Exploration of Self-Confidence in Students' Self-Concept and Its Impact on Work Competence in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aims to analyze the in-depth interrelationship between self-efficacy and student self-concept , as well as its implications for the readiness and mastery of work competencies in the digital ecosystem. Using data triangulation (in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis) on pamulang university students, this study focuses on the transition to a professional career.

The findings show that self-efficacy is formed from the interaction of internal factors (learning strategies and organizational activity) and authentic external support (lecturers, colleagues, family). Fluctuations in self-efficacy are critically influenced by personal achievement versus social comparison, and are assumed to be fundamental to fostering digital independence.

Furthermore, self-concept is internalized through experiential reflection and authoritative feedback. Self-authenticity is achieved when subjects break free from the pressures of social comparison, with professional image strategies centered on ethical consistency and proactive initiative. The synergy between contextual self-efficacy and mature self-concept is directly correlated with the mastery of digital work competencies, such as virtual collaboration and self-upskilling.

Theoretically, this study confirms the crucial role of authentic social validation as a counterweight to the destructive impact of digital social comparison pressure. Practical recommendations urge the intervention of structured self-reflection development (through professional guidance) as a priority over technical training, in order to produce innovative and risk-taking graduates in the digital work landscape.
Keywords: self-confidence; self-concept; digital work competencies; self-authenticity; self-efficacy.

Introduction
The contemporary young generation is characterized as a progressive generation that constantly interacts with rapidly evolving technological advancements. This interaction implies that this age group has significant potential to be innovative, think critically, and demonstrate high adaptability to technological innovation.

Consequently, this situation presents a substantial challenge for educational institutions, parents, and all components of society to closely monitor the potential negative implications that may arise from technological acceleration. Such negative impacts include, but are not limited to, personality dysfunction, confidence deficits, situational blocking phenomena, incoherence in lifestyle, and identity crises. This development is inevitable, given the influence of the environment and the penetration of foreign cultures which play a role as the main causality variable (Artisna et al, 2022). As a result, there is an erosion of norms that were previously reinforced by certain groups, communities, or jurisdictions as a direct consequence of the entry of global cultural influences.

Therefore, strengthening self-concept is essential and urgent in the framework of individual personality development. This strengthening is expected to function as an internal strength for the younger generation to optimize their personal potential (Octavia, 2020). The main purpose of strengthening this self-concept is to encourage creative, critical, and innovative thinking in young people, while still adhering to the principles of religious, cultural, and national norms. Specifically, personality development through self-concept aims to facilitate effective social adaptation (Syahraeni, 2020). At the implementation level, self-concept empowers individuals to plan for the future prospectively, thus making it a crucial need for the adolescent population. According to Saraswatia et al. (2016), self-concept represents self-knowledge that influences the way individuals process information and make decisions. The construction of self-concept is based on evaluation from external parties as well as internal assessments (Sarwono & Meinarno, 2009).

In short, self-concept serves as a fundamental determinant that shapes a person's personality and guides individual behavior (Syahraeni, 2020). Thus, strengthening self-concept in adolescent personality development is a vital foundation for navigating a sustainable life in the midst of intensive technological developments. Creating adolescents with the capacity to think critically, innovatively, confidently, and the ability to formulate personal goals is the collective responsibility of all elements of society, especially school and family institutions, in order to create a conducive and healthy social environment.

Theoretical Framework

Self-Concept and Self-Confidence

Self-Concept is defined as an individual's subjective view, assessment, and evaluation of himself, including personal opinions, awareness of self-identity, and comparison with other individuals (Fuhrmann, 2019; Calhoun & Acocella). This construct is not genetically innate, but continues to develop and includes a person's understanding of his characteristics, capabilities, values, and attitudes. Individuals with Positive Self-Concept tend to be able to accept their reality, including constructive feedback and criticism, and show a level of satisfaction with various aspects of their personality. The concept of self is often analyzed through several dimensions, namely the physical self, the moral-ethical self, the family self, the personal self, and the social self.

Self-Confidence refers to the belief or optimism that individuals have about their abilities, as well as a comprehensive understanding of their strengths and limitations. Subjects with high self-confidence tend to show minimal hesitation in acting and are able to take responsibility for their decisions. Self-confidence is a substantial personality dimension in facilitating social interaction and potential actualization.

The Relationship Between Self-Concept and Self-Confidence

Many empirical studies indicate a positive and significant correlation between Self-Concept and Self-Confidence, particularly in the student population. The direction of this relationship shows that the quality of Self-Concept that is getting better or more positive in students will correlate with higher levels of Self-Confidence. In contrast, negative or low self-concept is associated with low levels of self-confidence. A positive self-concept has a crucial role in forming and strengthening self-confidence. Students with high levels of confidence tend to be more proactive in interactions, dare to express their views, ask questions, and contribute to generating innovative ideas.

Students in the Context of the Digital Era and the Demands of Work Competency

Students today are part of the digital generation (digital natives), who grow and develop in a digital information-rich environment and are exposed to technology from an early age (Dingli & Seychell, 2015). This condition creates complex psychological dynamics, especially in the context of online learning that demands strong adaptation capabilities and self-motivation.

Technological developments and the Digital Era (e.g. the Industrial Era 4.0), with its diverse social media features, have a dual impact—positive and negative—on students. One of the relevant impacts is its effect on Self-Confidence, where social interaction and the tendency to make self-comparisons on social media platforms can affect an individual's self-perception.

Work Competence is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, and expertise possessed by individuals, plus values that serve as behavioral guidelines. In the academic realm, work competence refers to the aggregate of abilities that are essential for the success of students after completing their studies. In the Digital Era, this competency increasingly emphasizes technological adaptation capabilities, soft skills, and complex problem-solving.

Implications of Self-Concept and Self-Confidence on Work Competence

Although the direct association between these three variables in a single study has not been widespread, the literature suggests a significant linkage. Self-confidence is known to have a substantial influence on a student's career planning, which is an integral component of job readiness. Students who are confident have more potential to realize expectations and targets in the field of work and work professionally.

An optimistic attitude, self-confidence, and positive self-concept are essential capital that facilitates students to be more active, show persistence, maintain motivation, and adjust to environmental demands. This is very relevant in facing the challenges of the world of work in the Digital Era which is fast-paced and demands high agility

Method

This research adopts a qualitative approach with the aim of exploring and gaining a comprehensive understanding of phenomena related to student self-confidence and self-concept in the context of readiness to face the challenges of the world of work in the digital era. The subject of this research is a middle-level student at Pamulang University. The determination of informants was carried out using purposive sampling techniques. This technique was chosen because informants are selected based on specific criteria, namely students who are in the phase of preparing for the transition to the professional world of work. This field research will be carried out at Pamulang University in October 2025.

Primary data collection techniques are collected through several triangulation methods. The main methods include in-depth interviews with selected students, direct observation of activities carried out in the campus environment that are relevant to job readiness, and analysis of documentation related to the readiness and self-development of the interviewed students.

Results

Student Confidence Exploration

The results of in-depth interviews indicate that students' confidence in self-efficacy is formed by the convergence of internal and external factors. Internally, student self-efficacy mainly comes from strategies and preparation that have been proven effective in the academic domain, as expressed by Informant I: "I feel confident because I already have a learning strategy that suits my needs." Furthermore, the experience of overcoming challenges through active involvement in student organizations is also a major contributor for several informants (Informant III).

Externally, the immediate social support environment plays the most significant role. This support includes not only the nuclear family (especially Mother, Informant I) but also the campus environment, such as Lecturers who provide constructive input (Informant II) and Close Friends who consistently provide positive affirmations (Informant III). Fluctuations in self-confidence are strongly influenced by experience of achievement and social comparison. The dominant increase occurred after appreciation from lecturers or success in achieving personal targets. In contrast, a sharp decline was observed after experiencing academic failure or when subjects compared themselves to other individuals in a social setting (Informant II). Students view self-confidence as an essential foundation for independence and willingness to take risks in the world of work. A conducive environment, characterized by openness, non-judgment (Informant I), and positive spirit and mutual appreciation (Informant III), is considered the optimal space for the actualization of self-abilities.

Construction of Student Self-Concept in the Digital Era

The exploration of students' self-understanding (Self-Concept) shows that awareness of self-strengths and weaknesses is internalized through reflection from practical experiences, triggered by feedback from authoritative and trusted parties. Feedback from lecturers/peers (Informant II), internship experience (Informant I), and group post-project reflection (Informant III) were agreed to be the main triggers for self-

understanding ahead of the transition to the world of work. Self-recognition is considered vital as a basis for career development, which aims to enable students to 'take on roles that are appropriate to their abilities' (Informant II) and serve as a 'basis for professional and personal development' (Informant III).

In the self-assessment process, students use trusted figures as 'self-mirrors' that provide authentic and critical perspectives, including honest friends (Informant I), supervisors (Informant II), and family members with work experience (Informant III). Self-authenticity is achieved when the subject gains psychological freedom from social pressure, marked by a turning point when he 'stops comparing myself to others' (Informant I) and 'realizes that not everyone has to like me' (Informant III). The main strategies for building a positive self-image in the professional and academic domains focus on behavioral and ethical consistency, including honesty, responsibility (Informant I), initiative, active contribution (Informant II), and humility (Informant III).

The Combined Impact on Work Competencies in the Digital Era

In the context of digital job demands, students consistently emphasize the urgency of virtual collaboration skills, data mastery, and digital communication. The competencies considered the most essential include the dominance of the use of collaboration tools (e.g., Google Workspace, Informant I) and basic data analysis (e.g., Excel/Google Sheets, Informant III). Improving digital capabilities is seen as urgent because of the relevance of today's work that is highly dependent on technology (Informant I) and as an instrument of competitiveness. The development of such skills is highly dependent on social networks and open learning resources (Friends and YouTube, Informants I, II, and III). Technology-based job readiness is felt after going through self-proof and empirical practices, such as completing training and hands-on practice (Informant I) or completing online projects independently (Informant II). Students view a work environment that is progressive, flexible, and active in the use of technology for coordination as the optimal place to implement their digital competencies. Their competency development strategies include self-paced online courses, freelance practice, and involvement in the digital community.

Discussion
Interpretation of the Relationship between Self-Confidence and Self-Concept
The findings indicate that student self-efficacy operates contextually, where validation from the immediate environment (support of lecturers and friends) serves as an external affirmation that strengthens self-efficacy (according to the Bandura framework) and supports Self-Esteem subject. A strong Self-Concept, which is based on reflection and authentic feedback, is a prerequisite for self-authenticity. The shift from reliance on Digital Social Validation to Self-Internalization (demonstrated by a rejection of social comparisons) is essential, given that a stable Self-Concept becomes the psychological foundation for independence and the courage to take risks in a dynamic digital landscape.

Analysis of the Impact on Work Competencies in the Digital Era
The synergistic impact between Self-Confidence and Self-Concept on digital work competencies is analyzed through the perspective of psychological readiness and proactive behavior. Self-confidence, manifested as the courage to 'learn new things and take risks' (Informant III), has been shown to encourage self-upskilling behavior and mastery of essential tools. In addition, mature self-introduction (Self-Concept) facilitates students' ability to 'take roles that are appropriate to their abilities' (Informant II), which is supported by digital work flexibility. This contributes to the creation of an independent, responsible, and adaptive workforce. Students' preference for an inclusive and non-judgmental work environment is a reflection of the need to stabilize the self-esteem fluctuations triggered by social comparisons, in the hope that a progressive environment can integrate authentic Self-Concept with effective work practices.

Research Implications and Contributions
Theoretically, this study confirms the significance of Authentic Social Validation as a critical counterweight to the potentially damaging pressures of Digital Social Comparison, enriching the literature related to Self-Concept in a digital context. Practically, the results of the study recommend interventions that focus on the Development of Structured Self-Reflection (through professional coaching) to strengthen Self-Concept. This approach is considered more effective than just focusing on technical skills, because a healthy self-concept is the psychological foundation that underlies students' independence and innovative courage in the world of technology-based work.

Conclusion
A Study of the Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Self-Concept on Students' Digital Work Competencies This qualitative research aims to elaborate the intrusive correlation between self-efficacy and self-concept in the student population of Pamulang University, as well as analyze its implications for the ability to master relevant work competencies in the digital environment.
Construction of Self-Efficacy and Self-Concept
The construction of self-efficacy is influenced by the interaction between internal factors (including efficient learning strategies and active participation in the organization) and authentic external support coming from authoritative figures such as lecturers, colleagues, and family. Fluctuations in the level of self-efficacy are

significantly influenced by the disparity between realized personal achievement versus social comparison results.

Meanwhile, self-concept is internalized through a process of deep reflection on practical experience and assimilation of authoritative feedback provided by trusted figures, namely lecturers, peers, and family units. Self-authenticity can be achieved when individual students are able to overcome and free themselves from the pressures caused by social comparisons. The establishment of a strategic professional image is based on ethical consistency and proactive initiative.

Synergistic Impact on Digital Capabilities

The synergy between contextual self-efficacy and self-concept that is thoroughly internalized shows a direct correlation with the level of mastery of digital work competencies. Self-efficacy-induced confidence manifests an individual's willingness to risk-take and triggers self-upskilling in assimilating essential digital tools (e.g., virtual collaboration and fundamental data analysis).

The mature self-concept facilitates students' ability to select professional roles that are congruent with their actual abilities in a flexible work ecosystem. Fundamentally, this study confirms the crucial significance of Authentic Social Validation as an effective counterweight mechanism to the potential destructive impact of Digital Social Comparative Pressure.

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