Between Variables

bootstrapping results, the direct effect between the research variables can be seen in Table 4.20. These results indicate the level of significance of the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables based on the path coefficient, t-statistic, and p-value.

Table 6 Direct Effect Test (Path Coefficient Bootstrapping Direct Effect)

Path Efficiency	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values	Note
Digital Competency -> Self-Efficacy	0.404	0.405	0.080	5,022	0.000	Accepted
Social Media -> Self-Efficacy	0.286	0.291	0.086	3,348	0.001	Accepted
Digital Competency -> Gen Z Career Choices	0.254	0.255	0.084	3,023	0.003	Accepted
Social Media -> Gen Z Career Choices	0.070	0.069	0.080	0.877	0.381	Rejected
Sef-Efficacy -> Gen Z Career Choices	0.482	0.479	0.067	7,179	0.000	Accepted

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing presented in Table 6, the direct effect test between variables in the research model was analyzed using the PLS-SEM method through a bootstrapping procedure. The interpretation of each hypothesis is as follows:

- H_1 : The influence of digital competency (X_1) on self-efficacy (Z) with a coefficient value (influence) of 0.404, t- statistic 5.022 (>1.96) and p value 0.000 (<0.05) shows that digital competency has a significant influence on self-efficacy so that the first hypothesis is accepted.
- H_2 : The influence of social media (X_2) on self-efficacy (Z) with a coefficient value (influence) of 0.286, t- statistic 3.348 (>1.96) and p value 0.001 (<0.05) shows that social media has a significant influence on self-efficacy so that the second hypothesis is accepted.

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- H3: The influence of digital competency (X1) on the career choices of Gen Z (Y) with a coefficient value (influence) of 0.254, t-statistics of 3.023 (>1.96) and p-value of 0.003 (<0.05) shows that digital competency has a significant influence on the career choices of Gen Z so that the third hypothesis is accepted.
- H4: The influence of social media (X2) on the career choices of Gen Z (Y) with a coefficient value (influence) of 0.070, t-statistic of 0.877 (<1.96) and p-value of 0.381 (>0.05) shows that social media has no influence on the career choices of Gen Z so that the fourth hypothesis is rejected.
- H5: The influence of self-efficacy (Z) on career choices of Gen Z (Y) with a coefficient value (influence) of 0.482, t-statistic 7.719 (>1.96) and p-value 0.000 (<0.05) shows that self-efficacy has an influence and significant on Gen Z's career choices so that the fifth hypothesis is accepted.

Indirect Effect Between Variables (Indirect Effect)

bootstrapping results, the indirect effect between the research variables can be seen in Table 4.21. These results indicate the level of significance of the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables based on the path coefficient, t-statistic, and p-value.

Table 7 Indirect Effect Test (Path Coefficient Bootstrapping Indirect Effect)

Path Efficiency	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values	Note
Digital Competency -> Self-Efficacy -> Career Options	0.195	0.194	0.051	3,825	0.000	Accepted
Social Media -> Self-Efficacy -> Career Options	0.138	0.137	0.040	3,469	0.001	Accepted

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing presented in Table 4.21, the indirect effect test between variables in the research model was analyzed using the PLS-SEM method through a bootstrapping procedure. The interpretation of each hypothesis is as follows:

- H6: The influence of digital competency (X1) on Gen Z's career choices (Y) through self-efficacy (Z) shows a coefficient value of 0.195 with a t-statistic value of 3.825 (>1.96) and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). These results indicate that self-efficacy significantly mediates the influence of digital competency on Gen Z's career choices. In addition, the direct influence of digital competency on Gen Z's career choices is also proven to be significant, so that self-efficacy acts as a partial mediator (**partial mediation**). Thus, the sixth hypothesis which states that self-efficacy mediates the influence of digital competency on Gen Z's career choices is declared accepted.

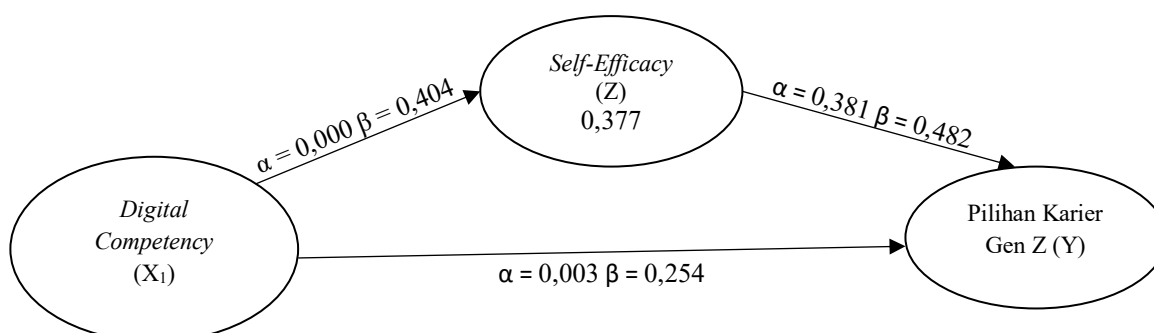


Figure 1 Path Analysis

- H7: The influence of social media (X2) on Gen Z's career choices (Y) through self-efficacy (Z) shows a coefficient value of 0.138 with a t-statistic value of 3.469 (>1.96) and a p-value of 0.001 (<0.05). These results indicate that self-efficacy significantly mediates the influence of social media on Gen Z's career choices. In addition, the direct influence of social media on Gen Z's career choices is proven to have no effect, so that self-

efficacy acts as a full mediator (**full mediation**). Thus, the seventh hypothesis which states that self-efficacy mediates the influence of social media on Gen Z's career choices is declared accepted.

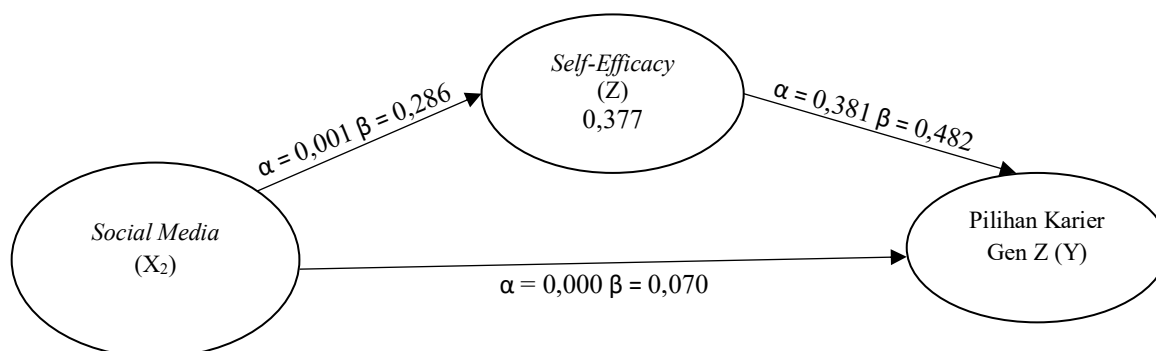


Figure 4 Path Analysis

Discussion

The Influence of Digital Competency on Self-Efficacy

The first hypothesis in this study states that digital competency influences self-efficacy in Generation Z. The results of the hypothesis test show that digital competency has a significant effect on self-efficacy, so the first hypothesis is accepted. This means that the digital competency possessed by Generation Z has a role in shaping individual confidence in their ability to complete tasks, face challenges, and achieve desired goals. This finding is in line with the results of research conducted by Sari and Soelaiman (2025) who found that digital competency has a significant effect on self-efficacy. The results of this study indicate that students' ability to utilize digital technology contributes to the level of self-confidence in carrying out various activities that involve the use of technology. Students who have good digital competency tend to be better prepared to face changes in an increasingly digitalized environment, thereby increasing confidence in their abilities. The findings of this study are also supported by research by Kholifah et al. (2025) which shows that digital competency has a significant effect on self-efficacy. This study explains that mastery of digital technology can help students in completing various tasks and problems more effectively.

Social Media Use on Self-Efficacy

The results of testing the second hypothesis in this study indicate that social media use significantly influences self-efficacy, thus accepting the second hypothesis. This means that social media use plays a role in shaping students' confidence in their abilities to face various challenges, complete assignments, and achieve set goals. Social media has become an integral part of Generation Z's lives, including final-year college students who utilize various digital platforms to obtain information, build relationships, expand their horizons, and access a variety of educational and career-related content. Social media use allows students to gain new knowledge, share experiences, and observe the success of others, which can serve as a learning resource. The interactions and information gained through social media can influence how individuals assess their abilities to deal with various situations and challenges. This research aligns with the findings of a study by Li F et al. (2025), which found that social media use significantly impacts self-efficacy. The study explains that social media can be a means for individuals to obtain information, build connections, and develop knowledge that supports increased confidence in their abilities. Through exposure to various experiences, achievements, and information available on social media, students can gain references and motivation that help them build confidence in their abilities.

The Influence of Digital Competency on Gen Z's Career Choices

The results of testing the third hypothesis in this study indicate that digital competency significantly influences Generation Z's career choices, thus accepting the third hypothesis. This means that students' digital competency plays a role in the consideration and decision-making process regarding their future career choices. In the ever-evolving digital era, these competencies have become a crucial aspect that can influence how individuals prepare for and determine their career paths. Students with strong digital competencies tend to have easier access to information about various professions, skills requirements in the workforce, career opportunities, and emerging industry developments. This information serves as a crucial foundation for determining career choices. This research aligns with the findings of research conducted by Kholifah et al. (2025), which found that digital competency

significantly influences career choices. The study explained that the ability to utilize digital technology allows individuals to gain broader access to career information, competency development, and job opportunities that align with their interests and abilities. Digital competency also helps individuals be more adaptive to the changing needs of an increasingly technology-driven job market.

Social Media Use on Gen Z's Career Choices

The fourth hypothesis in this study states that social media usage influences Generation Z career choices among final-year students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University. However, the results of the hypothesis testing indicate that social media usage does not significantly influence Generation Z career choices, thus the fourth hypothesis is rejected. These results indicate that social media usage by final-year students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University has not been a factor that directly influences their decisions in determining career choices. Social media essentially provides a variety of information related to education, employment, self-development, and career opportunities. However, the availability of this information is not always the primary basis for individuals in determining their career choices. In the career decision-making process, students generally consider various other factors such as interests, talents, abilities, personal values, job prospects, family environment, and academic and organizational experience. Therefore, although social media is widely used in everyday life, its use does not necessarily directly influence students' career decisions.

The results of this study align with research conducted by Li F et al. (2025), which found that social media use did not significantly influence career choices. The study explained that social media is more often used for communication, entertainment, and general information, and therefore does not directly determine an individual's career direction. Career decisions tend to be influenced by more complex considerations involving various personal and environmental aspects. This finding is also supported by research by Adzovie et al. (2025). The study revealed that although social media can provide extensive access to information regarding the world of work and career opportunities, individuals still rely on internal factors such as abilities, self-confidence, life goals, and personal preferences in determining their career choices. In other words, information obtained through social media may not necessarily translate into concrete career decisions.

The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Gen Z's Career Choices

The results of testing the fifth hypothesis in this study indicate that self-efficacy has a significant influence on Generation Z's career choices, thus accepting the fifth hypothesis. This means that students' confidence in their abilities plays a crucial role in determining and choosing their future careers. In the context of career choice, self-efficacy is a psychological factor that can influence how individuals evaluate their potential, consider various career alternatives, and make decisions regarding their professional future. Students with high levels of self-efficacy tend to be more confident in recognizing their abilities, more optimistic in facing the challenges of the workplace, and more confident in determining career choices that align with their interests and competencies.

This research aligns with the findings of research conducted by Ananda Basid and Nisya (2024), which found that self-efficacy significantly influences career choice. The study explained that individuals with high confidence in their abilities tend to be better able to plan and clearly define their career direction. Self-efficacy helps individuals navigate uncertainty, overcome obstacles, and maintain commitment to their desired career goals. The findings of this study are also supported by research by Li F et al. (2025). This study revealed that self-confidence is a crucial factor influencing career exploration and decision-making. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to be more active in seeking career information, more confident in evaluating available opportunities, and more confident in making career choices that align with their goals and abilities.

The Influence of Digital Competency on Gen Z's Career Choice is Mediated by Self-Efficacy

The sixth hypothesis in this study, namely the influence of digital competency on Generation Z's career choices mediated by self-efficacy, is accepted. This means that self-efficacy is proven to significantly mediate the relationship between digital competency and Generation Z's career choices. The results of this study indicate that the direct influence of digital competency on Generation Z's career choices remains significant. This condition indicates that self-efficacy acts as a partial mediation variable. This finding shows that the digital competency possessed by final-year students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University not only directly influences the process of determining career choices but also increases students' confidence in their abilities, which ultimately influences their career decisions. The ability to utilize digital technology allows students to obtain broader information about job opportunities, competency needs in the world of work, and developments in various professions. This finding supports the results of previous research conducted by Kholifah et al. (2025) which stated

that self-efficacy plays a role in mediating the relationship between digital competency and career choices. The study explained that individuals who have good digital competency tend to have higher confidence in their abilities to face the demands of the world of work.

The Influence of Social Media on Gen Z's Career Choices is Mediated by Self-Efficacy

The seventh hypothesis in this study, namely the influence of social media use on Generation Z's career choices mediated by self-efficacy, is accepted. This means that self-efficacy is proven to significantly mediate the relationship between social media use and Generation Z's career choices. The results of this study indicate that the direct influence of social media use on Generation Z's career choices is not proven to be significant. This condition indicates that self-efficacy acts as a full mediation variable. In other words, social media use does not directly influence Generation Z's career choices, but this influence can occur through an increase in an individual's self-efficacy. Therefore, self-efficacy is the main mechanism that bridges the relationship between social media use and Generation Z's career choices.

These findings indicate that social media use by final-year students at the Faculty of Economics and Business at Malikussaleh University does not automatically influence their career decisions. While social media provides a variety of information about the world of work, career opportunities, skills development, and others' professional experiences, this information may not directly inform career choices. However, when social media use increases students' confidence in their abilities, it can indirectly influence their career decision-making process. These findings align with research conducted by Li F et al. (2025), which demonstrated that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in bridging the influence of social media use on various individual decisions and behaviors, including those related to career development. The study explains that social media can be a means of obtaining information, inspiration, learning experiences, and references regarding the world of work, which can ultimately increase an individual's confidence in their abilities. This increased self-confidence then encourages individuals to be more confident in exploring and determining career choices.

CONCLUSION

1. Digital competency significantly influences self-efficacy. These findings indicate that students' digital competency plays a role in increasing their confidence in their abilities. The ability to effectively access, manage, evaluate, and utilize digital technology can help students feel more confident in facing various academic and professional demands.
2. Social media has a significant influence on self-efficacy. Research shows that social media use contributes to the development of students' self-confidence. Social media can be a means of obtaining information, broadening horizons, building networks, and gaining inspiration and experience that support increased self-efficacy.
3. Digital competency significantly influences Generation Z's career choices. These findings indicate that students' digital skills play a role in their career exploration and decision-making. Digital competency helps students gain broader information about job opportunities, competency requirements in the workplace, and various career alternatives that align with their interests and abilities.
4. Social media has no significant influence on Generation Z's career choices. Research shows that social media use has not directly influenced students' career decisions. Although social media provides a variety of information related to the world of work and career development, students' career decisions are more influenced by other factors, such as their abilities, interests, career goals, and deeper personal considerations.
5. Self-efficacy significantly influences Generation Z's career choices. These findings indicate that students' confidence in their abilities is a crucial factor in determining career choices. Students with high self-efficacy tend to be more confident in evaluating various career alternatives, setting career goals, and making decisions related to their professional future.
6. Self-efficacy partially mediates the influence of digital competency on Generation Z's career choices. The results of the study indicate that digital competency can influence career choices both directly and indirectly through self-efficacy. Digital competency not only helps students obtain career information and readiness, but also increases self-confidence which ultimately supports the career decision-making process. Thus, self-efficacy acts as a partial mediator in this relationship.
7. Self-efficacy fully mediates the influence of social media use on Generation Z's career choices. This finding suggests that social media use cannot directly influence students' career choices, but it can influence them by increasing self-efficacy. Information, experience, and insight gained through social media will impact career

choices if they increase an individual's confidence in their abilities. Thus, self-efficacy acts as a full mediator in this relationship.

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