

Peer Social Support and Career Decision-Making in Adolescents from Broken Homes: A Career Counseling Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between peer social support and career decision-making difficulties among adolescents from broken homes. Adolescents from broken homes often face emotional, social, and academic challenges, particularly in career planning, due to the absence of parental guidance. This research aims to explore how peer support may act as a protective factor in mitigating these difficulties. The study used a quantitative correlational design with 176 participants aged 15-18 years, who experienced parental divorce during adolescence and are in their final year of high school in Indonesia. Participants completed the Peer Social Support Scale and the Career Decision-Making Difficulty Scale. The results indicated a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.365$, $p < 0.01$) between peer social support and career decision-making difficulties, suggesting that higher levels of peer support are associated with reduced difficulties in making career decisions. Most participants reported receiving high levels of peer support and low levels of career decision-making difficulties, demonstrating the critical role that peer networks play in providing both emotional and informational support. The findings suggest that peer support can compensate for the absence of parental guidance in adolescents from broken homes. However, over-reliance on peers who lack sufficient knowledge may lead to suboptimal decisions. The study concludes that peer support is a valuable resource in reducing career decision-making difficulties among adolescents from broken homes, but professional guidance is necessary to ensure well-rounded career planning. Future research should expand to include other forms of family instability for a more comprehensive understanding of this population's challenges.

Keywords: peer social support, career decision-making, adolescents, broken homes, parental divorce



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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is universally recognized as a critical developmental stage marked by rapid psychological, emotional, and social transformations. As defined by Hurlock (2011), adolescence spans from approximately 12 to 21 years of age, during which individuals face profound challenges related to identity formation, independence, and future aspirations. Santrock (2002) emphasizes that these challenges become particularly pronounced in the context of significant life disruptions, such as parental divorce, which has the potential to shape not only an adolescent's emotional well-being but also their future trajectory. Parental divorce, a common phenomenon across many societies, is known to inflict substantial psychological strain on adolescents, manifesting in heightened feelings of insecurity, fear, and confusion (Yusuf, 2014). The prevalence of this issue is evident in Indonesia, where the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) recorded 408,347 divorce cases in 2023, a figure underscoring the pervasive

nature of broken homes in the country. Such societal trends highlight the need to closely examine the impact of family disintegration on adolescent development, particularly in their ability to navigate crucial life decisions, such as career planning. The disruption caused by divorce extends far beyond emotional challenges. Research consistently indicates that adolescents from broken homes are at a higher risk of experiencing academic difficulties, including increased absenteeism, lower academic performance, and diminished motivation (Sari et al., 2023). A critical factor in these outcomes is the absence of consistent parental guidance and emotional support, which plays a pivotal role in adolescent decision-making processes, particularly when it comes to career choices (Apri et al., 2024). Adolescents facing parental divorce often lack the reinforcement necessary to make well-informed decisions about their futures, leading to a heightened sense of uncertainty and confusion. Santrock (2007) points out that these adolescents are at a significant disadvantage when trying to achieve economic and personal independence, as the absence of a stable family environment often disrupts the foundational support needed for career exploration and planning. Hurlock (2017) further underscores that the transition to adulthood becomes exponentially more difficult without such guidance, particularly in terms of career preparation, which is a vital aspect of achieving independence.

Career decision-making is an inherently complex process, influenced by a multitude of factors including personal self-awareness, external familial influences, and the role of peers. As Harren (1979) suggests, career choices are not merely a reflection of individual interests but are shaped by the internalization of various experiences, expectations, and environmental cues. Gati et al. (1996) expand on this by introducing the concept of the "ideal career decision maker," which involves a sophisticated ability to gather, evaluate, and implement career-related information in a way that aligns with personal goals. However, for adolescents from broken homes, this process is fraught with difficulties due to the absence of parental guidance. Research by Rostini & Sa'adah (2022) revealed that adolescents with family instability frequently struggle with low motivation regarding their future careers, a situation exacerbated by both internal barriers, such as diminished self-confidence, and external pressures, including familial discord and economic constraints.

In contrast to the negative effects of family instability, peer support has emerged as a critical external factor that can mitigate some of the adverse outcomes associated with parental divorce. Peers play a central role in providing both emotional and practical support, which can be especially beneficial for adolescents navigating the challenges of career decision-making (House & Kahn, 1985). The sense of belonging fostered by peer relationships can significantly enhance an adolescent's confidence in making important life decisions (Sarafino & Smith, 2012). Indeed, a growing body of literature documents the positive correlation between peer support and career decision-making, with studies by Yustiana & Nurwahidin (2023) and Hasanatul et al. (2023) demonstrating that adolescents with strong peer networks tend to approach career choices with greater clarity and optimism. This is particularly relevant for adolescents from broken homes, who often find in their peers the emotional and social scaffolding that is absent from their family lives.

Moreover, peer support is not merely a source of comfort but a critical mechanism for building resilience in adolescents facing the turmoil of parental divorce. As Rohmah (2023) points out, social support is instrumental in helping adolescents from broken homes develop the resilience necessary to cope with the uncertainties of their circumstances. Lacking parental

guidance, these adolescents frequently turn to their peers for advice and emotional reinforcement when making critical decisions about their futures. Isnaini's (2019) research on the future orientation of adolescents from broken homes highlights the importance of peer support in career planning, emphasizing that adolescents often rely on their social circles to overcome the confusion and insecurity associated with family instability. Peer groups can serve as a buffer against the emotional and psychological impacts of divorce, providing a stable environment in which adolescents can explore their interests and make informed decisions regarding their educational and career paths.

The current study seeks to delve deeper into this relationship between peer social support and career decision-making among adolescents from broken homes. Specifically, this research aims to determine whether peer support can act as a protective factor, helping adolescents from unstable family environments to make more confident and informed career choices. Given the critical nature of career decisions in shaping an individual's future, it is imperative to understand how peer dynamics can influence this process, especially for adolescents who lack the traditional support structures typically provided by family. Theoretically, this research contributes to the existing literature in developmental and social psychology by providing insights into how external support systems, particularly peer networks, can influence the career decision-making process in adolescents facing significant family disruptions. Practically, the findings of this study can inform educators, counselors, and psychologists on the importance of fostering strong peer support systems for adolescents, particularly those from broken homes, as they navigate critical life transitions. By examining both the challenges posed by family instability and the potential buffering role of peer support, this research addresses a significant gap in the literature, providing a foundation for future studies to explore more nuanced aspects of adolescent development in the context of broken homes. In conclusion, the interplay between parental divorce, peer support, and career decision-making presents a complex landscape that warrants further exploration. As adolescents from broken homes face unique challenges in navigating their futures, understanding the role of peer support in mitigating these challenges is essential. This study seeks to contribute to this understanding by investigating the relationship between peer social support and career decision-making among adolescents from broken homes, with the goal of providing both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for supporting this vulnerable population.

METHOD

Research Design

This study utilizes a quantitative correlational research design to explore the relationship between peer social support and career decision-making among adolescents from broken homes. A correlational design allows for the identification of relationships between variables without manipulating them, offering insights into how one variable influences another in a natural setting. The approach is appropriate for investigating whether peer support acts as a significant predictor or buffer for career decision-making difficulties in the absence of adequate parental support, especially for adolescents facing family instability.

Variables

This study investigates two key variables:

1. Independent Variable (IV): Peer Social Support

Peer social support is operationalized using the framework established by House & Kahn (1985), which defines it as emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support received from peers. Adolescents, particularly those from broken homes, tend to rely more on peer support due to the lack of sufficient parental guidance. The Student Social Support Scale, adapted by Kaha (2012), will be used to measure these dimensions of peer support.

Table 1. Blueprint of the Peer Social Support Scale

Aspect	Indicator	Item No.
Emotional Support	Awareness of friends' situations	1, 2
	Willingness to listen to friends' complaints	3, 4
Appraisal Support	Appreciation of positive aspects	5, 6, 7
	Sharing feedback among group members or team	8, 9
Instrumental Support	Providing time for friends in need to solve problems	10
	Understanding and meeting friends' needs	11, 12
Informational Support	Sharing information with friends in need	13
	Willingness to offer physical assistance to help friends	14, 15, 16, 17

2. Dependent Variable (DV): Career Decision-Making

Career decision-making is defined as the process by which individuals choose educational and career pathways, which can be particularly challenging for adolescents from broken homes due to the absence of family guidance (Gati et al., 1996). The Career Decision Difficulty Scale, adapted by Hasanah (2018), will assess the readiness, access to information, and consistency in decision-making among these adolescents.

Table 2. Blueprint of the Career Decision-Making Scale

Aspect	Indicator	Item No.
Lack of readiness	Not knowing one's interests, talents, and the career to choose	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 18, 23
Lack of information	Lack of up-to-date career information	12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24
Inconsistent information	Individuals are not thorough in seeking information	25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34

Population and Sample

The target population for this study includes 12th-grade high school students across Indonesia who come from broken home backgrounds and plan to continue their education at the tertiary level. Since the exact size of this population is unknown, a non-probability sampling method, purposive sampling, will be employed. This technique is ideal when the population

characteristics are specific and difficult to identify using random sampling. Based on Isaac and Michael's sample size determination table (Sugiyono, 2013), a sample size of 176 participants is deemed sufficient for a population size of approximately 500 individuals, with a 10% margin of error. The inclusion criteria for participants are:

- Adolescents aged 15–18 years, in their final year of high school (12th grade).
- Adolescents from broken homes (parents separated or divorced) since they were between the ages of 12 and 18.
- Adolescents who plan to pursue higher education following high school graduation.

Instrumentation

Two primary instruments will be used for data collection:

1. Peer Social Support Scale

This scale, adapted from the Student Social Support Scale by Malecki and Elliott, is used to measure the level of peer support among adolescents. It consists of 17 items, each rated on a 4-point Likert scale (ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*). The scale evaluates four dimensions of peer social support: emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support. The reliability of this scale, previously validated by Kaha (2012), is high, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.97, ensuring that it accurately measures peer support.

2. Career Decision-Making Difficulty Scale

This scale, adapted from Gati et al. (1996), measures the difficulties adolescents face in career decision-making. The scale consists of 34 items, categorized into three sub-dimensions: lack of readiness, lack of information, and inconsistent information. Each item is rated on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. The scale has been validated and adapted by Hasanah (2018) for the Indonesian context, ensuring cultural relevance and accuracy in assessing career decision difficulties.

Data Collection Procedures

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire, which will be distributed either physically or digitally to the selected participants. The questionnaire consists of two sections: one for assessing peer social support and the other for evaluating career decision-making difficulties. Participants will be briefed on the purpose of the study and given instructions on how to respond to the Likert-scale items. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality of responses.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the instruments, content validity will be used, where experts in psychology and educational research will evaluate whether the items on each scale adequately represent the concepts being measured. According to Azwar (2019), an instrument is considered valid if it accurately measures what it intends to measure. Both scales have been previously validated and are widely used in similar studies, ensuring their appropriateness for the current research context.

The reliability of the instruments will be tested using Cronbach's alpha. A Cronbach's alpha value closer to 1.00 indicates higher reliability. The peer social support scale, with a reliability score of 0.97, is already highly reliable. The career decision-making difficulty scale

will also undergo reliability testing to ensure consistency and accuracy in measuring the participants' decision-making difficulties.

Data Analysis

Once data collection is complete, several steps will be followed for data analysis:

1. Assumption Tests

- Normality Test: This test will be conducted to ensure that the data distribution follows a normal pattern. The normality of the data is critical for applying parametric tests such as Pearson's correlation. If the data are not normally distributed, non-parametric alternatives such as Spearman's rank correlation will be used.
- Linearity Test: This test evaluates whether the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is linear. If a linear relationship is established, further parametric analyses will be applicable.

2. Hypothesis Testing

The primary hypothesis—that there is a significant relationship between peer social support and career decision-making—will be tested using Pearson's correlation if the data meet the assumptions of normality and linearity. If the data are non-normal, Spearman's rank correlation will be used instead. The strength and direction of the relationship between peer support and career decision-making will be examined to draw meaningful conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Context, Data Collection and Research Participants

This research utilized two psychological scales: the Peer Social Support Scale, adapted by Kaha (2012) from the Student Social Support Scale developed by Malecki and Elliott (1999), and the Career Decision-Making Difficulties Scale by Gati et al. (1996), adapted by Hasanah (2018). Data collection was conducted through a Google Form distributed via social media platforms of the researcher and their peers. Data collection occurred between June 4 and July 24, 2024, taking longer than anticipated due to challenges in finding participants that met the research criteria. The participants in this study were high school seniors aged 15-18 years, both male and female, with plans to continue their education at the tertiary level. The key criteria were that participants had parents who divorced when they were adolescents (ages 12-18). As the population size was unknown, Isaac and Michael's table for sample size determination was used, resulting in a sample size of 176 participants. Demographic data (Table 3) revealed that 36.5% of participants were male and 63.5% were female, with most participants aged 17 or 18 years.

Table 3. Demographic of Participants

Characteristic	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	65	36.5%
	Female	113	63.5%
Age when parents divorced	12 years	25	14%
	13 years	39	21.9%
	14 years	41	23%
	15 years	36	20.2%
	16 years	24	13.5%
	17 years	8	4.5%
	18 years	5	2.8%
Current age	15 years	10	5.6%
	16 years	26	14.6%
	17 years	65	36.5%
	18 years	77	43.3%

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4 shows descriptive statistics for the two main variables. The Peer Social Support scale had a mean score of 56.62 with a standard deviation of 3.802, and scores ranged from 42 to 65. The Career Decision-Making scale had a mean of 68.38 with a standard deviation of 18.436, with scores ranging from 46 to 111. Table 5 shows the categorization of peer social support. The majority of participants (93.8%) fell into the high category, indicating that most adolescents in the study received substantial peer support. Table 6 presents the categorization of career decision-making difficulties. A significant portion of participants (68%) were categorized as having low difficulties, suggesting that most adolescents from broken homes did not face severe challenges in making career decisions.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Peer Social Support	178	56.62	3.802	42	65
Career Decision-Making	178	68.38	18.436	46	111

Table 5. Peer Social Support Categorization

No.	Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	$X \leq 34$	Low	0	0%
2	$34 \leq X \leq 51$	Moderate	11	6.2%
3	$X \geq 51$	High	167	93.8%

Table 6. Career Decision-Making Categorization

No.	Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	$X \leq 68$	Low	121	68%
2	$68 \leq X \leq 102$	Moderate	36	20.2%
3	$X \geq 102$	High	21	11.8%

Assumption Testing

Table 7 presents the results of the normality test. Both variables—peer social support and career decision-making—showed significant results ($p < 0.05$), indicating non-normal data distribution. Thus, the hypothesis testing was conducted using the non-parametric Spearman’s Rho method. Table 8 shows the results of the linearity test, with an F linearity value of 51.042 ($p \leq 0.05$), confirming a linear relationship between peer social support and career decision-making difficulties. The correlation results in Table 9 show a negative correlation between peer social support and career decision-making difficulties ($r = -0.365$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that higher peer social support is associated with lower career decision-making difficulties among adolescents from broken homes.

Table 7. One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	PKK	DSTS
N	178	178
Mean	68.38	56.52
Std. Deviation	18.436	3.802
Most Extreme Differences		
Absolute	0.244	0.126
Positive	0.244	0.069
Negative	-0.157	-0.126
Test Statistic	0.244	0.126
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000

Table 8. ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DSTS * PKK					
Between Groups					
Combined	1639.918	49	33.468	4.666	0.000
Linearity	366.110	1	366.110	51.042	0.000
Deviation from Linearity	1273.808	48	26.538	3.700	0.000
Within Groups	918.104	128	7.173		
Total	2558.022	177			

Table 9. Correlation between Peer Social Support and Career Decision-Making

	DSTS	PKK
Spearman's rho		
PKK		
Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-0.365
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
N	178	178
DSTS		
Correlation Coefficient	-0.365	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
N	178	178

Discussion

The results of the hypothesis test confirm that the hypothesis is accepted. The correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between peer social support and career decision-making difficulties, with a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.365$ ($p < 0.01$). This means that as peer social support increases, career decision-making difficulties decrease. This finding aligns with previous research by Yustiana & Nurwahidin (2023), which also demonstrated a similar correlation between peer support and career planning. The categorization results show that 68% of the participants experienced low difficulties in making career decisions, suggesting that adolescents from broken homes can still have confidence in their potential when planning for their future careers. Confidence plays an essential role in career decision-making, as individuals who believe in their abilities are more likely to take decisive action (Ogotu et al., 2017). Additionally, participants demonstrated sufficient information and thoroughness in seeking career options, highlighting the importance of information access in the decision-making process (Lam & Santos, 2018).

Similarly, the categorization of peer social support showed that 93.8% of participants received high levels of peer support. This indicates that peer support can act as a crucial buffer, especially for adolescents who lack parental guidance. This finding is consistent with research by Isnaini (2019), who showed that adolescents from broken homes could develop strong career prospects through peer and community support, such as in the Organization Street Art Cilacap (OSAC), where adolescents received guidance from peers, compensating for the absence of parental support. In this study, the negative correlation between peer social support and career decision-making difficulties suggests that peer support serves as a valuable resource for adolescents from broken homes in making more confident career decisions. However, this reliance on peers could also carry risks, as adolescents may depend too heavily on friends who may not have adequate knowledge or experience regarding optimal career choices (Ika Zulfa et al., 2018). This study had limitations, particularly in the narrow conceptualization of "broken home" as primarily related to parental divorce. This limitation made participant recruitment challenging and restricted the depth of analysis. As a result, the findings may not fully capture the complexity and variation in experiences related to career decision-making among

adolescents from broken homes. Future research could expand the scope to include other forms of family instability, which might provide a more comprehensive understanding of this issue.

Implications for Guidance and Counseling

The findings of this study offer several important implications for the field of guidance and counseling, particularly in supporting adolescents from broken homes. Given the significant role that peer social support plays in reducing career decision-making difficulties, counselors can focus on fostering and enhancing peer relationships within the school environment. Peer support has proven to be a key factor in helping adolescents, especially those lacking parental guidance, make more informed and confident career decisions. This underscores the need for structured peer mentoring programs, group counseling sessions, and peer-led career exploration activities, where students can share experiences and provide mutual encouragement (Lam & Santos, 2018). First, school counselors should implement peer counseling programs that enable students to support each other emotionally and practically. These programs can be particularly effective in creating a supportive environment for students from broken homes, who may feel isolated due to their family circumstances (Yustiana & Nurwahidin, 2023). By fostering strong peer connections, adolescents can access the social and emotional resources necessary to navigate the complexities of career decision-making, even in the absence of direct parental support (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). Second, career counseling interventions should consider the role of social networks in shaping career choices. Research has shown that peer influence plays a significant role in adolescents' career planning, often providing valuable information and motivation for career exploration (Santrock, 2016). School counselors can integrate peer-based activities into career guidance programs, encouraging students to collaborate in setting career goals and exploring different career paths. This can help mitigate the challenges faced by adolescents from broken homes, who may not receive adequate guidance from their families (Ogotu et al., 2017). Third, the use of group counseling techniques can be an effective tool for addressing both emotional and career-related concerns among adolescents from broken homes. Group settings allow students to share their experiences with peers who may face similar challenges, thus normalizing their struggles and providing a sense of belonging. Group counseling also offers a platform for students to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills, which are essential for career planning (Hasanah, 2018). Furthermore, guidance counselors must be aware of the potential risks of over-reliance on peer support. While peer relationships provide significant emotional and informational support, there is a possibility that adolescents may place too much weight on the opinions of their peers, leading to suboptimal career decisions (Ika Zulfa et al., 2018). Counselors should work to balance peer influence with professional career advice, ensuring that students receive well-rounded guidance from multiple sources, including teachers, mentors, and career specialists (Perry, Liu, & Pabian, 2010). Additionally, counselors should focus on developing students' self-efficacy in career decision-making. Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's own ability to make decisions and achieve goals, is a crucial predictor of successful career planning (Bandura, 1997). By building self-confidence and providing tools for self-assessment, counselors can empower students from broken homes to make independent, informed decisions

about their future careers, reducing their dependence on external validation (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

Given the complexity of family dynamics in broken homes, counselors should adopt a holistic approach that addresses not only academic and career-related concerns but also emotional and psychological well-being (Isnaini, 2019). Adolescents from broken homes may experience a range of emotional challenges, including feelings of abandonment, insecurity, and low self-esteem, which can affect their career decision-making process (Wade, 2016). Counseling interventions should therefore integrate emotional support with career guidance to help students navigate both personal and professional challenges. Finally, schools should implement early intervention programs that identify students from broken homes and provide targeted support as they approach key decision points in their education, such as choosing high school courses or applying to college (Rosenstock, 1977). Early career interventions can help students develop the skills and knowledge necessary for making well-informed career choices, long before they face critical life decisions (Holland, 1997). In conclusion, the implications of this study for guidance and counseling are clear: peer support plays a critical role in alleviating career decision-making difficulties for adolescents from broken homes. However, counselors must ensure that peer influence is balanced with professional guidance and that students are empowered to make independent, informed career decisions. By adopting a comprehensive, peer-supported approach to career counseling, schools can provide the resources and support necessary for all students, especially those from broken homes, to succeed.

CONCLUSION

This study found a significant negative relationship between peer social support and career decision-making difficulties among adolescents from broken homes, indicating that higher levels of peer support are associated with reduced difficulties in making career decisions. The majority of participants demonstrated high levels of peer support, with most experiencing low levels of difficulty in their career decision-making processes. This suggests that peer networks play a crucial role in providing emotional and informational support, compensating for the lack of parental guidance in these adolescents' lives. However, while peer support can act as a protective buffer, over-reliance on peers may lead to suboptimal career decisions if peers lack proper knowledge or experience. The study's findings align with previous research on the importance of social support in adolescent development but highlight the need for broader exploration of family instability beyond divorce. Expanding the scope in future research could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting career decision-making in this vulnerable group.

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