

Self-Efficacy and Social Support in Relation to Fear of Failure Among Job Seekers

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ABSTRACT

University graduate job seekers in Indonesia face intense labor market competition, which may give rise to fear of failure. This study aimed to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and social support with fear of failure among job seekers. A quantitative correlational design was employed, involving 314 job seekers under the age of 29 who held a university degree, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using three Likert-type scales: a fear of failure scale adapted from the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Conroy et al., 2002), a self-efficacy scale based on the dimensions of level, strength, and generality (Bandura, 1997), and a social support scale based on the dimensions proposed by Cutrona and Russell (1987). Data were analyzed using multiple regression with SPSS version 27. The results showed that self-efficacy and social support were simultaneously and significantly negatively related to fear of failure ($R = .572$, $R^2 = .327$, $p < .001$), accounting for 32.7% of the variance. Partially, self-efficacy ($t = -6.421$, $p < .001$) contributed more strongly than social support ($t = -3.473$, $p < .001$) in predicting fear of failure. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening self-efficacy and social support networks as psychological intervention strategies for job seekers navigating a competitive labor market.

Keywords: *Self-Efficacy, Social Support, Fear Of Failure, Job Seekers*

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INTRODUCTION

Human development unfolds in stages, from childhood dependency on parents, through adolescent identity formation, to early adulthood, when individuals are expected to become socially and economically independent. Working constitutes one of the central developmental tasks of early adulthood (Hurlock, 2002), functioning not merely as a means of earning an income but also as a way of fulfilling psychological and social needs. Indonesia's national labor force survey recorded an open unemployment rate of 6.23% among holders of diploma, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in February 2025, an increase from 5.25% in the same period the previous year (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2025). This trend indicates that a higher-education credential does not automatically guarantee employment, and that new graduates must compete intensely with more experienced job seekers from earlier cohorts. Such uneven competition often provokes anxiety, and in some

cases a pronounced fear of failure, among recent graduates entering the labor market (Kamila et al., 2023).

Fear of failure has broad consequences for task choice, effort, persistence, achievement performance, intrinsic motivation, and psychological well-being (Elliot & Sheldon, 1997). Individuals who fear failure tend to avoid competitive or risky situations, because failure is perceived as threatening to their self-esteem and to others' perceptions of their competence. Conroy et al. (2002) conceptualized fear of failure as a motivational disposition to avoid the negative consequences of failure, including shame, loss of self-esteem, and loss of social influence, a view consistent with Atkinson's (1993) account of individuals' capacity to anticipate the shame and humiliation associated with underachievement. Elliot and Thrash (2004) further classified fear of failure as an avoidance-oriented temperament closely linked to achievement-goal orientation, with implications not only for individuals' emotional experience but also for their behavior and motivation.

Beliefs held by individuals about their own capabilities also shape the extent to which they experience fear of failure. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments. The higher an individual's perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goals they set for themselves and the stronger their commitment to those goals (Pudjiastuti, 2012). Job seekers with low self-efficacy tend to avoid tasks perceived as difficult because they doubt their own competence, making them more vulnerable to fear of failure. Recent international evidence corroborates this pattern: among vocational school students, self-efficacy has been shown to negatively predict fear of failure and to shape subsequent career adaptability (Chuang et al., 2022), while a cross-national study of business students in Latin America similarly found that fear of failure undermines entrepreneurial passion, which in turn is linked to entrepreneurial self-efficacy (García-Salirrosas et al., 2025). A recent scoping review further concluded that fear of failure remains a persistent psychological barrier across educational and career-related transitions worldwide, underscoring the continued relevance of self-efficacy as a protective psychological resource (Gao et al., 2024).

In addition to self-efficacy, social support is another important factor that influences fear of failure. Winkel (2009) identified the family environment as one of the external elements that contributes to fear of failure. Families play a critical role in shaping children's independence (Santrock, 2002), and according to Cutrona and Russell (1987), social support is a relational process shaped by an individual's perception of being loved, valued, and supported by others when facing life's pressures.

Self-efficacy can therefore be regarded as an internal factor, while social support represents an external factor contributing to fear of failure among job seekers. Muhid and Mukarromah (2018) found a significant effect of parental expectations and academic self-efficacy on the tendency toward fear of failure among high school students. Similarly, Ningrum and Suprihatin (2019) reported a negative relationship between self-efficacy and fear of failure among undergraduate students working on their theses. Murdafasmi et al.

(2020) found a negative relationship between social support and fear of failure among foodpreneurs, and Pamungkas and Muhid (2020) documented associations among perfectionism, shame, social support, and fear of failure in high school students. These studies differ from the present research in terms of the predictor variables, the study population, and the research context, indicating that the relationship between self-efficacy, social support, and fear of failure specifically among university graduate job seekers remains an underexplored and relevant topic for further investigation.

Based on the foregoing, this study aimed to examine: (1) the simultaneous relationship between self-efficacy and social support with fear of failure among job seekers; (2) the relationship between self-efficacy and fear of failure among job seekers; and (3) the relationship between social support and fear of failure among job seekers. Based on the theoretical framework above, the hypotheses proposed in this study were: (H1) there is a relationship between self-efficacy and social support, taken together, and fear of failure among job seekers; (H2) there is a negative relationship between self-efficacy and fear of failure among job seekers; and (H3) there is a negative relationship between social support and fear of failure among job seekers.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative correlational design intended to determine the extent to which variables are related to one another (Sugiyono, 2010). Specifically, it examined the relationship between self-efficacy and social support as independent variables and fear of failure as the dependent variable, using multiple regression analysis.

The population of this study consisted of individuals who were actively seeking employment and had completed higher education. Participants were selected using a non-probability, purposive sampling technique based on the following criteria: (a) holding a university degree, (b) being under 29 years of age and actively seeking employment, and (c) willingness to participate as a respondent. Based on these criteria, 314 eligible participants were obtained. Data were collected online via social media over an 11-day period, from November 27 to December 7, 2024.

This study involved one dependent variable, fear of failure (Y), and two independent variables, self-efficacy (X1) and social support (X2). Fear of failure was defined as the anticipation of negative consequences of failure combined with a diminished expectation of success, which may arise from a perceived threat to the self posed by failure or underachievement. Self-efficacy was defined as an individual's belief in their capability to perform a task or solve a problem, measured through the dimensions of level, strength, and generality. Social support was defined as the psychological comfort an individual experiences as a result of support received from others, such as family, friends, neighbors, or colleagues, reflecting a subjective evaluation of the quality of that support. Data were collected using three Likert-type scales with four response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree (Sugiyono, 2022).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Prior to hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were conducted, including tests of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, using SPSS version 27. Once the assumptions were satisfied, hypothesis testing was performed using multiple regression analysis to examine both the simultaneous and partial relationships between self-efficacy, social support, and fear of failure.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the data were normally distributed ($p = .200$, $p > .05$). The linearity test indicated a linear relationship between self-efficacy and fear of failure ($F = 0.675$, $p = .894$) and between social support and fear of failure ($F = 1.037$, $p = .418$). The multicollinearity test indicated no multicollinearity among the independent variables (tolerance = .551 > .10; VIF = 1.817 < 10). The heteroscedasticity test, using Spearman's rho, likewise indicated no heteroscedasticity for either independent variable ($p = .189$ and $p = .859$, both > .05). All assumptions required for multiple regression analysis were therefore satisfied.

The results of the simultaneous multiple regression analysis showed that self-efficacy and social support, taken together, were significantly related to fear of failure among job seekers (Table 1).

Table 1. Results of the Simultaneous Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ²	Sig.	Result
1	.572	.327	< .001	Significant

An R value of .572 with $p < .001$ indicates a significant relationship between self-efficacy (X1) and social support (X2), taken together, and fear of failure (Y), thereby supporting the first hypothesis (H1). The R² value of .327 indicates that self-efficacy and social support jointly accounted for 32.7% of the variance in fear of failure, while the remaining 67.3% was explained by variables outside the scope of this study.

Table 2. Results of the Partial Regression Analysis

Variable	t	Sig.	Result
Self-Efficacy	-6.421	< .001	Significant
Social Support	-3.473	< .001	Significant

The partial correlation results showed a t-value of -6.421 ($p < .001$) for self-efficacy, indicating a significant negative relationship between self-efficacy and fear of failure, thereby supporting the second hypothesis (H2). Social support showed a t-value of -3.473 ($p < .001$), indicating a significant negative relationship between social support and fear of failure, thereby supporting the third hypothesis (H3) as well.

DISCUSSION

The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that the combination of self-efficacy and social support was significantly and negatively related to fear of failure among

job seekers ($R = .572$, $R^2 = .327$, $p < .001$), meaning that the two variables jointly accounted for 32.7% of the variance in fear of failure, while the remaining 67.3% was explained by factors outside this model. This finding confirms the first hypothesis (H1). In a competitive labor market, the combination of strong self-belief and support from one's social environment functions as important psychological capital that helps individuals navigate lengthy selection processes, repeated rejection, and uncertainty about the future without being overwhelmed by debilitating fear. This is consistent with recent findings that fear of failure continues to act as a persistent psychological barrier across educational and career transitions, and that psychological resources such as self-efficacy help buffer its negative effects (Gao et al., 2024). The remaining unexplained variance of 67.3% suggests that other factors beyond self-efficacy and social support also contribute to fear of failure among job seekers and warrant further investigation in future research.

Partially, self-efficacy was significantly and negatively related to fear of failure ($t = -6.421$, $p < .001$), thereby confirming the second hypothesis (H2). The higher a job seeker's self-efficacy, the lower their fear of failure. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to view difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered, maintain strong commitment to their goals, and recover quickly from setbacks (Bandura, 1997), whereas individuals with low self-efficacy tend to avoid difficult tasks and doubt their own capabilities (Pudjiastuti, 2012). In the context of job seeking, high self-efficacy is associated with confidence in preparing competitive applications, performing well in interviews, and coping with rejection without losing motivation. This finding is consistent with Muhid and Mukarromah (2018), who found that academic self-efficacy significantly influenced fear of failure tendencies among students, and with Chuang et al. (2022), who found that self-efficacy negatively predicted fear of failure among vocational school students navigating career transitions. The larger t -value for self-efficacy compared to social support ($t = -3.473$) suggests that internal factors—namely, belief in one's own capability—play a more dominant role than external factors, consistent with Bandura's (1997) view that self-efficacy is a powerful predictor of behavior because individuals actively construct meaning from the situations they encounter.

Social support was also significantly and negatively related to fear of failure ($t = -3.473$, $p < .001$), thereby confirming the third hypothesis (H3), and is consistent with Murdafasmi et al.'s (2020) findings among foodpreneurs. Within the framework proposed by Cutrona and Russell (1987), social support is not merely a function of the number of relationships an individual has, but rather a subjective evaluation of the quality of support received from family, friends, or colleagues. Winkel (2009) emphasized that the atmosphere and support provided within the family environment constitute one of the external elements that influence an individual's likelihood of success, including their capacity to cope with fear of failure. When job seekers receive adequate support from their social environment, they feel valued and supported, which helps reduce anxiety and fear of failure while also providing useful perspectives and advice for navigating the challenges of the job search process. This is further corroborated by recent evidence from entrepreneurship research showing that fear of failure is closely intertwined with self-efficacy and

motivational resources in shaping how individuals approach uncertain, high-stakes pursuits such as career entry or business formation (García-Salirrosas et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study found that self-efficacy and social support, both jointly and individually, were significantly and negatively associated with fear of failure among job seekers. Together, these variables explained 32.7% of the variance in fear of failure, with self-efficacy showing a stronger contribution than social support. These findings highlight the importance of personal confidence and supportive social relationships in reducing fear of failure during the job search process. Job seekers are encouraged to strengthen self-efficacy through achievable job-search goals, skills training, and mock interviews, while also maintaining supportive relationships with family, peers, and alumni. Viewing failure as a learning opportunity rather than a sign of incompetence may also help reduce fear of failure. Future research should examine additional factors influencing fear of failure, use longitudinal designs to capture changes over time, include more diverse samples, and incorporate qualitative approaches to better understand job seekers' experiences.

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