



THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE AND CAREER PLANNING ON SELF-CONFIDENCE THROUGH SELF-EFFICACY

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:

Oktober 09, 2026

Revised

Oktober 23, 2026

Accepted:

Oktober 23, 2026

Online available:

December 01, 2026

Keywords:

Career Planning Internship Experience, Self-Efficacy, Self-Confidence, PLS-SEM

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The increasingly competitive labour market requires university students to have not only academic competencies but also psychological readiness and career-planning skills. Internship experience gives students opportunities to apply academic knowledge in real work environments, while career planning helps them set clear career directions and goals. In this process, self-efficacy plays an important role in strengthening students' beliefs in their abilities, which may ultimately enhance self-confidence. This study examines the effects of internship experience and career planning on self-confidence, with self-efficacy as a mediating variable.

Method: This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to university students who had participated in or were currently undertaking internships. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling. The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The analysis included evaluating the outer and inner models, as well as bootstrapping to examine direct and indirect effects among variables.

Results: The results indicate that internship experience and career planning have positive and significant effects on self-efficacy. Self-efficacy also has a positive and significant effect on self-confidence. Internship experience does not directly affect self-confidence significantly but does so indirectly through self-efficacy. Career planning also positively influences self-confidence through self-efficacy. Therefore, self-efficacy plays a significant mediating role in strengthening students' self-confidence

INTRODUCTION

The increasingly competitive world of work demands that students possess academic skills, as well as psychological and professional readiness to face the world of work. As prospective workers, students are required to be confident in their abilities, able to determine their career direction, and have experience that can provide them with provisions for entering the workforce. Self-confidence is a crucial pillar of career readiness, as individuals with high self-confidence tend to be able to manage professional challenges effectively (Shen et al., 2024; Sholikhah et al., 2021).

Internship experiences and structured career planning serve as key instruments in honing competencies and providing a realistic picture of the demands of the professional world (Coetzee et al., 2022; Nugroho, 2022).

One important aspect that students need to have is self-confidence, which is related to an individual's belief in their ability to face various situations, make decisions, complete tasks, and demonstrate their competence. A good level of self-confidence can help students prepare for the transition to the world of work. Furthermore, self-efficacy is seen as a mediating variable that integrates internship experiences and career planning into the formation of student self-confidence, because self-efficacy acts as an internal mechanism in stimulating an individual's ability to perform tasks and achieve desired results (Sutiman et al., 2022). Through self-efficacy, students can process internship experiences as tangible evidence of competence and validate their career plans into stronger beliefs in facing industry demands (Putra & Suhariadi, 2021; Susilowati & Fauzan, 2022).

Hands-on internship experiences allow students to put academic theory into practice in a professional environment, which in turn fosters self-confidence through familiarity with the work culture (Fauzan et al., 2023).

Through these experiences, students can gain an understanding of job demands and develop both technical and interpersonal skills. A positive internship experience is expected to enhance students' understanding of their competencies, ultimately leading to increased self-confidence in facing the world of work. In line with this, structured career planning provides a strategic framework for students to align professional aspirations with the competencies being developed, thereby reducing uncertainty in career transitions (Hakiki et al., 2023). In this context, self-efficacy functions as a strategic mediator that strengthens the relationship between practical experience and individual beliefs, where students' systematic involvement in career development activities directly contributes to increased perceptions of self-efficacy (Liu et al., 2022).

Career planning is the process by which an individual identifies their interests, abilities, values, and career goals. Good career planning provides structured direction and goals to prepare for their professional future. By viewing their career as a personal responsibility, individuals who actively plan for their future are better able to recognize their potential and face challenges with greater persistence (Horst et al., 2021).

Students with high self-efficacy tend to be more confident in their ability to complete tasks, face challenges, and overcome obstacles. Successful internship experiences can provide a sense of mastery that strengthens students' confidence in their abilities. Similarly, a clear career plan can help students set realistic goals and take action, thus strengthening their confidence in their abilities.

Psychologically, individuals with high levels of self-efficacy tend to be more proactive in career exploration and decision-making, because they view the challenges of the working world as opportunities to demonstrate competence rather than as threats (Cheung, 2024).

The research gap in this study lies in the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms linking internship experiences and *career planning* to *self-confidence*, particularly through the mediating role of *self-efficacy*. Internship experiences provide an opportunity to gain practical competencies, but they do not necessarily directly increase students' confidence in their abilities. Similarly, career planning can help students determine their professional direction, but clarity of career goals does not necessarily automatically generate self-confidence if students do not have sufficient confidence to realize them.

The question that then becomes important to examine is whether internship experiences and career planning can directly increase students' self-confidence, and whether this influence occurs through increased self-efficacy. Studying this relationship is relevant because students not only need work experience and career planning, but also need confidence in their abilities to be able to utilize those experiences and plans optimally. Thus, self-efficacy is suspected to play a role as a mediating variable that bridges the influence of internship experiences and career planning on self-confidence. Self-confidence based on strong self-efficacy plays a crucial role in the success of career transitions, because confidence in one's abilities encourages students to be more persistent in facing obstacles and more proactive in their job search (Capone et al., 2021) efforts. (Li et al., 2022)

Based on the research background, the problem formulation in this research is:

1. Do Internship Experience and Career Planning Influence Students' Self-Confidence ?
2. Do Internship Experience and Career Planning Influence Students' Self-Efficacy ?
3. Does Self Efficacy influence students' Self Confidence ?

4. Does Self Efficacy mediate the influence of Internship Experience and Career Planning on Students' Self Confidence ?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internship Experience

Internship experience is a form of work-based learning that allows students to apply academic theory to a real-life professional context, thereby enriching their practical competencies (Petruzziello et al., 2021). This not only facilitates students' transition to the labor market but also significantly reduces concerns about their future career prospects. Factors influencing the effectiveness of internship experiences include informational support from supervisors at work and instrumental support from parents, which have been empirically shown to stimulate individuals' confidence in developing professional skills (Okorie et al., 2022). Furthermore, internship experiences provide students with a platform for independent exploration of their professional interests and abilities in a realistic work environment. This direct interaction with a professional environment allows students to build self-confidence through familiarization with organizational dynamics and the accomplishment of relevant tasks (Covrig et al., 2022). Through mastery of specific tasks during the internship, students receive positive feedback that strengthens their perception of competence, gradually transforming self-doubt into solid self-confidence (Syamsuadi et al., 2022). Furthermore, participation in an internship program allows students to identify skills gaps between academic theory and industry needs, allowing them to adapt their professional profiles to be more relevant to job market (Wang & Hsieh, 2022) demands . (Ebner et al., 2021) This is in line with the assumption that participation in internships serves as a mechanism to validate students' self-efficacy through their success in completing assigned professional responsibilities. Thus, internship experiences not only serve as a means of knowledge transfer, but also become a critical instrument in building self-efficacy that underlies students' self-confidence, as a crucial variable that determines the level of student engagement and persistence in pursuing their career goals. Career planning, on the other hand, serves as a strategic compass that helps students map out systematic steps in achieving their professional aspirations (Aninda Anastasya, 2024) Aninda Anastasya. (2024). Hubungan Pengalaman Magang. *Jurnal Maneksi*, 13(3), 628–637.

Career Planning

Includes the process of formulating long-term goals and identifying concrete steps needed to achieve competencies relevant to industry demands. This process reflects students' cognitive engagement in evaluating their self-efficacy to navigate obstacles and capitalize on existing professional opportunities, so that structured planning positively strengthens confidence in making career decisions (Wang, 2021). By establishing a systematic roadmap, students are able to increase self-efficacy through consistent short-term achievements, which ultimately mediates the effect of career planning on strengthening overall self-confidence (Muslihati et al., 2023). Within this framework, career planning that sets professional goals and steps in a targeted manner can strengthen students' self-efficacy, which in turn bridges the influence of career planning and internship experiences on self-confidence by helping students translate these plans and experiences into concrete actions (Muslihati et al., 2023; Okolie et al., 2021; Wang, 2021).

Self-Efficacy

In this model, self-efficacy functions as a cognitive mediator that processes feedback from work experiences and career planning regularity, enabling individuals to integrate past successes into beliefs about future capabilities (McKenzie & Bennett, 2022). Specifically, a high level of self-efficacy acts as a mechanism that modulates how practical experiences in the field and career planning strategies are internalized into students' psychological frameworks (Suyitno et al., 2025). This mediator ensures that the accumulation of professional competencies and clarity of career direction do not simply become theoretical knowledge, but are transformed into stable self-confidence through beliefs of task mastery (Alfaiz et al., 2021). Thus, strong self-efficacy enables students to be more adaptive in processing career challenges, ultimately validating their readiness to make crucial professional decisions (Salim et al., 2023). (Kim & Ra, 2022) Active engagement in this process confirms that self-efficacy functions as a psychological catalyst that encourages individuals to strive harder and persist when facing obstacles in the workplace (Shengyao et al., 2024). (Álvarez-Huerta et al., 2022) This research confirms that self-efficacy beliefs are an essential cognitive bridge in transforming professional insights into adaptive career behavior.

This mediation process aligns with the literature stating that self-efficacy beliefs are a key determinant for individuals in organizing the actions necessary to achieve desired job targets (Rahayu & Kurniawan, 2022). The integration of self-efficacy into this model conceptually clarifies how individuals' beliefs in their capacities serve as a key foundation in motivating effective and persistent work behavior in a competitive professional environment. Thus, this self-efficacy variable plays a central role in facilitating the transition from simply having plans and experiences to the actual realization of proactive job search behavior oriented towards future career achievement. This study also assumes that high self-efficacy will strengthen students' confidence in executing targeted job search strategies, just as self-efficacy plays a role in organizing individual behavior (Müceldili et al., 2021).

Self-Confidence

In this context, it is a manifestation of a comprehensive self-evaluation of personal abilities, which grows from successfully meeting the demands of the work environment (Li et al., 2022). The level of self-confidence formed through this mediation mechanism allows students to maintain optimism and resilience in facing the dynamics of a competitive job market. Essentially, this self-confidence calibrated through self-efficacy provides a psychological foundation for students to view challenging tasks as opportunities for competency development, rather than simply threats to be avoided (Sabouripour et al., 2021). This confirms that self-efficacy functions as a psychological determinant that bridges the acquisition of practical competence with the ongoing strengthening of professional self-identity. Furthermore, this strengthening of self-confidence allows individuals to persist in facing various professional challenges, because they believe in their capacity to produce the expected performance. In relation to self-confidence, a successful internship experience helps students recognize their proven abilities and feel more confident about entering the workforce.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study applies an explanatory quantitative method to examine the impact of internship experience and career planning on students' self-confidence, and analyzes the role of self-efficacy as an intervening variable. The variables used include Internship Experience (X1), *Career Planning* (X2), *Self-Efficacy* (Z), and *Self-Confidence* (Y).

The research population included active students of STIE Malangkucecwara who had experience participating in an internship program. The research sample was selected based on certain criteria, namely: (1) active students of STIE Malangkucecwara; (2) currently participating in or having completed an internship program; (3) having direct experience in carrying out tasks or activities during the internship; and (4) willing to be respondents by completing the questionnaire completely. Primary data were obtained through a questionnaire measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1, meaning "strongly disagree" to 5, meaning "strongly agree."

The data processing and analysis of this study used the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the help of the SmartPLS application. The analysis stages include evaluating the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The outer model evaluation aims to assess the validity and reliability of the research constructs through outer loading indicators, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha. Meanwhile, the inner model evaluation is conducted to analyze the relationship between the studied variables by referring to the path coefficient and determination coefficient (R-square or R²).

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Result should be presented continuously start from main result until supporting results. Unit of measurement used should follow the prevailing international system. It also allowed to present diagram, table, picture, and graphic followed by narration of them.

1. Outer Model

Outer model testing is conducted to analyze the relationship between latent constructs and the indicators used as measurement tools. This evaluation aims to ensure that each indicator accurately represents the research construct and meets validity and reliability criteria. *Outer model analysis* consists of three aspects: *Convergent Validity* , *Discriminant Validity* , and *Construct Reliability* .

a. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity testing is performed by examining the *loading factor* value for each indicator. This value reflects the indicator's ability to reflect the latent construct being measured and is obtained through the estimation of the *outer loading*. An indicator is categorized as having good convergent validity if the *loading factor value* reaches ≥ 0.70 . However, in certain studies, indicators with a *loading factor value* ≥ 0.60 can still be retained because they are considered to have met an acceptable level of validity.

Table 1. *Outer Loading Results of Convergent Validity Test*

	Internship Experience	Career Planning	Self- Confidence	Self-Efficacy	Information
X1.1	0.797				Valid
X1.2	0.666				Valid
X1.3	0.716				Valid
X1.4	0.633				Valid
X1.5	0.806				Valid
X2.1		0.790			Valid
X2.2		0.797			Valid
X2.3		0.669			Valid
X2.4		0.750			Valid
X2.5		0.666			Valid
Y.1			0.756		Valid
Y.2			0.720		Valid
Y.3			0.742		Valid
Y.4			0.783		Valid
Y.5			0.803		Valid
Z.1				0.790	Valid
Z.2				0.727	Valid
Z.3				0.750	Valid
Z.4				0.716	Valid
Z.5				0.787	Valid

Data Source Processed by SEM-PLS 4.0 (2026)

Based on the data processing results, all research indicators showed outer loading values above 0.60. Thus, all indicators met the convergent validity criteria, meaning no indicators needed to be removed or eliminated from the research model.

b. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is used to test the extent to which each construct in a research model is able to demonstrate clear differences from other constructs. This test ensures that each variable measures a distinct concept and does not exhibit excessive similarity or overlap between constructs.

1) Cross Loading

The following are the results of data processing using SmartPLS version 4 with cross loading as shown in the table below:

Table 2: Cross Loading Results of Discriminant Validity Test

	Internship Experience	Career Planning	Self- Confidence	Self- Efficacy	Information
X1.1	0.797	0.557	0.626	0.494	Valid
X1.2	0.666	0.541	0.462	0.498	Valid
X1.3	0.716	0.543	0.549	0.567	Valid

X1.4	0.633	0.629	0.478	0.435	Valid
X1.5	0.806	0.593	0.518	0.563	Valid
X2.1	0.519	0.790	0.566	0.492	Valid
X2.2	0.677	0.797	0.617	0.602	Valid
X2.3	0.608	0.669	0.509	0.531	Valid
X2.4	0.588	0.750	0.560	0.539	Valid
X2.5	0.477	0.666	0.491	0.483	Valid
Y.1	0.584	0.642	0.756	0.561	Valid
Y.2	0.486	0.529	0.720	0.619	Valid
Y.3	0.473	0.467	0.742	0.672	Valid
Y.4	0.617	0.573	0.783	0.600	Valid
Y.5	0.606	0.630	0.803	0.607	Valid
Z.1	0.677	0.578	0.639	0.790	Valid
Z.2	0.391	0.422	0.576	0.727	Valid
Z.3	0.529	0.530	0.627	0.750	Valid
Z.4	0.539	0.605	0.591	0.716	Valid
Z.5	0.495	0.569	0.591	0.787	Valid

Data Source Processed by SEM-PLS 4.0 (2026)

Cross-loading test , it is known that all indicators have a higher loading value on the construct that should be measured compared to the loading value on other constructs. Thus, all indicators have met the criteria of discriminant validity and are declared valid in differentiating each research construct

c. Construct Reliability

Construct reliability testing can be performed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values . This is used to determine the extent to which the indicators within a construct provide reliable results.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability Values

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Information
Career Planning	0.787	0.793	0.855	Reliable
Internship Experience	0.774	0.781	0.848	Reliable
Self-Confidence	0.818	0.819	0.873	Reliable
Self-Efficacy	0.811	0.814	0.868	Reliable

Data Source Processed by SEM-PLS 4.0 (2026)

Construct reliability testing , all research variables, including *Career Planning* , *Internship Experience*, *Self-Confidence* , and *Self-Efficacy*, demonstrated a level of reliability that met the criteria. This was evidenced by the *Cronbach's Alpha* and *Composite Reliability values* , which for each construct exceeded 0.70. These results indicate that the research indicators have adequate internal consistency in measuring the constructs in question. Thus, all constructs were declared reliable and could proceed to the next testing and analysis stage.

2. Inner Model

The evaluation of *the inner model* includes the main indicators, namely hypothesis testing to determine the significance of the relationship between constructs, *the R-square* (R^2) value to measure the ability of independent variables to explain endogenous variables.

a. R Square (R^2)

The R^2 value indicates how much change in an endogenous variable can be explained by its predictor variables. The higher the R^2 value, the better the model's ability to explain the endogenous variable under study. The results of the *R-Square* (R^2) calculation for this study are as follows:

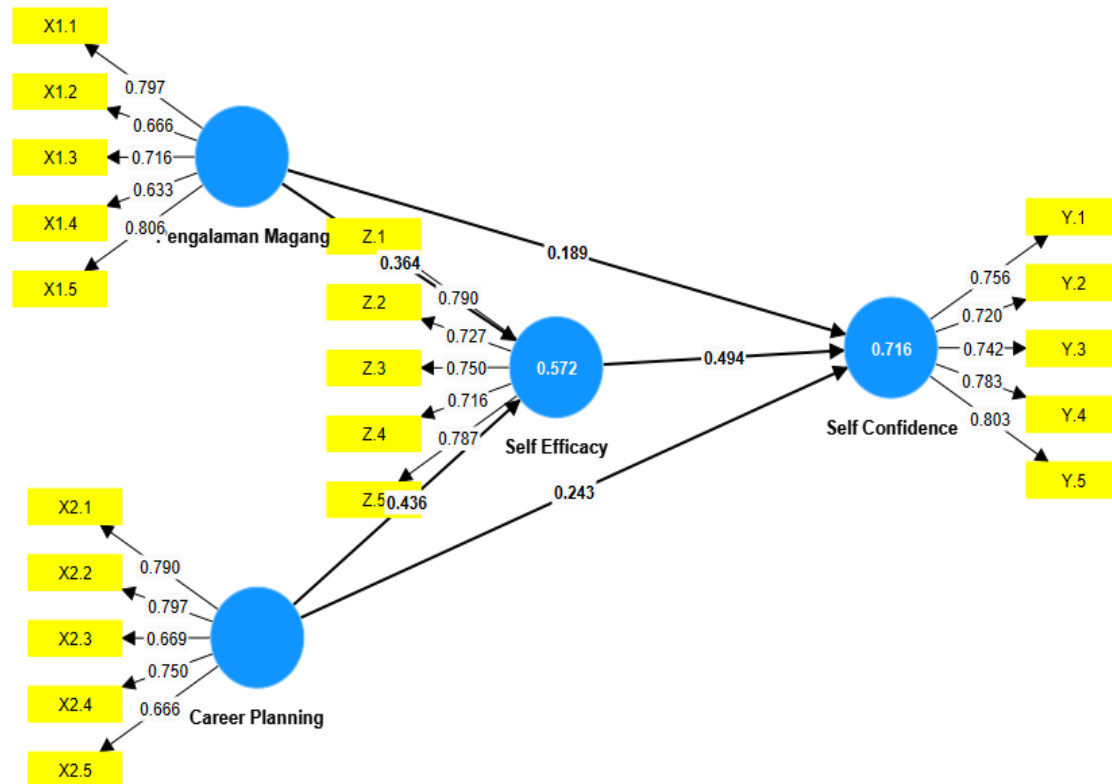
Table 4: R Square (R^2) Test Results

Variables	R-square	R-square adjusted
Self-Confidence	0.716	0.703
Self-Efficacy	0.572	0.559

Data Source Processed by SEM-PLS 4.0 (2026)

Self-Confidence variable has an *R-Square* value of 0.716. This means the research model can explain 71.6% of the change in *Self-Confidence* through Internship Experience, *Career Planning* , and *Self-Efficacy* . The remaining 28.4% comes from the influence of other factors not included in this study.

Furthermore, *Self-Efficacy* has an *R-Square* of 0.572. This means that Internship Experience and *Career Planning* simultaneously explain 57.2% of the variation in students' *Self-Efficacy* . The remaining 42.8% is influenced by variables outside the research model.



PLS SEM Alogarithm Model Output Image

b. Significance (Hypothesis Testing)

In PLS-SEM analysis, significance testing aims to identify the level of influence between latent constructs through the *bootstrapping method* . Decisions regarding the significance of the relationship are based on the *T-statistics* and *P-values* , and are declared significant if the *P-values* are below 0.05. The *bootstrapping procedure* is then used to analyze the *direct* and *indirect effects* between variables.

Table 5: Results of Path Coefficient Bootstrapping Direct Effect

Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Career Planning -> Self Confidence	0.243	0.237	0.131	1,863	0.031
Career Planning -> Self Efficacy	0.436	0.432	0.129	3,376	0,000

Internship Experience -> Self Confidence	0.189	0.200	0.132	1,430	0.076
Internship Experience -> Self Efficacy	0.364	0.376	0.123	2,957	0.002
Self Efficacy -> Self Confidence	0.494	0.490	0.104	4,727	0,000

Data Source Processed by SEM-PLS 4.0 (2026)

The results of the analysis prove that Career Planning has a positive and significant effect on Self-Efficacy, with a path coefficient value of 0.436, T-statistics of 3.376, and P-values of 0.000. Internship Experience also shows a positive and significant effect on Self-Efficacy, as indicated by a path coefficient value of 0.364, T-statistics of 2.957, and P-values of 0.002.

In contrast to these results, Internship Experience has a positive effect on Self-Confidence with a path coefficient of 0.189, but the effect is not statistically significant. This is reflected in the T-statistics value of 1.430 and P-values of 0.076. Meanwhile, Self-Efficacy is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Self-Confidence, with a path coefficient value of 0.494, T-statistics of 4.727, and P-values of 0.000.

In general, the research results indicate that internship experience and career planning play a role in improving students' self-efficacy. This increase in self-efficacy subsequently contributes to strengthening students' self-confidence.

Table 6: Results of Path Coefficient Bootstrapping Indirect Effect

Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Career Planning -> Self Efficacy -> Self Confidence	0.215	0.216	0.088	2,452	0.007
Internship Experience -> Self Efficacy -> Self Confidence	0.180	0.182	0.066	2,723	0.003

Data Source Processed by SEM-PLS 4.0 (2026)

The results of bootstrapping tests on the indirect effect indicate that Career Planning has a positive and significant influence on Self-Confidence through Self-Efficacy. This finding is supported by a path coefficient value of 0.215, a T-statistic value of 2.452, and P-values of 0.007. These values meet the significance criteria, because the T-statistic exceeds 1.96 and P-values are below 0.05. Therefore, Self-Efficacy can be stated to have a significant mediating role in the relationship between Career Planning and Self-Confidence.

On the other hand, Internship Experience has also been shown to have a positive and significant influence on *Self-Confidence* through *Self-Efficacy*. The indirect effect value was recorded at 0.180, while the *T-statistics* reached 2.723 and *P-values* were 0.003. By fulfilling the criteria of *T-statistics* > 1.96 and *P-values* < 0.05, it can be concluded that the indirect effect is statistically significant.

Thus, *Self-Efficacy* acts as a mediator in the relationship between *Career Planning* and Internship Experience on *Self-Confidence*. This finding indicates that career planning and internship experience can help increase students' self-confidence, especially by increasing students' belief in their own abilities (*Self-Efficacy*).

DISCUSSION

Internship Experience Has a Positive and Significant Influence on Student Self-Confidence.

These results indicate that active engagement in a real-world work environment facilitates the internalization of professional competencies, which in turn strengthens students' confidence in their ability to succeed. This is consistent with the finding that training activities and practical experiences consistently strengthen self-efficacy, which in turn enhances students' perceptions of their future career readiness (Gunawan et al., 2024). Consistent with the contribution of career planning, systematic professional strategizing has been empirically proven to enhance self-

efficacy, which then serves as a cognitive bridge for students to convert these practical experiences into substantive self-confidence (Aydın, 2022; Lisá et al., 2023). This confirms that self-efficacy plays an essential mediator, where high levels of self-confidence do not emerge automatically from field experience, but rather through a process of strengthening self-beliefs mediated by strategic planning. Thus, strengthening self-efficacy is a key determinant that enables students to more effectively manage problems and complete tasks in a professional environment (Peng & Yue, 2022).

Career Planning Has a Positive and Significant Influence on Students' Self-Confidence

Developing a structured career roadmap provides students with a clear sense of professional direction, significantly enhancing their confidence in facing job market dynamics (Yiming et al., 2024). This planning structure facilitates the development of self-efficacy, which serves as a key mediating mechanism in enhancing students' readiness and competitiveness in the job market (Li et al., 2022). (Pandya et al., 2023) This suggests that students with a well-developed career plan are more likely to optimize self-efficacy as a psychological foundation for facing professional demands (Saputro et al., 2023). (Tentama & Nur, 2021) This process demonstrates that self-efficacy acts as a cognitive mediator that translates strategic readiness into concrete actionable beliefs. Theoretically, this relationship confirms that career planning is not merely an administrative instrument, but rather a cognitive resource that mitigates career-related concerns through systematic self-efficacy enhancement (Kleine et al., 2022). This is in line with the social cognitive theoretical framework that positions self-efficacy as a central cognitive variable in motivating individual behavior to seek opportunities and manage career challenges more adaptively (Zhao et al., 2021). Thus, self-efficacy serves as a bridge that transforms structured career planning into tangible self-confidence enhancement, while ensuring that students are able to adapt to changes in the dynamic work environment. This integration of careful planning and self-confidence ultimately creates crucial adaptive competencies for students in achieving anticipated career outcomes (Hui et al., 2024). Students' success in navigating the complexities of the professional world relies heavily on the alignment between perceived self-efficacy and planned strategic actions, thus strengthening their confidence in anticipating desired career outcomes. Thus, high self-efficacy acts as a key driver that enables individuals to remain optimistic and persistent in the face of professional obstacles that demand mental toughness (Nguyen, 2023). High self-efficacy enables individuals to set more challenging goals and maintain persistence when faced with complex tasks (Mason et al., 2022).

Internship Experience Has a Positive and Significant Influence on Students' Self-Efficacy

Direct exposure to the dynamics of the working world facilitates students to conduct accurate self-assessments of their abilities, which directly optimizes their confidence in completing professional tasks (Turda, 2024). The results of the analysis show that internship experience has a positive but insignificant effect on self-efficacy. This phenomenon indicates that although internships provide practical exposure, students may require guided reflection to transform this experience into optimally internalized self-efficacy (Brass et al., 2023). This lack of significance underscores that practical experience without adequate cognitive mechanisms, such as reflective feedback, is not strong enough to automatically build students' self-confidence (Talsma et al., 2021). Therefore, structured pedagogical interventions are needed so that field experience can be transformed into psychological capital that significantly strengthens self-efficacy (Rosantono et al., 2021). This is in line with the view that involvement in a real work environment is crucial, but self-efficacy remains the main determinant that ensures students are able to transform this experience into competencies ready to be applied in the job market (Zhou et al., 2023).

Career Planning Has a Positive and Significant Influence on Students' Self-Efficacy

Theoretically, active involvement in designing a career path allows students to conduct more comprehensive self-assessments and goal-setting, which directly optimizes confidence in their capabilities in career-related decision-making (Akhsania et al., 2021). This structured planning process provides a strong cognitive foundation, where self-efficacy serves as a catalyst in converting future plans into concrete beliefs to overcome upcoming career challenges. Through systematic planning, students are able to strengthen their self-efficacy, which in turn mitigates doubts in facing the uncertainty of the world of work (Okolie et al., 2022). This increase in self-efficacy also acts as an effective buffer mechanism in suppressing career anxiety, especially amidst labor market volatility triggered by unexpected changes in circumstances (Elfina & Andriany, 2023). Thus, strengthening self-efficacy through comprehensive career planning plays a significant role in determining students' career

competencies (Kholifah et al., 2025). Empirically, integrated planning capacity has been shown to be positively correlated with self-efficacy in job search, which collectively strengthens students' ability to achieve sustainable career development (Gerçek, 2023; Wu & Zhao, 2022). The mediation of self-efficacy in this relationship explains that the acquisition of career resources, whether through internship programs or strategic planning, will not produce optimal self-confidence without adequate cognitive internalization of individual capacities (Pianda et al., 2025). This gap between practical exposure and realization of self-efficacy emphasizes the importance of interventions that can bridge career exploration with the formation of a more robust future self-concept.

Thus, self-efficacy serves as a crucial mediator that converts experiential capital and planning into tangible career adaptability (Liu et al., 2023), as well as strengthening individual optimism in navigating inevitable professional disruptions (Ahmad & Nasir, 2021).

Self-Efficacy Has a Positive and Significant Influence on Students' Self-Confidence

A strong belief in one's capabilities serves as a psychological anchor that encourages students to view challenges as development opportunities, thereby increasing their confidence when interacting in professional environments (Wang & Liu, 2022). This increased self-efficacy constructs a more stable foundation for students to cultivate pride in their achievements, which in turn strengthens their confidence to actualize personal values in the workplace (Chuang et al., 2022). As shown in the literature, high self-efficacy in educational and professional contexts consistently serves as an important predictor of individual confidence in facing various situations, including work environments that demand mental toughness. Specifically, self-efficacy acts as a mediator that facilitates the transformation of internship experiences and career planning into a stable form of self-confidence, where individuals who have high perceptions of ability tend to be more successful in integrating practical skills into their professional identity (Malureanu et al., 2021). High self-efficacy also helps suppress the tendency for self-assessment bias that often occurs during the transition from the academic to the professional world, allowing students to be more objective in evaluating their competencies (Jones & Wang, 2022). Thus, the integration of practical experience and strategic planning creates a synergy that strengthens self-efficacy as a key driver in building resilient self-confidence (Andrews et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2024).

Empirically, individuals who are able to cultivate confidence in their own abilities will have higher motivation to achieve personal achievements, which ultimately validates their self-confidence as competent young professionals (Williams et al., 2021).

Self-Efficacy Mediates the Effect of Internship Experience on Students' Self-Confidence .

This mediating mechanism suggests that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in converting practical exposure from internships into concrete confidence in overcoming various professional challenges, in line with the theory that observing competent models can increase an individual's capacity to believe in their potential for future success (Hutasuhut et al., 2023). Furthermore, self-efficacy serves as a cognitive lens that filters the internship experience to make it relevant to career needs, so that students not only complete technical tasks but also strengthen their confidence in their professional capacity (Oberman et al., 2021; Qiao et al., 2022). This confirms that success in internship tasks is a form of *mastery experience* that is essential in building authentic self-confidence, where the experience is validated by the individual as concrete evidence of their competence (Astuti & Purwanto, 2024). Thus, self-efficacy formed from success in the work environment substantially increases students' self-confidence because they view challenges as opportunities to demonstrate their potential, as emphasized in social cognitive theory that places efficacy at the center of individual motivation and performance (Bekešienė, 2023). The integration of deep internship experiences has been shown to significantly contribute to job readiness, where direct interaction in a professional environment is a key foundation in validating students' perceptions of ability (Amalia et al., 2023; Chukwuedo & Ementa, 2022).

Self-Efficacy Mediates the Effect of Career Planning on Students' Self-Confidence

Structured career planning provides a more precise direction, allowing students to conceptualize professional goals cognitively, thus minimizing self-doubt by strengthening confidence in personal capacity (Ping et al., 2021). This process creates a logical flow where students who actively develop career plans tend to be more capable of objective self-assessment, which in turn stimulates self-efficacy in managing professional transitions (Xu et al., 2023). By strengthening the understanding of career aspirations and interests, high self-efficacy acts as a

mechanism that transforms these future plans into operational beliefs in facing the demands of the working world (Bi et al., 2023), (Vautero & Silva, 2022) because individuals who are able to map out long-term goals proactively will show higher persistence in overcoming obstacles that arise during the career transition phase (Circir et al., 2023; Rüschoff et al., 2021). Thus, a thorough career plan not only functions as an administrative guide but also acts as a cognitive catalyst that triggers self-efficacy to transform future uncertainty into measurable professional readiness. The mediating role of self-efficacy here confirms that self-efficacy functions as a cognitive bridge that translates strategic planning into beliefs in one's own competence, which ultimately validates students' confidence when facing the realities of the labor market (Duggal et al., 2023). This is in line with the finding that individuals with high self-efficacy tend to be more persistent in setting goals and remain persistent when facing difficulties in the job search process (Stremersch et al., 2021). Therefore, in line with the focus of this study, self-efficacy is a mechanism that bridges internship experiences and career planning with students' confidence in facing job search challenges and transitioning to the labor market (Guan et al., 2022). , students who have a strong future orientation and are actively involved in career planning activities are proven to be more competent and have greater self-confidence in navigating academic and professional obstacles. Providing a targeted career planning workshop has been shown to be an effective strategic intervention, as it can increase students' self-efficacy while strengthening life satisfaction through the development of realistic career plans. Thus, strengthening self-efficacy through careful planning facilitates a smoother transition from the academic environment to dynamic professional demands (Badwy et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it was found that Internship Experience and Career Planning had a positive and significant influence on Self-Efficacy. Furthermore, Self-Efficacy was also shown to have a positive and significant influence on Self-Confidence. Meanwhile, Internship Experience did not show a significant direct influence on Self-Confidence, but did have a positive and significant influence through Self-Efficacy as a mediating variable.

The research results also show that career planning has a positive and significant effect on self-confidence through self-efficacy. Therefore, self-efficacy plays a crucial role as a mediating variable, bridging the influence of internship experience and career planning on improving students' self-confidence.

The results of the study show that increasing self-confidence can be done through strengthening internship experiences and career planning accompanied by efforts to increase students' confidence in their own abilities. Future research could incorporate additional variables and a broader range of subjects, thereby providing a clearer description.

Author Contributions: Compiled a summary of the results from the distributed questionnaires for subsequent analysis; also assisted in interpreting the data analysis results.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) utilized artificial intelligence (AI) tools to search for additional information related to the research findings. The author(s) assume full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript, including all content generated or assisted by AI.

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