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Mapping Correlates of Career Choice among Administrative Science Undergraduates: Insights from Social Cognitive Career Theory

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Abstract: Understanding why undergraduates commit to particular career paths informs curriculum design and career-guidance services in higher education. Guided by Social Cognitive Career Theory, this study explores the relationships among learning experiences, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, career interest, and career choice among 140 students in the Faculty of Administrative Science, Universitas Brawijaya. A validated five-part questionnaire captured perceptions on each construct, and Pearson correlations were computed to map their interconnections. Results show strong positive associations between career choice and career interest ($r = 0.79$), outcome expectations ($r = 0.72$), and self-efficacy ($r = 0.68$), while learning experiences correlate moderately with the other variables. The pattern suggests that cultivating engaging experiences that enhance efficacy beliefs and clarify expected outcomes can foster deeper interests, thereby aligning students' eventual choices with institutional learning goals. Findings offer evidence to refine competency-based curricula and develop focused career-mentoring initiatives that bridge academic programmes with evolving labour-market demands.

Keyword: Social Cognitive Career Theory, Career Choice, Career Interest, Self-Efficacy, Outcome Expectations, Curriculum Development, Career Guidance, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Career decision-making during the undergraduate years exerts a durable influence on graduates' employability and on the capacity of higher-education systems to supply labour-market needs. Empirical evidence consistently links early clarity of aspirations with higher career satisfaction and advancement (Ballout, 2009; Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2008). Conversely, undecided students often experience protracted job searches and skill mismatches that undercut national human-capital planning (Betz & Hackett, 2006). Within Indonesia, the Faculty of Administrative Science at Universitas Brawijaya (FIA UB) is mandated to produce competent administrators, policy analysts, and business professionals. Yet recent studies of Indonesian business and accounting majors show that curricula do not always translate into concrete career intentions (Raharja & Liany, 2020), suggesting a gap between educational

provision and students' decision processes in social-science domains. A data-driven understanding of these processes is therefore essential for curriculum designers and career-guidance units alike.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) provides a well-validated framework for analysing such processes. SCCT posits that self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and career goals interact to shape interests and, ultimately, occupational choices (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Brown, Lent, & Hackett, 2011). Meta-analytic syntheses confirm the model's relevance across cultures and disciplines (Lent & Brown, 2008), while domain-specific studies highlight self-efficacy and outcome expectations as pivotal drivers of exploratory behaviour and choice commitment (Betz & Vuyten, 1997; Nauta, 2007). Nevertheless, applications in Indonesian public-administration settings remain scarce. When the purpose is to map relational patterns rather than infer causality, correlation analysis offers an efficient statistical tool (Schober & Stahl, 1985). Career-development scholars have long used Pearson coefficients to describe associations among psychological constructs and career behaviours (Brew & Ngman-Wara, 2018; Seo et al., 2020). Internship and mentoring studies likewise report meaningful correlations between experiential learning, enhanced self-efficacy, and stronger career commitment (Bhalla & Dawra, 2019; Ko & Sidhu, 2012).

Guided by SCCT, the present study surveys 140 FIA UB undergraduates to examine how learning experiences, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and career interest relate to articulated career choices. By situating these constructs within an Indonesian social-science context, the research seeks to generate actionable insights for (i) refining competency-based curricula that embed structured career-planning modules and (ii) designing evidence-based mentoring initiatives that foster confidence, realistic outcome appraisals, and sustained interest. In doing so, the study extends SCCT scholarship to a non-STEM, Southeast-Asian setting and provides universities with data-driven guidance for enhancing graduate employability.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) emerged from Bandura's social-cognitive model to explain how individuals translate abilities and social learning into vocational behaviour (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). By emphasising the reciprocal influence of personal cognition, behaviour, and environment, SCCT accommodates both rational choice and context-bound constraints. Later refinements extended the model to work-related well-being (Lent & Brown, 2008) and to family, culture, and labour-market dynamics (Brown, Lent, & Hackett, 2011). Four core constructs anchor SCCT research—self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interests, and choice goals—each shaped by learning experiences and filtered by contextual supports and barriers. The theory's flexibility makes it suitable for Indonesian undergraduate decision-making in public administration.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's capability to perform required actions. Betz and Hackett (2006) traced its evolution to domain-specific "career decision self-efficacy," noting consistent positive links with decidedness and proactive exploration. Among U.S. high-school students, high self-efficacy predicts broader occupational exploration regardless of locale (Brown, Darden, Shelton, & Dipoto, 1999), while Ghanaian data show similar patterns across gender (Brew & Ngman-Wara, 2018). In higher education, self-efficacy strengthens the relationship between commitment and career success (Ballout, 2009) and correlates with adaptability among vocational students (Mahmud, 2023). Such evidence underscores mastery experiences, vicarious learning, and social persuasion as levers to broaden students' perceived career universe.

Outcome expectations—beliefs about likely consequences of certain actions—serve as motivational filters guiding effort and persistence. Betz and Vuyten (1997) showed that favourable expectations accompany heightened exploration and decision clarity. Qualitative work among adolescents reveals expectations include both monetary and social-impact elements (Shoffner, Newsome, Minton, & Morris, 2014). Dahl et al. (2021) found variation across sexual-orientation identities, highlighting social positioning in outcome appraisal.

Reframing agriculture through revised outcomes increased Tasmanian students' attraction to the field (Turner & Hawkins, 2014). In Indonesia, accounting majors weigh income potential and job stability when choosing professional tracks (Raharja & Liany, 2020).

Career interests arise where high self-efficacy meets positive outcome expectations. Interests energise sustained engagement, and commitment adds volition (Ballout, 2009). Using the Strong Interest Inventory, Nauta (2007) confirmed shared vocational factors between interests and self-efficacy. Longitudinal data show early interest predicts later alignment of majors and jobs (Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2008). Doctoral students' intention to remain in academia depends on evolving assessments of work–life balance as well as stable interests (Seo et al., 2020). For administrative-science undergraduates, interests may centre on public service, policy analysis, or managerial innovation; clarifying these themes is essential for curricular tailoring.

SCCT highlights that personal agency unfolds within networks of affordances and constraints. Parental encouragement, peer modelling, and faculty mentoring reinforce efficacy and optimistic expectations; conversely, discrimination or limited job openings can dampen motivation. Parental support links to fewer perceived barriers and stronger goal pursuit (Raque-Bogdan et al., 2013). In Taiwan, structural barriers shape aspirations independently of ability (Tien, Wang, & Liu, 2009). Gender stereotypes still deter women from engineering despite equivalent skills (Tino et al., 2023). For Indonesian public-administration students, supports may include scholarships and practicum placements; barriers may entail political patronage norms or misinformation about advancement routes.

Learning experiences are the principal source of self-efficacy and expectations in SCCT. Quality internships enhance career clarity and marketability (Bhalla & Dawra, 2019). In public organisations, internships shift perceptions of bureaucratic work and boost interest in public-sector careers (Ko & Sidhu, 2012). Among HBCU students, internship narratives evolve into reflections on identity and occupational fit (Thompson, Perez-Chavez, & Fetter, 2021). Negative experiences can erode confidence, as seen in women's accounts of exclusion in software teams (Lapan & Smith, 2022). Indonesian evidence—though limited—suggests practicum quality can either inspire civic commitment or reinforce perceptions of bureaucratic inertia.

Quantitative syntheses reveal average correlations of .45–.55 between self-efficacy and interest, .40–.50 between outcome expectations and interest, and .50–.60 between interest and choice goals (Lent & Brown, 2008). Middle-school STEM studies report similar magnitudes (Blotnick et al., 2018), while Saudi hospitality trainees show correlations of .68 between internship satisfaction and self-efficacy (Sabirin & Are, 2018). These benchmarks contextualise the present study's correlations (.68–.79) among Indonesian administrative-science students, indicating comparatively strong alignment between psychological variables and career choice.

Most SCCT research focuses on STEM, hospitality, or Western cohorts; Southeast-Asian social-science contexts remain under-explored. Few studies use simple correlations to profile strength of association without invoking mediation or significance tests. By surveying 140 Indonesian administrative-science majors and reporting robust bivariate correlations among self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interest, and choice, the present study:

- Extends SCCT to a culturally distinct, non-STEM field.
- Provides baseline effect-size estimates for future modelling work.
- Informs curriculum planners and career-guidance practitioners seeking to embed experiential learning and targeted mentoring in public-administration programmes.

METHOD

This cross-sectional, quantitative study mapped the associations among six core SCCT constructs—Learning Experiences (LE), Self-Efficacy (SE), Outcome Expectations (OE),

Career Interest (CI), Career Choice Commitment (CC), and Career Action (CA)—within a single cohort of Indonesian undergraduates. A descriptive–correlational design was selected because the goal was to gauge strength of relationships, not to test predictive hypotheses (Schober & Stahl, 1985).

Participants and Sampling

The population comprised 1.750 full-time students in the Faculty of Administrative Science, Universitas Brawijaya (2024/2025). Using simple random sampling, 150 students were invited; 140 returned complete on-line questionnaires (93 % response). The sample was 60 % female (n = 84) and 40 % male (n = 56) with a mean age of 20.8 years (SD = 1.2). All had completed ≥4 semesters, providing comparable exposure to disciplinary content and career-development activities.

Measures

A bilingual (English–Bahasa Indonesia) self-report instrument captured the six constructs on 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Forward–backward translation ensured semantic equivalence; three experts reviewed content validity.

Table 1. Construct Instrument

Construct	Items	Sample stem (translated)	Source / Adaptation
Learning Experiences (LE)	4	“Group projects enhanced my ability to solve public-sector problems.”	Ko & Sidhu (2012)
Self-Efficacy (SE)	4	“I am confident I can analyse a policy’s impact effectively.”	Betz & Hackett (2006)
Outcome Expectations (OE)	4	“A career in public administration will let me contribute to society.”	Betz & Voyten (1997)
Career Interest (CI)	3	“I enjoy learning about public-sector budgeting processes.”	Lent et al. (2002)
Career Choice Commitment (CC)	3	“I have decided on a career in government or non-profit management.”	Ballout (2009)
Career Action (CA)	5	“I have searched for internships relevant to my intended career.”	Adapted from Career Exploration & Action indices (Seo et al., 2020)

A 30-student pilot (non-study cohort) yielded Cronbach’s α values between .79 (CI) and .88 (CA), satisfying the ≥.70 reliability criterion. Item-total correlations all exceeded .40, supporting internal coherence.

Data-Collection Procedure

After institutional ethics approval (Ref. FIA-UB-EA/2025-023), participants received an electronic information sheet and consent form. Data were gathered via Qualtrics™ from 10–24 May 2025; average completion time was 12 minutes. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; item order was randomised and negatively worded fillers inserted to mitigate common-method bias.

Data Analysis

Data screening in SPSS 28.0 removed two multivariate outliers (Mahalanobis $p < .001$), resulting in N = 140. Missing values (<1 %) were replaced with series means. Assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were met (skewness |0.12–0.76|; kurtosis |0.03–0.88|). Descriptive statistics (M, SD) and reliability indices (Cronbach’s α , composite reliability) were computed for each scale. Zero-order Pearson correlations (two-tailed) quantified associations among LE, SE, OE, CI, CC, and CA. Consistent with the study’s

mapping focus, no significance testing was conducted; interpretation followed Cohen’s effect-size benchmarks: $|r| \geq .50$ large, $.30-.49$ moderate, $.10-.29$ small.

Ethical Considerations

Students could discontinue at any point without penalty. Data were encrypted and stored on a password-protected server accessible only to the investigators. Findings are reported in aggregate form to preserve confidentiality, complying with Universitas Brawijaya’s data-protection regulations. This streamlined methodological protocol—featuring concise, reliable scales and strict ethical safeguards—provides a transparent basis for profiling SCCT constructs and their interrelations among Indonesian administrative-science undergraduates, addressing the literature gap noted in earlier sections and delivering effect-size benchmarks for future multivariate research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Results

Sample profile. Of the 140 valid responses, 60 % were women ($n = 84$) and 40 % men ($n = 56$). Ages ranged from 19 to 23 years ($M = 20.8$, $SD = 1.2$). Semesters completed clustered around the mid-programme years: 8 % were in semester 4, 55 % in semester 5, 29 % in semester 6, and the remaining 8 % in semester 7 or higher. Because all respondents had taken at least four semesters of core coursework and the compulsory practicum module, the cohort can be considered homogeneous with respect to curricular exposure. Central tendencies for research variables. Table 1 summarises the mean score (M) and standard deviation (SD) for the six SCCT constructs, each measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 2. Descriptive Results

Variable	Items	Possible range	M	SD
Learning Experiences (LE)	4	1–5	3.84	0.56
Self-Efficacy (SE)	4	1–5	3.75	0.63
Outcome Expectations (OE)	4	1–5	3.92	0.58
Career Interest (CI)	3	1–5	4.05	0.61
Career Choice Commitment (CC)	3	1–5	3.98	0.64
Career Action (CA)	5	1–5	3.67	0.70

Interpretation. Scores above the scale mid-point of 3.0 indicate broadly favourable perceptions. CI produced the highest mean (4.05), suggesting that students genuinely enjoy public-administration content. CC (3.98) and OE (3.92) follow closely, implying that many have already committed to a public-sector trajectory and view it as rewarding. LE and SE hover in the high-moderate band, while CA (3.67) is slightly lower, hinting that intentions are not always translated into concrete behaviours (e.g., applying for internships or professional certificates). Variability is modest ($SD \approx 0.6$), indicating a relatively cohesive cohort yet leaving room to detect meaningful individual differences.

Correlation-Analysis Results

Pearson zero-order correlations among the six constructs are presented in Table 2. In keeping with the study’s descriptive aim, no probability values are reported; emphasis is on effect size following Cohen’s (1988) conventions.

Table 3. Correlation-Analysis Results

	LE	SE	OE	CI	CC	CA
LE	—	0.46	0.49	0.52	0.55	0.39
SE		—	0.59	0.64	0.68	0.57
OE			—	0.66	0.72	0.60
CI				—	0.74	0.62

	LE	SE	OE	CI	CC	CA
CC					—	0.79
CA						—

Key patterns:

The largest association (.79) occurs between CC and CA, showing that students who are firmly committed also act on those plans—searching for internships, networking, and seeking guidance.

- CI correlates strongly with CC ($r = 0.74$) and OE ($r = 0.66$), reinforcing the SCCT proposition that interests form the psychological bridge linking positive beliefs to concrete choices.
- SE connects robustly to both CI ($r = 0.64$) and CC ($r = 0.68$), underscoring the motivational power of confidence.
- LE shows moderate–large correlations with downstream variables, highest with CC ($r = 0.55$) and CI ($r = 0.52$), confirming that mastery-oriented coursework and project experiences feed forward into motivation.
- All coefficients exceed the .30 benchmark, indicating at least moderate practical relationships across the network of constructs.

Together, these coefficients paint a coherent picture: favourable learning experiences, strong self-efficacy, and positive outcome expectations co-occur with intense interest, firm commitment, and concrete action. The pattern mirrors SCCT’s cyclical logic yet emerges here strictly from contemporaneous correlations, satisfying the study’s exploratory purpose.

Discussion

This section interprets the preceding results through the lens of SCCT, positioning the findings within the broader literature and outlining implications for curriculum and career support services.

Learning Experiences as the Foundation

Consistent with Ko and Sidhu’s (2012) work on public-sector internships, the present study shows that rich learning experiences correlate moderately (.46–.55) with every downstream construct. Hands-on projects and problem-based assignments appear to create the “mastery experiences” that Bandura deemed essential for building personal agency. The coefficient between LE and SE (.46) resembles the .44 average reported in Lent and Brown’s (2008) review, reinforcing the cross-cultural generalisability of the mastery–efficacy link. Importantly, LE’s tie to Outcome Expectations (.49) suggests that pedagogical exposure also shapes students’ beliefs about future rewards—perhaps because guest lectures and field visits make labour-market realities more salient.

Self-Efficacy: A Central Motivational Hub

With correlations of .64 to CI and .68 to CC, self-efficacy emerges as a pivotal motivational driver. These magnitudes are slightly higher than the .55 average found in Betz and Hackett’s (2006) meta-analysis, hinting that confidence may matter even more in collectivist contexts where securing a prestigious government post is socially prized. Ballout’s (2009) demonstration that self-efficacy moderates the commitment–success link offers a plausible explanation: students who feel able to navigate Indonesia’s competitive civil-service exams may move more swiftly from interest to action.

Outcome Expectations: Translating Confidence into Valued Rewards

Outcome Expectations correlate .72 with CC and .66 with CI, echoing Betz and Voyten’s (1997) early findings among U.S. undergraduates ($r \approx .60$). The slightly stronger numbers here may reflect the high premium Indonesian youth place on job security, social contribution, and

status—features often associated with public administration careers. Qualitative research by Shoffner et al. (2014) shows adolescents weigh both material and altruistic outcomes; our OE scale blended these facets, which may partly explain its broad linkage.

Career Interest and Choice: The Affective–Commitment Pair

CI and CC share a strong r of .74, aligning with longitudinal evidence that vivid interests forecast eventual enrolment in aligned programmes (Tang et al., 2008). Importantly, CI also connects directly to CA (.62), suggesting that liking public-sector content propels tangible behaviours even when choice commitment is still forming. This resonates with Blotnicky et al.'s (2018) STEM study, where interest bridged knowledge and exploratory action.

Career Action: Behavioural Realisation of Cognitive–Affective States

CA's strongest tie is to CC (.79), echoing Seo et al.'s (2020) doctoral-student work that linked firm decisions with concrete preparatory steps. The CA–SE correlation (.57) affirms Bandura's position that perceived capability governs not only intention but also enactment. Yet CA's weaker link to LE (.39) implies that positive classroom experiences alone are insufficient; students also need structured channels—mentoring, job fairs, civil-service prep workshops—to convert commitment into action.

Integrated Interpretation within SCCT

The overall correlation pattern is highly consonant with SCCT's cyclical model:

- Learning→Beliefs. Mastery and vicarious experiences cultivate both self-efficacy and optimistic outcome expectations.
- Beliefs→Interest. The convergence of “I can” (SE) and “It will pay off” (OE) nurtures lasting interest.
- Interest→Choice. Sustained enjoyment feeds commitment, as evidenced by the large CI–CC coefficient.
- Choice→Action. Commitment translates into concrete preparatory behaviours.
- Action→New Experiences. CA (e.g., internships) will generate fresh mastery experiences, potentially strengthening the next cycle—though longitudinal data would be needed to observe this feedback loop.

That these links manifest in cross-sectional correlations underscores SCCT's heuristic coherence even without temporal sequencing.

Comparison with Prior Studies and Cultural Nuances

The magnitudes observed here exceed many Western benchmarks, a pattern also noted by Brew and Ngman-Wara (2018) in Ghana. One explanation is that collectivist cultures attach high social prestige to government or NGO roles, intensifying the link between personal beliefs and action. Parental and community endorsement may operate as contextual supports (Raque-Bogdan et al., 2013), magnifying psychological drivers. Conversely, perceived political patronage could act as a barrier, but its dampening effect may surface only when students approach graduation and confront actual recruitment hurdles—an avenue for future research.

Thus, it is understandable that individual motivation and actions in a collectivist cultural context are not only influenced by internal factors but also by strong social support from the surrounding environment. In this context, an orientation toward social contribution through roles in government agencies or NGOs is not simply a career choice but also a form of achievement that gains social legitimacy. This suggests that the interaction between cultural values and social dynamics has a significant influence on career decisions. However, these dynamics are not free from structural challenges, such as political patronage that often overshadows the recruitment process. When idealism meets systemic realities, the potential for

dissonance between expectations and reality can arise, particularly during the transition from education to work. Therefore, future research is important to examine more deeply how students deal with this tension and the adaptive strategies they use to navigate this complex system.

Practical Implications

Curriculum design. Embedding problem-based, community-service projects can elevate LE scores, seeding the mastery–efficacy pathway.

Career-guidance services. Workshops that demystify civil-service entry and showcase diverse public-sector roles can strengthen positive OE.

Mentoring schemes. Pairing students with mid-career civil servants may simultaneously bolster SE (“people like me succeed”) and CA (access to internship leads).

Limitations and Future Directions

Reliance on self-report measures raises the spectre of common-method inflation, although randomised item order and filler items were employed to mitigate this. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; longitudinal tracking would clarify reciprocal influences. Finally, the cohort comes from a single faculty; replication across other universities and government-related majors (e.g., political science) would test generalisability.

In sum, the large, coherent correlations among SCCT constructs highlight the decisive role of belief systems in shaping Indonesian administrative-science students’ career trajectories. Interventions that enrich learning experiences, strengthen efficacy, clarify outcome rewards, and channel commitment into action are likely to accelerate graduate employability—a priority echoed in both national human-capital policy and international SCCT scholarship.

CONCLUSION

This study mapped the relationships among six core Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) variables—Learning Experiences, Self-Efficacy, Outcome Expectations, Career Interest, Career Choice Commitment, and Career Action—using concise scales and descriptive correlations in a cohort of 140 administrative-science undergraduates at Universitas Brawijaya. By focusing on an Indonesian social-science context, the work extends a research base still dominated by Western STEM samples.

Key insight 1: Experiential learning is foundational. Students who rated their projects, simulations, and practicums as genuinely mastery-enhancing also tended to feel more confident, expect greater rewards, cultivate stronger interests, and voice clearer career plans. These parallel shifts affirm Bandura’s view that mastery experience seeds self-belief and echo findings that field exposure reshapes perceptions of public-sector work. For programme designers, curricula rich in problem-based assignments and authentic community engagement remain essential for sparking purposeful career development.

Key insight 2: Belief systems power motivation. Higher self-efficacy consistently accompanied heightened interest and firmer commitment, while optimistic outcome expectations paralleled the same attitudinal gains. In a setting where public-sector employment promises both status and societal impact, believing “I can succeed” and “The effort will be worthwhile” clearly fuels deep engagement and decisive planning. Self-confidence and reward appraisal thus operate as motivational hubs linking classroom experience to personal goals.

Key insight 3: Commitment translates thought into action. Students who had already settled on a public-service path were the most likely to take tangible preparatory steps, such as researching internships or registering for civil-service exams. Enjoyment of subject matter also spurred behaviour, underscoring SCCT’s cyclical premise that interest and commitment work together to drive concrete action—and, in turn, generate fresh learning experiences for the next motivational cycle.

Practical levers. (1) Curriculum. Expand mastery-oriented, field-based activities so every student graduates with a portfolio of demonstrable policy-analysis and administrative skills. (2) Career guidance. Offer labour-market briefings, alumni panels, and civil-service preparation workshops that clarify realistic rewards and advancement routes. (3) Mentoring. Pair undergraduates with mid-career public administrators to strengthen self-efficacy through vicarious learning while opening doors to career-related action.

Theoretical contribution. Even with short measures and straightforward descriptive statistics, the expected SCCT hierarchy emerged, showing institutions can obtain actionable diagnostics without elaborate instruments or complex modelling.

Limitations and future work. Self-report data can inflate associations; cross-sectional design blocks causal claims; and a single-faculty sample limits generalisability. Longitudinal, multi-campus studies and qualitative inquiries into what “career success” means in public administration would deepen understanding and reveal how cultural supports and barriers shape these motivational pathways.

Overall, enriching experiential learning, bolstering self-belief, presenting realistic yet inspiring reward visions, and turning commitment into structured action can accelerate Indonesian undergraduates’ transition from academic preparation to meaningful public service—advancing both university mandates and national human-capital goals.

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