

Life After Graduation : A Systematic Literature Review of Life Design Career Counseling for High School Students

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Abstract

The challenges of globalization, rapid technological advancement, and dynamic job markets have increased the urgency of career planning among high school students. This study aims to systematically review the effectiveness, conceptual approaches, and procedural techniques of Life Design Career Counseling (LDCC) in addressing students' career dilemmas, particularly those related to post-secondary education choices. Using a systematic literature review method based on PRISMA-P standards, A total of 10 primary studies published within the last 10 years were selected based on specific inclusion criteria: relevance to high school students (or equivalent), focus on career development using the LDCC model, and publication within the 2015–2025 period. Studies unrelated to upper-secondary level populations or lacking primary data were excluded. Literature was gathered from Google Scholar, SINTA Ristekbrin, and Elsevier. The findings indicate that LDCC effectively enhances students' career adaptability, vocational certainty, self-efficacy, optimism, and reflective capacity. Grounded in Career Construction Theory (CCT), LDCC utilizes narrative-based approaches, such as the Career Construction Interview (CCI), to help students make sense of their life stories and align them with meaningful career goals. The implementation of LDCC varies across individual, group, and online settings, typically delivered over 3 to 8 sessions. Techniques like storytelling, visual-symbolic tools, and structured interviews were found to be adaptable for diverse student populations, including those with special needs and in resource-constrained contexts. This review concludes that LDCC offers a holistic and personalized intervention framework that supports students' self-exploration and future career planning. The study highlights the practical implications for school counselors to adopt LDCC as a proactive career intervention method tailored to students' developmental and contextual needs.

Keywords: *Life Design Counseling, High School Students, Career Counseling, Career Development*

Introduction

The digital era has brought numerous developments in various sectors of life, one of which is the career sector. Career selection is one of the important aspects for every individual. As for the career itself, it has now faced increasingly diverse challenges, such as globalization, migration, international competition, market changes, technology, politics, and the surrounding environment (Scott, 2023). These various challenges encourage every individual, especially students, to be able to adapt and not be overwhelmed by technological developments. This creates competition in the world of work that will be increasingly competitive, and of course it is a challenge for schools to pay more attention to and prepare career planning for students as early as possible (Hamzati et al, 2023). With the increasingly fierce competition, high school students must prepare themselves carefully so that they have qualified abilities to survive and compete in the world of work (Fitri et al, 2021). Classifying adolescents into two stages, namely early adolescents (13-16 years old) and late adolescents (16-18 years old) (Hurlock, 1996).

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Super (1969) in Stating that adolescents are at a crucial stage, namely the stage of exploring and crystallizing their career choices (Bakar et al, 2004). This means that students are expected to have started planning their career choices and looking for information about it. But in reality, there are still many students who experience problems in their career journey. Career problems that arise can be in the form of indecision in determining their career in the future. Career instability can result in academic procrastination, panic in making decisions that result in decisions that are not optimal, and often make career switches (Feldman, 2003). Students who make career decisions with hesitation can result in career decisions that are not in accordance with the field of interest, so that they will have difficulty adapting and their potential cannot develop properly (Permatasari et al, 2023).

Research conducted by researcher said that high school and vocational high school students face serious problems with their career decision-making (Billiny, 2019). This is in line with research in 26 class X students at SMAN 1 Sekaran, it showed that 73% of students were still confused about determining their interests, talents, and career choices (Sakti et al, 2019). Further research in grade XII students of SMKN 12 Surabaya, the results showed that 44.4% of students did not know the relationship between talents, interests, hobbies, and potential, 38.9% of students did not have a career plan, and 36.1% of students were not satisfied with the career choices taken at this time (Khotimah et al, 2019). These various career problems that arise are caused by the lack of preparation and lack of maturity and career planning of high school students. Based on these data, high school students need appropriate guidance and counseling interventions to overcome their career problems. One of the interventions that can be carried out is life design career counseling. Life design career counseling is counseling to show the uniqueness of counseling through life stories (Savickas, 2015). The understanding and intervention of life design in career counseling is still relatively new. The paradigm of life design itself has evolved to adapt to the challenges that arise in the 21st century to develop a career in counseling (Prasetya et al, 2022).

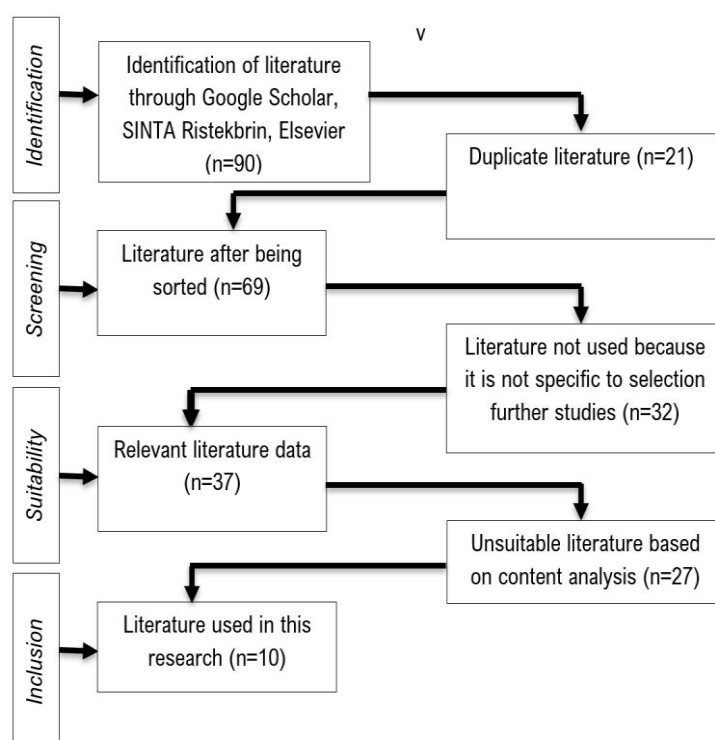
Life design career counseling is an effective guidance intervention to help students address various career-related issues. This approach goes beyond simple career choice; it supports students in exploring potential career paths that align with their personal values and abilities. Moreover, it enables students to reconstruct their life narratives through meaning-making, set life goals, strengthen their self-concept, and design a more meaningful future (Savickas, 2012). The life design intervention model consists of six stages, including 1) Defining the career problem and setting counseling goals 2) Encouraging reflection on past and future expectations, life experiences, and social interactions to shape a career narrative 3) Opening new perspectives to help clients rewrite their stories by incorporating these perspectives 4) Placing the current career dilemma within the new narrative 5) Developing specific plans to overcome current obstacles and practice the new life story 6) Designing both short-term and long-term follow-up actions (Savickas et al, 2009). The intervention process in life design career counseling is conducted through the Career Construction Interview (CCI). Life design career counseling focuses on five key topics: role models, favorite television shows, magazines or websites, favorite stories from books or movies, personal mottos, and early recollections from ages three to six (Savickas, 2011; Wang et al, 2023).

Implementing life design career counseling among students has been shown to significantly influence their career narratives before and after the intervention. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the life design approach in resolving career decision-making issues, particularly for high school students. Various studies have found positive changes in students' self-confidence, career adaptability, and reductions in anxiety, uncertainty, insecurity, and doubt

regarding their career choices. Several empirical studies support the effectiveness of life design career counseling in addressing students' career-related concerns. Found that students demonstrated significant improvements in self-confidence and career adaptability after participating in life design interventions (Maree et al, 2016). In a subsequent study, observed a reduction in students' indecisiveness regarding their career choices (Maree, 2020). Similarly, reported a noticeable decrease in students' levels of career-related anxiety, uncertainty, and insecurity following the intervention (Barclay et al, 2016; Obi, 2015). These findings suggest that life design career counseling is a valuable approach in empowering students to navigate complex career decisions and build a more coherent and confident career narrative.

Stating that direct intervention from life design career counseling is still very rare (Permatasari et al, 2023). Therefore, a systematic literature review is needed on life design career counseling. This article aims to analyze relevant research to find out 1) the effectiveness of life design career counseling 2) the concept and approach used 3) the procedure for implementing life design career counseling. The focus of this research is on student career problems regarding the obstacles experienced by students in their career journey in determining further study, not on careers in the world of work. The results of this study are expected to be considered by guidance and counseling teachers to be able to provide life design career counseling interventions in helping high school/vocational school students to be able to prepare themselves and be competent when they enter the next stage.

Method



Picture 1. Flow Chart from Systematic Literature Review

This study uses systematic literature review as the method used. The use of this method is effective for use in researching the state of knowledge and finding gaps in the field of research that can help researchers to steer the direction of research into the future (Paul et al, 2020). The literature data contained in this study was collected based on relevant research from both international and national journals. The search for research data was carried out through Google

Scholar, Sinta Ristekbrin, and Elsevier. The method in this study uses the PRISMA-P standard. Conducting a systematic literature review is carried out with three main steps, including: planning the systematic literature review process, preparing review results with a systematic process, compiling a review results report with research sourced from primary sources (Kitchenham, 2004). Data sources were obtained from various journals downloaded through Google Scholar, Sinta Ristekbrin and Elsevier. To review the research data, the main keywords used are "career counseling" "life design counselling" "life design career counselling" "high school students". The inclusion criteria set in the selection of relevant literature in this study are journals that have been published for a maximum of the past 10 years, specific to the selection of advanced studies, and the subject is an upper secondary student or equivalent. The process of selecting articles to obtain articles relevant to the research is shown in flow chart Below:

The initial stage of collecting relevant sources involved identifying literature through Google Scholar, SINTA, and Elsevier. Keywords such as "career counseling," "life design counseling," and "high school students" were used to narrow the focus of the literature search. A total of 90 sources were initially identified based on the selected keywords. After eliminating duplicate entries, 69 distinct articles remained. For the purposes of this article, only literature focusing on post-secondary education decision-making was included, while studies discussing careers in general or within the workforce were excluded. Following this filtering process, 37 sources were retained. The literature was further refined based on content relevance. The search was limited to publications from 2015 to 2025 to ensure the inclusion of recent studies. In the final screening stage, articles were selected according to all inclusion and exclusion criteria, resulting in 10 articles deemed suitable for use in this study.

Results

This study involved 10 sorted literature data that came from primary research and met the study quality assessment and study selection criteria. The literature data used has also been published in national and international journals to prove that life design career counselling is needed by high school students around the world and is not limited to Indonesia. The following is a summary of the primary literature data attached in table 2:

Table 1. Study Quality Assessment

No	Author	Title	Year	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	Result
1	Maree, J. G., & Symington, C.	Life design counselling effects on the career adaptability of learners in a selective independent school setting	2015	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Cardoso, P., Gonçalves, M. M., Duarte, M. E., Silva, J. R., & Alves, D.	Life Design Counseling with an Adolescent: A Process-Outcome Case Study	2016	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Cardoso, P., Janeiro, I. N., & Duarte, M. E.	Life design counseling group intervention with Portuguese adolescents: A process and outcome study	2018	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Prasetya, A., Fatma, H. W., Awalya, A., & Purwanto, E.	Efektivitas teknik konseling karier life design terhadap kemampuan adaptabilitas karier siswa	2022	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Ruiters, S-E., & Maree, J. G.	Life Design Counselling with a Learner from a Vocational School Setting	2022	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Che Jude, C., Maree, J. G., & Jordaan, J.	Career indecision in a resource-constrained community	2023	✓	✓	✓	✓

No	Author	Title	Year	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	Result
7	Istiqomah, M., Sugiyono, S., & Sunawan, S.	The Effect of Life Design Online Career Counseling to Improve the Career Adaptability and Optimism	2023	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Wang, D., & Liu, X.	Intervention and evaluation of the life design counseling: A case study	2023	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Prasetya, A., Trisnani, R. P., & Lestari, W. A.	Konseling Karir Life Design untuk Meningkatkan Kecerdasan Adversitas dalam Pengambilan Keputusan Karir Siswa	2024	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Supriatna, M., Handani, T., Yudha, E. S., & Gofur, R.	Empowering Choices: Impact of Life Design Career Guidance on Senior High School Students' Career Development in Indonesia	2024	✓	✓	✓	✓

This table presents a summary of data from ten primary studies evaluated in this literature review, focusing on the use of Life Design Career Counseling. Each entry includes information about the authors, the title of the study, and the publication year, as well as whether the study meets the three research questions (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3) related to the effectiveness, concepts, and implementation procedures of counseling. Results marked with a check symbol (✓) indicate that the study successfully provided relevant answers to these research questions. This table aims to provide a systematic overview of the quality and contributions of each study in supporting the understanding of the effectiveness of career counseling for high school students.

Discussion

The Effectiveness of Life Design Career Counseling

Based on an in-depth literature analysis of the journals reviewed, life design career counseling is consistently able to improve various aspects of career readiness in students (Prasetya et al, 2022; Supriatna, et al, 2024). Several studies have confirmed a significant increase in career adaptability, namely the ability to adapt to changes and challenges faced in their career journey, and reported that life design counseling interventions were able to increase the dimensions of career adaptability, namely concern, control, curiosity, and confidence in students (Istiqomah et al, 2023; Maree et al, 2015; Wang et al, 2023). Evidence that life design career counseling is effective in increasing career adaptability is in research who conducted experiments on 4 groups, namely 2 experimental groups and 2 control groups with each group totaling 8 people (Prasetya et al, 2022). The results of the provision of life design career counseling interventions in experimental group 1 experienced an average increase from the pretest (M=94.13; SD=9.387) to posttest (M=115.50) and follow-up (M=119.43; SD=2.812). while in control group 1 showed a pretest value (M=79.50; SD=13.628) to posttest (M=89.65; SD=12.113) and follow-up (M=91.212; SD=11.518). These results prove that the group given life design career counseling interventions experienced a significant increase in career adaptability compared to the control group.

Research Conducting life design career counseling interventions with qualitative methods on 16-year-old adolescents who are confused to determine the choice of their advanced study major (Wang et al, 2023). After being given life design career counseling interventions, there are changes in the dimensions of career adaptability. Career anxiety changed from the original 1.66 standard deviation to 0.21 standard deviation, career control changed from 1.28 standard deviation to 0.51 standard deviation, career curiosity changed from 1.16 standard deviation to 0.2 standard deviation, career confidence changed from below 1.41 standard deviation to below

0.68 standard deviation, and career adaptability changed from below 1.58 standard deviation to below 0.33 standard deviation. In addition to career adaptability, career life design counseling has proven to be effective in improving other aspects that support the needs of students in facing the uncertainty of their career choice, namely vocational certainty (Prasetya, 2024). Adversity Intelligence, student optimism, and career certainty and self-efficacy (Cardoso, 2018; Istiqomah et al, 2023). Life design career counseling has also been proven to be effective in improving internal aspects, such as increasing career meaning, self-reflection, and independence in making decisions (Ruiters et al, 2022). However, research in communities with limited resources (Jude et al, 2023). It shows that life design counseling has not been significant in reducing career confusion, despite an increase in the Curiosity dimension.

Concepts and Approaches in Life Design Career Counseling

Life design career counseling is a modern approach to career development rooted in Career Construction Theory (CCT) developed by Mark Savickas. The career counseling paradigm of life design is to construct careers through small stories, reconstruct stories into self-descriptions, and co-construct career story goals in new episodes (Savickas, 2012; Supriatna et al, 2024). The main concept of this approach is constructivism and narrative, in which careers are seen as the result of an individual's construction of meaning over his or her life experiences, rather than simply a match between his personality and career (Cardoso et al, 2016; Prasetya et al, 2022). In its development, develop a career life design counseling implementation manual, called the Career Construction Interview (CCI) where the counselor facilitates the client to write, tell, and reflect on his or her life story and explore the main themes of the client's life (Cardoso et al, 2016; Cardoso et al, 2018; Savickas, 2015). This counseling emphasizes the importance of identity, narrative, and intentionality in helping counselors understand who they are, narrating life experiences, values, interests, and trauma and successes, to find life patterns and themes that shape career direction (Maree et al, 2015; Prasetya, 2024; Wang et al, 2023).

Life design career counseling can be applied when adolescents begin to be able to construct coherent identity narratives and think reflective of their life experiences (Savickas, 2012). Interventions in grade 9 students showed results that students still had narrative difficulties compared to grade 12 students who tended to be more reflective (Cardoso et al, 2018). This shows that life design career counseling interventions can be more effectively applied to high school students. Life design career counseling can also be applied to students who experience uncertainty in their choice of major and have an uneven interest, by helping them to reconstruct their story with their career goals (Wang et al, 2023). In addition, life design career counseling can also be applied to adolescents from limited resource backgrounds and students with special needs (Jude et al, 2023; Ruiters et al, 2022).

Counselors who will conduct life design career counseling must master three core elements, namely building relationships, reflecting, and encouraging individuals to interpret their experiences (Savickas, 2015). Life design career counseling has several uniqueness that distinguish it from other career counseling methods. These uniqueness include a focus on narrative, developing adaptability and career flexibility, lifelong learning, and an emphasis on the meaning of life (Wen et al, 2022). This counseling is also contextual and holistic while still paying attention to historical, cultural, economic, social and personal contexts, and can be done in individual and group counseling settings, even online in the digital era (Istiqomah et al, 2023; Ruiters et al, 2022). Thus, life design career counseling focuses not only on the selection of advanced studies, but also on the creation of meaning in life, resilience, and adaptation to the dynamics of life and the modern world (Cardoso et al, 2018; Maree et al, 2015).

Procedures and Techniques for Implementing Life Design Career Counseling

Life Design Counseling (LDC) interventions generally follow the Career Construction theory-based narrative approach by Mark Savickas. In its implementation, LDC consists of several core stages that include the exploration of individual life stories, the identification of life themes, and the preparation of future action plans. The LDC procedure varies depending on the participant's background and study design, but is generally conducted in 3–8 sessions with an average duration of between 45–90 minutes per session. The implementation procedure of life design career counseling refers to manual guidelines from called CCI (Career Construction Interview). CCI itself is a narrative-based career counseling (Savickas, 2015). Through narrative counseling, the researcher introduces students to the method of storytelling through encouragement to students to be open in discussing problems, then ask in detail about the effects of problems in their lives. CCI is an interview consisting of five topics that are raised and begin with the question "How can I be useful to you?" (Table 3). These topics consist of role models, magazines, television programs or websites, favorite magazines, favorite words, and childhood memories (Prasetya et al, 2022).

Table 2. Career Construction Interviews (Savickas, 2011)

Question	Information
1. How can i help you in building your career?	The client, as the only expert in their life, must be able to communicate their goals and set up counseling sessions
2. Who do you admire or who were your three role models before you were six years old? Why?	The role model represents the client's main self-concept and life goals; they represent a blueprint for self building
3. What is your favorite a) magazine b) TV programs and c) Websites? Why?	The answers to these three sub-questions indicate the environment that suits the client's lifestyle and the setting they prefer to manifest themselves in
4. What's your favorite story – a book or a movie or a book turned into a movie?	Reveals character who are facing the same problem as the client and shows how that character solved the problem
5. What are your three favorite mottos or quotes?	Expressing client advice to themselves at any given moment
6. What's the first thing you remember? About your life? What are your early memories?	The earliest memories reveal the core issues the client is facing, but also the client's advice for themselves

In a study by Focusing on improving career adaptability, the intervention was carried out in five group counseling sessions (Prasetya et al, 2022). Each session is 45 minutes long and is carried out face-to-face with vocational high school students. The intervention stages consist of an initial assessment (pretest), the implementation of LDC through the Career Construction Interview (CCI) technique, posttest, and a follow-up session two weeks after the intervention. Applying LDC in the context of career decision-making of grade 10 high school students with a quasi-experimental approach (Supriatna, et al, 2024). The results showed a significant improvement in the aspect of the ability to choose a career more precisely. Other research by with a case study design in adolescents showing that individual LDCs can be performed in three sessions (Cardoso et al, 2016). The first session focused on the exploration of life stories through CCI, the second session developed an integrated narrative based on life themes, and the third session established a realistic career plan based on the life meaning that has been formed.

Meanwhile, Intervening in a qualitative setting for a 16-year-old teenager who still has an equal interest so that he experiences confusion to determine his career choice (Wang et al, 2023). This study uses the Innovative Moment Coding System (IMCS) and Future Career

Autobiography (FCA) as methods to evaluate the process. IMCS is used to analyze narrative changes that arise spontaneously. At the FCA, clients will be asked to write a free narrative of their future career. The FCA can help clients who are struggling to narrate their careers verbally. Before conducting formal counseling, clients are required to fill out the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale China Form (CAAS-CF), Career Counseling Innovative Outcomes (CCIO), and Future Career Autobiography (FCA). The intervention was carried out in 3 sessions and lasted for about 50 minutes per session. This intervention uses the strategic guidance described in a structured interview (Savickas et al, 2009). In the context of a group, conducted eight group LDC sessions on high school students in independent schools in South Africa. The results showed an increase in four main aspects of career adaptability, namely career concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Maree et al, 2015). Likewise, carried out group LDCs for 9th and 12th grade students in Portugal using the My Career Story (MCS) module which also consists of three core parts: Telling My Story, Hearing My Story, and Enacting My Story (Cardoso et al, 2018). This intervention has been shown to increase clarity of career direction and career self-efficacy, especially in grade 12 students. LDC has also been adapted in online form. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of web-based career counseling in increasing career adaptability and optimism (Istiqomah et al, 2023). This intervention involved 15 students online to be given life design career counseling interventions.

In the context of resource-poor communities, Providing life design career counseling interventions with the help of visual storytelling and symbolic drawing. Students from under-resourced communities were asked to describe or compose an illustration of their dreams (Jude et al, 2023). They create images of dream jobs, work environments, or roles in the family. Visualization helps students who are not used to expressing the future verbally. The results of the interventions provided showed that the LDC group was able to increase the curiosity aspect in the adaptability of students' careers even though it had not significantly reduced career indecision. This study emphasizes the importance of the application of LDC that is adaptive to the social and economic context of students. The last to apply life design career counseling for students with special needs (Ruiters et al, 2022). In his intervention, he used the Life Bundle and Genogram as visual techniques to help clients who struggle to explain verbally, especially when clients do not feel at ease. The genogram is used to help students understand who supports them in their life and career. This tool is depicted through the social circles of people around the client related to their work and their roles in the client's life. This can help clients map their careers within their social environment and assist them in explaining their careers.

Conclusion

Based on the results of an in-depth analysis of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR), namely life design career counseling are effectively used to handle various career challenges or problems in high school/vocational high school students. Life design career counseling is effective in improving career adaptability, self efficacy, as well as cognitive and psychomotor aspects in career selection. Life Design counseling focuses on narrative and reflection, allowing students to connect their life experiences with the career decisions to be made. The results of this in-depth slr have also known the effectiveness of the LDC career concept, the concepts and approaches used, as well as the processes and techniques carried out. The implementation of these services will be more effective and efficient if applied with more varied and character-oriented methods according to the needs of students. This research has intellectual limitations, where it provides space to create a living collection using simple images and symbols, as a means to convey the

meaning of their work and aspirations. Thus, future research is expected to assist counselors/teachers in providing an overview of the context of LDC careers and direct interventions to help students' career issues, especially in choosing further studies.

Acknowledgment

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