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Needs Assessment To Develop A Vocational Identity Crisis Instrument For Students

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the need for developing a vocational identity crisis instrument for university students, as a first step to address the lack of contextually relevant career crisis assessment tools in Indonesia. This descriptive quantitative study involved 30 fourth- and sixth-semester students from the Catholic Religious Education program at Atma Reksa Pastoral College in Ende, selected using a *purposive sampling technique*. The initial instrument was developed based on five aspects: career confusion, self-doubt, lack of direction in life, difficulty in decision-making, and emotional response, consisting of 30 statements with a four-point Likert scale. Content validity was evaluated by three experts, resulting in Aiken's V coefficients ranging from 0.73 to 0.92. Descriptive statistics showed that all dimensions were in the moderate category, with mean scores ranging from 2.69 to 2.87. The lack of direction in life dimension was the most prominent (M=2.87; SD=0.39), followed by the emotional response dimension (M=2.85; SD=0.44). These findings reveal that university students experience psychosocial vulnerability, highlighting the urgent need for preventive career planning support. Implicitly, the 30 developed statements effectively reflect the actual conditions of students and provide a strong empirical foundation for further validity and reliability testing in scale development. Future research should expand the sample size and conduct Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

Keywords : *Vocational Identity Crisis, Needs Assessment, Students, Measurement Instruments, Career Planning.*

INTRODUCTION

During college, individuals are at a crucial developmental stage, particularly in the process of forming their identity and determining their future direction. During this stage, individuals engage in intensive exploration of various life options, including career choices. Arnett (2015) refers to this phase as emerging adulthood, a transitional period characterized by identity search, identity exploration, and instability in various aspects of life. In this context, students are challenged to make informed decisions regarding their future careers.

However, empirical conditions in Indonesia demonstrate unexplained dynamics. Reports from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) consistently show that the open poverty rate (TPT) in Indonesia is still dominated by college graduates due to their lack of understanding of the job market and their unpreparedness for career transitions. Psychologically, this situation triggers a crisis of future orientation. A national survey by an independent research institute shows that more than 70% of final-year students in Indonesia admit to feeling confused, anxious, and unprepared for the world of work due to the uncertainty of their career paths. Furthermore, the widespread phenomenon of choosing the wrong major at various universities in Indonesia indicates that students' vocational identity formation is often

hampered from the beginning of their studies. This reality emphasizes the need for valid early detection tools to identify students vulnerable to experiencing a vocational identity crisis.

Not all students are able to navigate this exploration process optimally. Many students experience confusion in determining their career direction, which then develops into a vocational identity crisis. Vocational identity development in students does not occur linearly, but rather through a reciprocal interaction with their beliefs regarding their career decisions. A recent longitudinal study showed that clarity in the vocational identity process significantly predicted improvements in students' career decision-making self-efficacy over time (Chang et al., 2025). Self-efficacy is a crucial factor in determining an individual's readiness to plan a career, where individuals with low self-efficacy tend to struggle to determine career choices that align with their potential. In addition to internal psychological support, external environmental support, such as the role of family, has been shown to strengthen students' self-efficacy by mediating the formation of a mature vocational identity (Dwiyanthi, 2023). Conversely, obstacles to career exploration are often triggered by a mismatch between academic roles and work orientations, which triggers emotional distress (Li & Wang, 2023). The dynamics of vocational identity crises in the modern era are also greatly influenced by the demographic background and past social attachments of individuals during higher education (Strate et al., 2023).

To avoid conceptual overlaps common in previous literature, it is important to clarify the academic distinction between the construct of vocational identity crisis and other similar concepts. *Career uncertainty* generally refers only to an individual's inability to choose a career due to a lack of career information (Gati & Levin, 2014). Meanwhile, career uncertainty is more likely related to uncertain external labor market situations (Hirschi, 2012). On the other hand, vocational identity status is a classification of an individual's commitment and exploration position based on developmental theory (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). Different from the three concepts above, vocational identity crisis in this study is defined as a complex and multidimensional state of psychosocial distress, involving not only uncertainty *but* also emotional disintegration, a profound loss of meaning/purpose in life (lack of direction), and chronic darkness regarding vocational self-efficacy. This construct captures comprehensive negative affective aspects and internal barriers, thus requiring a specific measurement instrument different from the usual career choice scales.

Viewed from the perspective of multicultural and religious guidance and counseling, the phenomenon of vocational identity crisis, particularly in the aspect of unclear life goals, is closely related to the depth of an individual's spiritual value orientation. For students studying Catholic Religious Education, professional vocation *(vocatio*) is not only seen as an effort to meet financial needs or secular work, but as a form of service, apostolic duty, and spiritual devotion to God and others. The career confusion experienced by this group of students reflects an internal existential struggle in aligning their potential with the values of their faith. Therefore, the presence of integrative guidance and counseling services that are able to touch the dimensions of spirituality, the meaning of life, and religious values is crucial to help students overcome emotional obstacles and rebuild their future orientation. Developing instruments that are sensitive to these conceptual aspects is an important first step in addressing their real needs in the field. Although previous studies have explored career readiness and adaptability variables in college students (Ariyanto & Ishak, 2019; Putrawan, 2020), most of these studies focused directly on intervention measures or correlations between variables without validating whether the measurement tools used truly represent students' vocational identity crises as a whole. Most instruments used in Indonesia are crude adaptations of Western instruments that may not be appropriate to the psychosocial characteristics of local students. A clear research gap exists, as studies on systematic needs assessment (needs analysis) as a basis for developing contextual vocational identity crisis scales are still very limited. Implementing needs analysis is a crucial foundation for measuring students' educational orientation before psychological measurement instruments are widely tested (Abdullah, 2020). Without

an objective needs analysis, the developed instruments risk construct bias and fail to capture important aspects of the career crises faced by students in the field.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its position as a preliminary study in the development of a new psychological scale (original instrument construction) built on the theoretical integration of five dimensions of vocational identity crisis: vocational confusion, self-doubt, lack of life direction, decision-making difficulties, and emotional responses. This study does not adapt or translate an existing measurement instrument, but rather formulates new behavioral indicators derived directly from the needs assessment of the actual conditions of Indonesian students. Through this approach, the research position serves as a theoretical-empirical blueprint that ensures the authenticity of the instrument before proceeding to the next stage of validity and reliability testing. Based on this description, this study aims to conduct a needs assessment analysis related to vocational identity crisis in students as a systematic first step in developing an instrument that is valid, reliable, and relevant to the local context.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive design. This research is part of a psychological scale development study that refers to the instrument development model according to DeVellis (2021). The current research position is in the early stages of development, focusing on the first three phases of DeVellis' model: clearly establishing theoretical constructs, creating an initial item pool, and conducting a needs analysis through a preliminary study to validate the indicators' relevance to the actual conditions of subjects in the field before moving on to the extensive empirical testing phase.

The subjects in this study were 30 students selected using purposive sampling techniques. The use of a sample of 30 respondents served as an initial test group to capture trends in basic needs. Subject selection was based on strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included: (1) active undergraduate students, (2) currently studying Catholic Religious Education at a Religious College, and (3) being in their 4th and 6th semesters because this phase is an important transition period where students begin to interact in field practice and professional role orientation as catechists or religious teachers. Meanwhile, exclusion criteria were final year students who were no longer actively attending regular lectures and were working on their final assignment (thesis), or students who were on academic leave.

In terms of demographic characteristics, the research subjects consisted of 18 female students (60%) and 12 male students (40%) with an age range of 19 to 22 years. All respondents studied in the same group at the Atma Reksa Ende Pastoral College. The research instrument was developed based on the vocational identity crisis construct developed from theoretical studies. This construct consists of five main aspects: Vocational *confusion* , *Self-doubt* , Lack of *life direction* , Difficulty in decision *-making* , and *Emotional responses* . The initial design of this instrument consisted of 30 statement items structured as favorable and unfavorable items. These items were arranged based on the principle of psychological scale development, namely based on clear and representative indicators of the construct being measured (Azwar, 2012).

The measurement scale used was a Likert scale with four response categories: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree. This instrument is still in its early development stage, so its empirical validity and reliability have not been tested. Therefore, this study focuses on needs analysis as a basis for further instrument development (DeVellis, 2016).

Table 1. Design of Vocational Identity Crisis Instrument

No.	Aspect	Indicator	Statement
1.	*Vocational Confusion* (Confusion about Career Direction)	Not knowing career direction	1. I feel confused in determining the direction of my career. 2. I started to have a clear picture of my career direction.

No.	Aspect	Indicator	Statement
		Not understanding one's own potential	3. I have trouble recognizing my own strengths.
			4. I understand well the abilities that I have.
		Have no career goals	5. I don't have a definite career goal yet.
			6. I have clear career goals.
2.	Self- *Doubt*	Doubting one's own abilities	7. I doubt my ability to achieve my career goals.
			8. I am confident in my ability to achieve my career goals.
		Lack of self-confidence	9. I am not sure about making a career choice.
			10. I am confident in my career choice.
		Fear of failure	11. I am afraid of failing in making decisions regarding my future career.
			12. I dare to take risks in making career choices.
3.	*Lack of* Direction in Life	Have no purpose in life	13. I don't have a clear goal in life yet.
			14. I have a clear life goal.
		Doesn't understand the value of life	15. I have not yet understood the important values in my life.
			16. I know the values that are important in my life.
		Have no future plans	17. I don't have any clear future plans yet.
			18. I have a clear future plan.
4.	*Decision Making* Difficulties	Confused in choosing	19. I'm having trouble choosing between several career options.
			20. I am able to determine my career choice well.
		Decisions are easily changed	21. I often change my mind after making a career decision.
			22. I am consistent with the career decisions I have made.
		Fear of making decisions	23. I'm afraid to make important career decisions.
			24. I dare to make career decisions even though there are risks.
5.	*Emotional* Response	Anxious about the future	25. I feel anxious thinking about my career future.
			26. I feel calm about the future of my career.
		Worried about life choices	27. I'm worried that my career choice will be wrong.
			28. I am confident in the career choice I have made.
		Not sure of yourself	29. I often feel unsure of myself when it comes to my career.
			30. I feel confident in determining my future career.

Before the instrument was distributed for needs analysis, these 30 statement items first went through a peer review process and content validity testing using *expert assessment procedures.* The evaluation was carried out by three experts (two experts in the field of career counseling/psychology and one expert in the field of measurement methodology). The experts were asked to assess the suitability and clarity of the items to the behavioral indicators with a score range of 1 (not relevant) to 4 (very relevant). The expert assessments were then analyzed quantitatively using the Aiken's V coefficient formula to measure the content validity index. Items were declared valid and retained if the coefficient value of Data Collection Techniques $V \geq 0{,}70$. The calculation results show the Aiken's

coefficient The V value ranges from 0.73 to 0.92, which indicates that all items have good content validity and are suitable for use in the needs assessment stage.

Data for this study were collected through an online questionnaire distributed using the Google Forms platform. This online platform was chosen to facilitate respondent accessibility, minimize the risk of manual data entry errors, and ensure the anonymity of subjects' identities and responses. Before completing the questionnaire, each respondent was given an *informed consent form,* which emphasized that participation was voluntary and that the measurement results would only be used for scientific advancement. Respondents were asked to reflect and provide objective answers based on their actual circumstances, feelings, and personal experiences related to future career planning.

The collected quantitative data were then processed using descriptive statistical techniques to obtain a comprehensive picture of the level of identity crisis among students. Statistical analysis focused on calculating measures of central tendency and variability, including the empirical average value (*Mean)* , standard deviation *(SDS)* , and minimum and maximum scores for both individual aspects and the entire data set. This quantitative information serves as an important basis for identifying the dimensions most strongly experienced by students, thus providing an empirical basis for determining the need to develop measurement scales and design contextual career guidance services.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis results in this study, which are based on empirical scores obtained from 30 respondents, through a 30-item vocational identity crisis scale. To avoid subjective conclusions, the determination of the level of student vocational identity crisis is classified into three categories (Low, Medium, High) using a theoretical score range division based on a Likert scale of 1-4. The categorization limits are formulated as follows:

Table 2. Categorization of Vocational Identity Crisis

No.	Category	Score Range
1.	Low	$1{,}00 \leq X < 2{,}00$
2.	Currently	$2{,}00 \leq X \leq 3{,}00$
3.	Tall	$3{,}00 < X \leq 4{,}00$

Description: X = Empirical average score of respondents.

Based on this categorization, the frequency distribution and percentage of the general level of vocational identity crisis among Catholic Religious Education students are presented in Table 3. This grouping was carried out to provide an empirical picture of the extent of psychosocial vulnerability experienced by the subjects regarding their future career direction. This quantitative information serves as crucial baseline data to identify the proportion of students who require career guidance interventions, both intensive and preventive. Descriptive statistical analysis shows that the majority of respondents fall into the moderate crisis category, which indicates the need for special attention from educational institutions.

Table 3. Distribution of the Frequency of Career Identity Crises Among Students in General

No.	Category	Score Range	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1.	Tall	3.01 - 4.00	5	16.7%
2.	Currently	2.00 - 3.00	22	73.3%
3.	Low	1.00 – 1.99	3	10.0%
	Total		30	100%

The data in Table 3 shows that the majority of students are in the moderate category (73.3%). This indicates that Catholic Religious Education students generally tend to experience psychosocial stress related to future orientation, but have not yet reached the acute crisis phase. To examine variations in data distribution and map needs more specifically, descriptive analysis was conducted on each aspect of the crisis by calculating the empirical average value (Mean *), Standard Deviation (SD),* minimum value, and maximum value for each group, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 4. Results of Descriptive Analysis

No.	Aspect	Means	Min	Maximum	Standard Deviation (Sd)	Category
1.	Vocational Confusion (Confusion About Career Direction)	2.81	1	4	0.42	At The Moment
2.	Self-Doubt	2.74	1	4	0.48	At The Moment
3.	Lack Of Direction In Life (Lack Of Direction In Life)	2.87	1	4	039	At The Moment
4.	Decision Making Difficulties	2.69	1	4	0.53	At The Moment
5.	Emotional Response	2.85	1	4	0.44	At The Moment

Based on Table 4, the data distribution reflects that the standard deviation value is in the aspect of decision-making difficulty ($SD = 0{,}53$*).* This reflects that the level of variation or differences in students' obstacles in making career decisions is quite diverse across fields. On the other hand, the aspects of lack of life direction ($M = 2{,}87; SD = 0{,}39$) and emotional response ($M = 2{,}85; SD = 0{,}44$) occupy the highest average ranking among other aspects. These results provide an in-depth interpretation of the need for instrument development. Although all aspects are in the "Moderate" category, the average score approaches the upper limit of 3.00, especially in the aspects of unclear life direction (lack of life direction) and negative emotional response (emotional response), proving that Catholic Religious Education students are beginning to feel existential pressure. This "Moderate" category position indicates a phase of vulnerability. If not detected early, this condition has the potential to escalate into a crisis that hinders progress. Therefore, the development of this Vocational Identity Crisis Scale is very urgent as an early detection tool (early warning system) that is preventive before students fall into the high-level crisis category.

The research findings indicate that most subjects fall into the moderate category, with the highest levels of anxiety focused on a lack of direction in life and emotional responses. The subjects' specific backgrounds as Catholic Religious Education students contribute to this finding. Students in religious studies programs often associate work with the concept of vocation (a call to a holy life or service). When faced with the realities of the modern, regular workplace, internal regulations emerge to balance the ideals of faith with economic needs. The mean score is high on the emotional aspect. The research findings indicate that most subjects fall into the moderate category, with the highest levels of anxiety focused on a lack of direction in life and emotional responses. The subjects' specific backgrounds as Catholic Religious Education students contribute to this finding. Students in religious studies programs often associate work with the concept of vocation (a call to a holy life or service). When faced with the realities of the modern, regular workplace, internal regulations emerge to balance the ideals of faith with economic needs. The high mean score on the emotional aspect ($M = 2{,}85$) reflects the latent anxiety felt during this process of identity alignment.

The results of this preliminary study align with the findings of a recent international study by Chang et al. (2025), which confirmed that vocational identity formation in young people has a very strong reciprocal relationship with their level of self-confidence. Career-oriented immaturity is directly proportional to high levels of psychological distress. Furthermore, research by Li and Wang (2023) shows that when students fail to align academic expectations with future professional demands, negative emotional responses such as chronic anxiety dominate. Limited career exploration opportunities for

religious scholars entering the formal sector in the modern era also exacerbate this emotional disintegration, a situation also confirmed by Strate et al. (2023), who found that certain social ties and demographic backgrounds significantly determine an individual's vulnerability to career crises.

Most importantly, these findings offer significant practical implications for career guidance and counseling services in higher education. Given that student crisis rates remain at a "Moderate" level, counselors in university career centers can optimize preventive and developmental guidance and counseling services. Interventions should not require students to experience significant hardship while waiting. Counselors can design integrated group career guidance programs that incorporate existential-spiritual counseling approaches. These programs aim to help students plan their life paths and manage negative emotional responses by reconstructing the meaning of work as part of a religious service.

Furthermore, this research makes a significant contribution to the practice of guidance and counseling assessment. To date, career assessment in Indonesia has been dominated by adaptations of foreign instruments focused on general career maturity. The Vocational Identity Crisis Scale, initiated through this research, offers a novel contribution in the form of a measurement tool specifically designed to detect negative affective aspects and vocational difficulties, contextualized with the psychosocial characteristics of local students. With its construct boundaries free from overlapping conceptualizations, this instrument provides a methodological contribution as an initial screening tool with strong discriminatory validity. This will facilitate counselors in implementing appropriate clinical interventions before identity crises impact students' academic achievement.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the initial needs assessment, it can be concluded that the level of vocational identity crisis among Catholic Religious Education students is generally in the moderate category. This condition reflects a phase of psychosocial vulnerability, with the highest levels of stress seen in aspects of unclear life goals (lack of direction) and negative emotional responses. The lack of clear career goals and anxiety about the future are latent obstacles faced by this group of students during the transition to the workforce. This study makes a significant theoretical contribution to the development of psychological instruments in Indonesia. Through rigorous reconceptualization, the study successfully eliminated overlapping indicators between dimensions, particularly by separating the constructs of self-doubt and career confusion. This restructuring resulted in clear and measurable construct boundaries, providing a strong methodological foundation for developing measurement instruments with high discriminatory validity to detect career difficulties, particularly among local students.

Practically, the results of this study provide a strong empirical foundation for transforming career guidance and counseling services in religious higher education institutions. These findings confirm that the issue of student vulnerability can no longer be addressed solely through mechanical lectures. University counselors can use this blueprint instrument as a preventive early screening tool. Furthermore, these data provide a basis for counselors to form career guidance groups that integrate existential-spiritual dimensions to help students reconstruct the meaning of work as a form of devotion to their faith. As a preliminary study with a limited sample size (30 respondents), recommendations for further research focus on two main agendas. First, future researchers suggest expanding the subject scope by involving a larger and more representative sample from various religious universities to support the generalizability of the data. Second, the instrument development phase should be followed by psychometric testing using the DeVellis formal model, which includes empirical validity testing through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), as well as internal consistency reliability testing to produce a standardized, universally valid, and reliable instrument.

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