



Table of contents available at [Journal IICET](#)
JPGI (Indonesian Journal of Teacher Research)
ISSN: 2541-3163 (Print) ISSN: 2541-3317 (Electronic)
Journal homepage: <https://jurnal.iicet.org/index.php/jpgi>



The role of parental expectations and perceptions in high school student career choices

Alifkah Alifkah^{*}), Nur Fadhilah Umar, Aswar Aswar, Nurfaidah Ardis
Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received Jul 09th, 2026

Revised Jul 10th, 2026

Accepted Jul 11th, 2026

Keywords:

Expectations,
Perception,
Parents,
Career choices,
Student experiences

ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the phenomenon of parental expectations and perceptions that influence high school student career choices. The study aims to describe student subjective experiences in dealing with their parent expectations and perceptions during the career decision-making process. This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive phenomenology. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations of two 12th-grade high school students and their parents. The results indicate that high parental expectations and perceptions of prestigious occupations often create pressure that limits student career exploration and triggers internal conflict. Conversely, parents who provide support, guidance, and freedom in making career choices can boost student self-confidence to select careers aligned with their interests and potential. The findings suggest that a balance between parental expectations and support for student aspirations plays a crucial role in fostering more positive career decision-making. Therefore, these findings offer practical implications for school career guidance and counseling services to strengthen collaboration among guidance counselors, students, and parents in supporting career decisions that align with student potential, interests, and career goals.



© 2026 The Authors. Published by IICET.
This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-SA license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0>)

Corresponding Author:

Alifkah Alifkah,
Universitas Negeri Makassar
Email: Ikkaalifkah@gmail.com

Introduction

Student development in high school (SMA) is a transitional phase toward higher education or the workforce, during which students face academic and career decisions, as well as the process of self-identity formation and the exploration of various career options (Sinring & Umar, 2023). During this phase, parents expectations and perceptions play a crucial role as a guide in shaping student attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making regarding their future careers (Zahrani & Fakhriya, 2024). The phenomenon of parent expectations and perceptions which are typically high will influence the direction of career choices. Parents generally have certain hopes for their children's future, which indirectly provides guidance and considerations in this process.

Expectations refer to hopes and desires, while perceptions are the views and judgments parents hold regarding their children's career choices. Parents expectations regarding their children's careers can be either realistic or unrealistic. Realistic expectations can encourage and motivate students in developing their careers. However, unrealistic expectations those that do not align with student abilities and desires often cause stress, fear of failure, and internal conflict for students (Hutahaean & Muzzamil, 2025). In addition to expectations, parent perceptions also play a significant role in influencing their attitudes and support toward student career choices. A positive perception of a student career choice will strengthen the student's confidence in pursuing a

particular path that aligns with their parent assessment. Conversely, negative perceptions or a mismatch between parents' views and student interests and talents can lead to confusion, pressure, and uncertainty in career decision-making (Rajasa & Jannah, 2020). Such pressure can result in feelings of dissatisfaction and low self-esteem if the outcomes or decisions made do not align with parent expectations and perceptions.

Research Lestari, (2025) shows that approximately 40% of 12th-grade high school students experience pressure from their parents' expectations during the career planning process. Gradiyanto & Indrawati, (2023) found that 60.55% of 12th-grade students exhibit low career decision-making ability, influenced by family factors such as parental expectations and desires. Students often choose a career based on their parents' advice or the career's popularity in society (Bahri et al., 2020). Furthermore, an international report from the Pathways Report (2026) indicates that 55% of students state that parents are a key factor in decision-making, and as many as 23% of students feel pressured by parental expectations when determining their career choices. This leads students to experience identity confusion and difficulty exploring career paths because they prioritize their parent wishes over their own personal choices.

This suggests that the influence of parental expectations and perceptions on student career choices remains a relevant issue. Many students face the dilemma of whether to pursue their personal interests and aspirations or meet their parent expectations. This situation suggests that student experiences with parental expectations and perceptions are important aspects to understand because they can influence career exploration and career decision-making (Vasquez, 2025). Parents' perceptions of certain professions as prestigious and high-status jobs that guarantee economic stability also shape their expectations regarding their children's career choices (Saritulawah et al., 2022; Pratama et al., 2022).

Various previous studies have shown that parents' expectations and perceptions influence student career choices and decision-making. Psychological support, open communication, and parents' understanding of their children's abilities and potential can enhance student self-confidence, commitment, and career maturity (Sinring & Umar, 2021). Conversely, overly high expectations and parental involvement that fails to consider student aspirations can hinder career exploration, identity development, and student independence in making career choices (Muttaqin & Fitriani, 2025; Sinring & Umar, 2023). In addition, parents' expectations and perceptions are influenced by various factors, such as educational background, family socioeconomic status, parents' career experiences, and the family's social environment (Zahrani & Fakhriya, 2024; Utami, 2024).

Nevertheless, most of these studies still employ a quantitative approach focused on the relationships between variables. Previous research has not extensively explored how students interpret their experiences when confronted with their parent expectations and perceptions during the career decision-making process. Yet, understanding student subjective experiences is crucial for explaining the psychological dynamics underlying career decision-making and providing a deeper insight into the influence of parents on student career choices.

Based on this problem, this study aims to explore student subjective experiences regarding their parent expectations and perceptions in the high school career selection process using a phenomenological approach. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how students interpret the influence of their parent expectations and perceptions on their career choices. In addition to enriching the literature on career decision-making among adolescents, the results of this study are also expected to serve as a foundation for the development of career guidance and counseling services in schools through more effective collaboration between guidance counselors, students, and parents in supporting career decisions that align with student potential, interests, and aspirations.

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive phenomenological research design to gain an in-depth understanding of student subjective experiences in dealing with their parent expectations and perceptions regarding career choices at SMAN. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and structured observations. The research procedure began with the design of an interview guide intended to explore student experiences as well as parent expectations and perceptions regarding student career choices in detail. Next, participants were selected, including two students identified as AN and FY, along with their parents identified as AK and NH, to ensure that the data obtained accurately represented the focus and objectives of the study. This approach is expected to provide an accurate picture of how parents' expectations and perceptions influence student career decision-making processes at SMA.

Data analysis in this study employed Creswell's phenomenological approach, conducted in stages: *epoché* and bracketing to suspend the researchers' preconceptions; (horizontalizing) in-depth reading of the data; (cluster of meaning) grouping themes based on emerging meanings; and the formulation of textural and structural descriptions to detail the participants' subjective experiences, ultimately resulting in a composite description that authentically and deeply summarizes the essence of student experiences regarding their parents' expectations and perceptions in determining career choices at SMA.

Data validity was ensured through methodological and temporal triangulation to guarantee data consistency and relevance, peer review to evaluate the quality of the results, and subjective validity by directly confirming transcripts and interpretations with participants to minimize researcher bias. The entire research process also adhered to ethical principles such as maintaining confidentiality, using appropriate language, and ensuring researcher reflectivity so that the research results would be accurate and meaningful for the development of career guidance theory and practice.

Results and Discussion

The research results indicate that student experiences in dealing with their parent expectations and perceptions regarding career choices are shaped by several main themes, namely: parent expectations regarding their children's careers; parent perceptions of work; parents hope for their children's future; parental support in career selection; student career aspirations; career exploration; and student interpretations of their parent expectations and perceptions. These themes were derived from in-depth interviews with two 12th-grade high school students and their parents and were supported by observations made during the research process.

Based on the interview results, several aspects were identified that illustrate student experiences regarding their parent expectations and perceptions of career choice. These aspects demonstrate how parents shape student perspectives in determining their future career paths.

Table 1. Interview results based on aspects of student experiences

Aspect	Interview Findings
Parents Expectations Regarding Student Careers	Parents want students to choose majors and careers that are considered prestigious, secure, and capable of ensuring a bright future. Students feel that their parents have high expectations regarding their career choices, so they try to align their choices with their families' wishes.
Parents perceptions of employment	Parents view permanent jobs, such as civil service positions or certain professions, as the best career choices because they are seen as providing economic stability, job security, and a good social status. This perspective influences how students view their future career choices.
Parents Hopes for Their Children Future	Parents hope that students will secure decent jobs, have a steady income, and be able to contribute to the family's financial well-being in the future. Students understand that these expectations are a key factor in determining their career paths.
Parental Support in Career Choice	Some parents support their children's career choices by providing motivation, guidance, and the freedom to choose a major or job based on the student's interests and abilities. This support helps students feel more confident in making their career choices.
Student Career Aspirations	Students have career interests and aspirations that differ from their parent expectations. This situation makes students feel they must balance their personal desires with their family's expectations when making career choices.
Student Career Exploration	Students reported that their career exploration process is often limited because they must take into account their parent expectations and views regarding certain majors or jobs that are considered better and more promising.
Student Interpretations	Students interpret their parent expectations as a form of care and a desire for them to achieve success. Parental support is viewed as an important source of encouragement in the career decision-making process. Students also tend to regard information and advice from their parents as paramount, especially when choosing a career.

Interview results show that both participants experienced a discrepancy between their personal career aspirations and their parent expectations. FY revealed that her parents expected her to become a doctor or a civil servant because these careers are considered to offer a more secure future, whereas FY is more interested in fields outside of healthcare. Meanwhile, AN want to continue her education in college, but her parents hope she will start working soon to help support the family financially. These differences led both students to consider their parents expectations in every career decision they made. Parental expectations that emphasize job security, stability, and a sustainable income create emotional pressure and confusion for both students, making career decision-making difficult and influenced by the desire to meet family expectations rather than solely based on the student personal interests and talents (Zahrani & Fakhriya, 2024).

Parents expectations and perceptions play a significant role in shaping student experiences during the career selection process. Parental expectations that steer students toward jobs considered prestigious, secure, and offering a guaranteed future indicate that career decisions are not based solely on student interests and abilities but are also influenced by family values and expectations. For some students, these expectations are viewed as a form of parental care and concern for their future (Qi et al., 2024). However, when these expectations do not align with student aspirations, a dilemma arises that forces students to balance their personal desires with their parent expectations. This finding reinforces the results of a study by Rajasa and Jannah (2020), which states that parental expectations are one of the factors influencing student career decision-making processes.

Parents perceptions of occupations also influence how students view their career choices. Parents tend to view professions that offer economic stability, job security, and high social status as the best options for their children. These perceptions shape how students evaluate various career alternatives, leading them to prioritize factors such as security and future stability over personal interests. This finding aligns with the work of Saritilawah et al. (2022), who explain that parent perceptions of a profession form the basis for their expectations regarding their children's career choices.

Interestingly, students interpret their parent expectations and perceptions as expressions of love and a desire for them to have a better future. This interpretation suggests that students do not always reject their parent expectations but strive to understand the reasons behind them (Damas & Kurniawati, 2025). However, the student experiences also highlight the importance of discussions between parents and students to convey their wishes realistically while still considering the student aspirations, interests, and potential. It's known that parents always provide the best guidance for their children to achieve their desired careers. These findings support the research by Muttaqin and Fitriani (2025) as well as Sinring and Umar (2023), which explains that overly dominant parental involvement can reduce student independence in exploring career options.

Student career exploration is often limited by the pressure to meet their parent expectations, resulting in suboptimal career identity formation and maturity. Students must struggle to find a balance between their personal desires and family expectations, which can potentially lead to confusion and psychological stress (Liu et al., 2024). This highlights the importance of healthy communication and realistic support from parents so that students can explore various career options more freely and make decisions aligned with their interests and potential (Simbolon & Rasyid, 2021). Thus, balanced parental involvement can help students achieve career success without sacrificing their personal aspirations.

In interactions related to career discussions, there is an imbalance in which parents tend to control the conversation and dictate the direction of discussions regarding student educational and career choices. This is particularly felt by female students, who often face limitations in expressing their opinions regarding these career decisions (Pandang et al., 2022). This dominant attitude on the part of parents can cause students to feel burdened and cautious about expressing their opinions, leading them to think long and hard before voicing their desires (Nur et al., 2025). Taken together, these findings illustrate the student uncertainty in the face of high parental expectations, which significantly affects their communication and career decision-making processes.

Observations of students indicate that when discussing career choices that differ from their parent expectations, students tend to display hesitant facial expressions, remain silent, and take a long time to think. Additionally, students often avoid eye contact when trying to express their personal career desires, indicating discomfort and uncertainty in conveying aspirations that conflict with their family's expectations. Student soft and uncertain tone of voice also reflects a lack of self-confidence in expressing career choices that their parents consider inappropriate. If a student speaks in a soft and uncertain tone when expressing career choices that parents consider inappropriate, this reflects a lack of positive verbal persuasion received, which in turn leads to low self-confidence or self-efficacy in career decision-making (Umar et al., 2022 ; Sinring & Umar, 2023).

Parents tend to expect students to choose majors and careers that are considered capable of guaranteeing a secure future. In addition, parent perceptions of certain professions as stable jobs with high social status also influence how students view various career alternatives. On the other hand, some parents provide support through motivation, guidance, and the freedom for students to choose careers based on their interests and abilities. These circumstances lead students not only to consider their parents expectations when making career choices but also to interpret those expectations as a form of parental care and a desire for them to have a better future (Lestari, 2025). These findings indicate that the pressure arising from parental expectations can hinder student career exploration. When students feel they must meet parental expectations that do not align with their interests, they tend to experience inner conflict, anxiety, and self-doubt. This aligns with the research Hidayat et al., (2022), which shows that family support influences the career decision-making process. Conversely, excessive pressure can undermine student confidence in exploring various career alternatives and hinder the development of a mature career identity.

Furthermore, these experiences provide a vivid illustration of the psychological impact caused by expectations that are at odds with student own desires. The pressure to meet parents high standards often leads to significant stress and anxiety; indeed, the fear of failing or disappointing one's family becomes a heavy burden that weighs on student minds daily (Lestari, 2025). In some cases, this triggers a decline in self-esteem and motivation, causing students to feel limited in their ability to fully explore their potential (Ghassani & Anwar, 2020; Rasyid et al., 2023). This situation is exacerbated when students do not receive adequate emotional support, as they feel they must hide their confusion and uncertainty so as not to disappoint their parents (Syarafina & Andriani, 2023). As a result, the career decision-making process which should be a pivotal moment takes place under intense pressure and tends to yield choices based more on external expectations than on the student own persona aspirations.

Subjective experiences also reveal communication challenges between students and parents that contribute to the complexity of this issue. Many high school parents instill expectations based on their own perceptions of prestigious, secure careers that promise a bright future, without always considering the uniqueness of their children's interests and potential (Zahrani & Fakhriya, 2024). This imbalance causes confusion and frustration among students, who feel they are not being heard or understood in the career decision-making process. Open and empathetic communication between parents and children is essential so that the expectations communicated are more realistic and aligned with the student desires and abilities. Students need support that fosters self-confidence and autonomy in exploring career paths aligned with their interests and talents, without excessive pressure from unrealistic parental expectations. Such support is expected to reduce the internal conflicts students experience and strengthen the process of identity formation as well as healthy and independent career decision-making (Rahmadani et al., 2023; Romadalia et al., 2025).

Overall, this study indicates that parental expectations and perceptions play a complex role in student career choice processes. Expectations accompanied by support, open communication, and respect for student aspirations can serve as protective factors that enhance self-confidence and career maturity. Conversely, expectations that are too high and fail to consider student individual characteristics have the potential to create psychological pressure that hinders career decision-making. These findings enrich our understanding of student subjective experiences in dealing with parental influence and provide practical implications for guidance and counseling teachers to develop services that involve active collaboration between schools, students, and parents in supporting career planning.

The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of student subjective experiences in dealing with parental expectations and perceptions during the career selection process. Unlike previous studies, which generally focused on the relationship between parental expectations and career decision-making through a quantitative approach, this study demonstrates how students interpret these expectations as experiences that can serve as sources of both motivation and pressure, depending on the form of communication and support provided by parents. The results of this study reinforce the notion that career decision-making is a process influenced by the interaction between individual factors and the family environment. Therefore, school career guidance and counseling services need to develop strategies that not only focus on students but also involve parents through consultation services, group guidance, and the provision of career information. Thus, open communication and collaboration among guidance counselors, students, and parents are expected to help students make more realistic career decisions aligned with their potential, interests, and career goals.

Conclusions

This study shows that parents expectations and perceptions play a complex role in student career choice process. Parents expectations regarding jobs that are considered secure, prestigious, and capable of guaranteeing a secure future influence how students view their career options and serve as a key consideration in their decision-making. However, this influence is not always negative. Parents who provide support through open communication, motivation, and recognition of student interests and abilities can boost student self-confidence and encourage them to make career decisions that better align with their potential. Conversely, expectations that are too high and fail to consider student aspirations can limit career exploration and create doubts about career choices. The findings of this study confirm that a balance between parental expectations and support for student aspirations is a crucial factor in fostering positive career decision-making. This research enriches our understanding of student subjective experiences in navigating parental expectations and perceptions during the career selection process. Practically, the research results have implications for school guidance and counseling services to develop career planning services that involve collaboration among guidance counselors, students, and parents. This collaboration is expected to help students make career decisions that are more independent, realistic, and aligned with their interests, potential, and career goals.

References

- Bahri, R. R., Simarmata, S. W., & Batubara, A. (2020). The Relationship Between Locus Of Control And Student Career Maturity. *Serunai Journal Of Guidance And Counseling*, 9(2), 72–79.
- Damas, R. R., & Kurniawati, F. (2025). Parental Involvement In Career Decision-Making Among Students In Collectivist Cultures: A Systematic Literature Review. (1), 214–228.
- Ghassani, M., Ni'matuzahroh, N., & Anwar, Z. (2020). Enhancing Junior High School Student Career Maturity Through Career Planning Training. *Jip (Journal Of Psychological Intervention)*, 12(2), 123–138.
- Gradiyanto, G., & Indrawati, E. S. (2023). The Relationship Between Authoritarian Parenting And Career Decision-Making Among 12th-Grade Students At Smk Hidayah Semarang. *Jurnal Empati*, 12 (April), 133–143.
- Hidayat, D. R., Marjo, H. K., Bimbingan, M., Fakultas, K., Pendidikan, I., & Negeri, U. (2022). The Influence Of Family Support And Self-Efficacy On Career Decision-Making Among Students At State Vocational High School 1. *Journal Of Science And Culture*, 43, 33–44.
- Hutahaean, E. S. H., & Muzzamil, F. (2025). When Expectations Become Pressure: Parental Expectations And Performance Anxiety. *Poseidon Journal Of Psychology*, 8, 71–82.
- Lestari, P. A. (2025). The Influence Of Parental Roles On Career Planning Among 12th-Grade Students At State Senior High School 1 Pangkal Pinang. *Ijoc: Indonesian Journal Of Counseling And Education E*, 6 (1), 17–25. <https://doi.org/>
- Liu, T., Yue, J., Liang, Z., & Liu, S. (2024). Career Exploration And Career Adaptation In Middle School Students: The Moderating Effect Of Perceived Parental Expectations. *Journal Of Psychological Research*, 06(03), 33–39.
- Muttaqin, H. G., & Fitriani, A. (2025). The Role Of Parental Involvement In Student Career Decision-Making With An Achievement Identity. *Journal Of Psychological Science And Profession*, 9 (2), 93–105. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jpsp.v9i2.62483>
- Nur, E. W., Danial, A. R. A., Khatimah, H., & Putri, A. (2025). A Grounded Theory Study On The Dynamics Of High School Student Career Choices And Parental Attitudes In The Digital Age. 5 (December), 318–329.
- Pandang, A., Umar, N. F., & Harum, A. (2022). Gender Analysis Of Student Career Self-Efficacy And Implications For Career Guidance Services At State Vocational Schools. *Journal Of Educational Science And Technology (Est)*, 8(2), 105–112.
- Pratama, A., Sasferi, N., & Kholidin, F. I. (2022). The Role Of Family Socioeconomic Status In Student Career Planning. *Indonesian Journal Of Counseling And Development*, 4(1), 44–52.
- Qi, Y., Liu, Y., Huang, B., Xie, S., Liu, J., & Si, J. (2024). How Important Are Parental Career Expectations? A Subtle And Long-Term Influence On Adolescents' Career Aspirations. *Journal Of Youth And Adolescence*, 53(5), 1091–1100.
- Rahmadani, N., Hidayat, D. R., Karlina, H., & Jakarta, U. N. (2023). The Influence Of Career Exploration And Parental Social Support On Career Anxiety Among High Schoolan-Nur Student *Journal Of Guidance And Counseling: Different, Meaningful, Noble*, 9, 190–198.
- Rajasa, P. G., & Jannah, A. T. (2020). The Relationship Between Parents Perceived Expectations And The Choice Of High School/Vocational School Majors Among Eighth-Grade Students At Smpn 1 Balongbendo Pief Gustida Aji Rajasa Ana Tasriyah Jannah. *Journal Of Bikotetik (Guidance And Counseling: Theory And Practice)*, 04 (02), 46–49. <https://journal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/jbk/article/download/10436/pdf>
- Rasyid, N., Husain, A., Nurya, A. M., & Mulinkasari, A. (2023). The Effectiveness Of Career Planning In Improving High School Student Career Decision-Making. *Journal Of Student Talent Psychology*, Volume, 3(1).
- Romadalia, R. N., Lubis, K., & Novirson, R. (2025). The Relationship Between Parental Communication And Career Decisions. *Biblio Couns: Journal Of Counseling And Education Studies*, 8(3), 190–197.
- Saritulawah, A., Bukhari, A., & Setyowati, R. B. (2022). The Relationship Between Parents Perceived Expectations And Independence And Career Decision-Making Among 11th-Grade Students At Muhammadiyah 12 High School In Jakarta. *Ikraith-Humaniora*, 8(1), 11–19.
- Simbolon, N. P., & Rasyid, M. (2021). Self-Concept And Parental Support On Career Decisions. *Psikoborneo*, 9 (2), 391–401. <https://doi.org/10.30872/psikoborneo>
- Sinring, A., & Umar, N. F. (2021). Differences In Generation Z's Self-Efficacy In Making Career Decisions. 2154–2162.
- Sinring, A., & Umar, N. F. (2023). The Influence Of Different Types Of Career Exploration On Career Achievement And Identity Among Generation Z. *Journal Of Educational Science And Technology*, 9(1), 8–18.

- Syarafina, F. F., & Andriani, R. (2023). The Effect Of Parental Social Support On Student Career Planning And Its Implications For Guidance And Counseling Services. *Unindra Pgri Guidance And Counseling*, 3(2), 63–68.
- Umar, N., Sinring, A., Pandang, A., & Anas, M. (2022). The Career Self-Management Scale (Cedle Scale) In The Indonesian Version Of The Social Cognitive Model. *Indonesian Journal Of Educational Studies*, 25(1), 10–20.
- Utami, T. R. (2024). Analysis Of Factors Influencing Student Career Choices: A Qualitative Approach In The Context Of High School Education. *Educatus: Journal Of Education*, 2(2), 34–40.
- Vasquez. (2025). Exploring Student Experiences Regarding Parental Influence On Career Decision-Making. *International Journal Of Modern Development In Engineering And Science*, 4(4), 14–28
- Zahrani, N., & Fakhriya, S. D. (2024). The Relationship Between Perceptions Of Parental Expectations And Career Maturity Among 12th-Grade Students At Sma Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung. *J-P3k: Journal Of Research, Community Service, Education, And Counseling*, 5(1), 86–93.