

Career Self-Efficacy as a Predictor of Career Exploration Among Pre-Service Teachers

April Mae N. Toledo¹ , Larissa Mae C. Pagobo² , Princess Mae T. Do-ong³ ,
Princess Earl P. Tumanda⁴ , Jed Anthony A. Ceballos⁵ 

Author Information:

¹⁻⁵ University of Science and Technology of
Southern Philippines – Panaon Campus,
Philippines

Correspondence:

jedanthony.cebvallos@ustp.edu.ph

Article History:

Date Received: June 23, 2026

Date Revised: July 9, 2026

Date Accepted: July 9, 2026

Date Published: July 25, 2026

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21495827>

Document ID: 2026IJROMS0230

Recommended Citation:

Toledo, A. M. N., Pagobo, L. M. C., Do-ong,
P. M. T., Tumanda, P. E. P. & Ceballos, J. A.
A. (2026). Career Self-Efficacy as a Predictor
of Career Exploration Among Pre-Service
Teachers. International Journal of Research
on Multidisciplinary Studies, 1(6), 237–243.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21495827>

Abstract. Career self-efficacy plays a critical role in shaping individuals' career-related attitudes, decisions, and behaviors, particularly among pre-service teachers who are preparing for future professional roles. This study examined the predictive role of career self-efficacy on career exploration among pre-service teachers from two satellite campuses of a state university in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. Specifically, the study determined the levels of career self-efficacy and career exploration, identified differences between campuses, examined the relationship between the variables, and assessed the predictive influence of career self-efficacy on career exploration. The study is anchored on Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994), which posits that self-efficacy beliefs influence career-related behaviors such as exploration, planning, and decision-making. Data were collected through standardized questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, correlation, and regression analysis. Findings revealed that pre-service teachers demonstrated high levels of career self-efficacy and moderate levels of career exploration. No significant differences were found between Campus A and Campus B in terms of career self-efficacy and career exploration. However, a significant positive relationship was observed between career self-efficacy and career exploration ($r = .679$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of confidence in career-related tasks were associated with greater engagement in career exploration activities. Furthermore, career self-efficacy significantly predicted career exploration, explaining 46.1% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .461$). The findings suggest that strengthening career self-efficacy may enhance students' engagement in career exploration and career planning activities. Teacher education institutions may therefore develop interventions and career guidance programs that foster self-efficacy to better prepare future educators for professional decision-making and career development.

Keywords: Career self-efficacy; career exploration; pre-service teachers; career development; teacher education

Introduction

Career development is a critical component of teacher education, as pre-service teachers are expected to make informed career decisions while preparing for future professional roles. One of the most influential factors in career development is career self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's confidence in performing tasks necessary for career planning, decision-making, and occupational success. Career self-efficacy influences how individuals perceive opportunities, overcome challenges, and engage in career-related behaviors. Among pre-service teachers, strong self-efficacy beliefs have been associated with greater professional commitment, persistence, and readiness to pursue teaching careers (Kwon & Kwon, 2021).

Career exploration, on the other hand, involves actively seeking information about oneself and the occupational environment to make informed career choices. Through exploration activities, individuals gain a deeper understanding of their interests, abilities, values, and potential career pathways. Yusran et al. (2021) emphasized that career exploration plays a significant role in shaping career choices by enabling students to evaluate alternatives and align personal aspirations with occupational opportunities. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2022) found that career exploration contributes to stronger career decision self-efficacy and adaptability among pre-service educators.

The relationship between career self-efficacy and career exploration has been widely acknowledged in the literature. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to engage in exploratory



behaviors because they possess greater confidence in managing career-related tasks and uncertainties (Tadele & Terefe, 2018; Brew & Ngman-Wara, 2018). Furthermore, self-efficacy has been linked to career adaptability, career resilience, and professional commitment, all of which are essential attributes for future teachers (Elwakil, 2023; Kwarteng & Servoh, 2024).

Within teacher education, pre-service teachers face various challenges related to career planning, professional identity formation, and employment preparedness. Studies have shown that teaching experiences, career barriers, and perceived competencies significantly influence career decision-making processes among future educators (Kim et al., 2019; İnce Aka & Taşar, 2020). Likewise, teaching competence and instructional confidence have been found to strengthen professional commitment and career persistence among pre-service teachers (González et al., 2017).

Despite the growing body of literature on career self-efficacy and career exploration, empirical studies focusing on pre-service teachers in Philippine teacher education institutions remain limited. Most existing studies have been conducted in foreign educational settings, leaving a gap in understanding how career self-efficacy influences career exploration among Filipino pre-service teachers. Addressing this gap is important because teacher education programs play a vital role in preparing future educators for professional practice and career decision-making.

Hence, this study examined the influence of career self-efficacy on career exploration among pre-service teachers from two satellite campuses of a state university in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. Specifically, it determined the levels of career self-efficacy and career exploration, examined differences between campuses, investigated the relationship between the variables, and assessed the predictive influence of career self-efficacy on career exploration.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of career self-efficacy and career exploration of pre-service teachers from two satellite campuses of a state university in Northern Mindanao?
2. Is there a significant difference between pre-service teachers from Campus A and Campus B in terms of career self-efficacy and career exploration?
3. Is there a significant relationship between career self-efficacy and career exploration among pre-service teachers?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study examined the influence of career self-efficacy on the career exploration of pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education programs at two satellite campuses of a state university in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. Specifically, the study focused on career self-efficacy and career exploration among pre-service teachers and examined the relationship and predictive influence of career self-efficacy on career exploration. Data were gathered using a survey questionnaire administered to pre-service teachers currently enrolled in teacher preparation programs. The study was limited to the respondents from the selected campuses and did not include pre-service teachers from other higher education institutions. Consequently, the findings reflect the experiences and perceptions of the participants within the study context and may not be generalized to all pre-service teachers in other institutions or geographic locations. Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by individual perceptions and experiences at the time of data collection.

Literature Review

Career Self-Efficacy

Career self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks associated with career planning, decision-making, and career development. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy influences motivation, persistence, and behavioral choices. Studies among pre-service teachers indicate that higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with stronger career commitment, professional confidence, and teaching readiness (Kwon & Kwon, 2021). Furthermore, González et al. (2017) found that self-efficacy contributes significantly to instructional competence and professional engagement among future educators.

Career Exploration

Career exploration involves activities aimed at gathering information about oneself and the occupational environment. According to Greenhaus and Callanan (2006), career exploration is an essential component of career development because it enables individuals to increase self-awareness, acquire

occupational knowledge, and make informed career decisions. Through exploration activities, individuals clarify career goals, evaluate alternatives, and identify opportunities that align with their interests, skills, and values. Yusran et al. (2021) reported that career exploration significantly influences career choices among students by enhancing self-awareness and occupational knowledge. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2022) emphasized that career exploration promotes career adaptability and career decision-making confidence among pre-service educators.

Career Self-Efficacy and Career Exploration

Research consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between career self-efficacy and career exploration. Tadele and Terefe (2018) found that students with higher career self-efficacy were more likely to engage in exploratory behaviors related to career planning. Brew and Ngman-Wara (2018) similarly reported that self-efficacy significantly influences career exploration regardless of gender differences. More recently, Zhao et al. (2022) found that career self-efficacy indirectly influences career decision-making through career adaptability and work volition. These findings suggest that confidence in one's abilities encourages individuals to actively seek career information and engage in meaningful career planning activities.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the influence of career self-efficacy on career exploration among pre-service teachers. Descriptive statistics were utilized to determine the levels of career self-efficacy and career exploration, while correlational analysis was employed to examine the relationship between the variables. Furthermore, regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive influence of career self-efficacy on career exploration. This design was deemed appropriate because it allows the investigation of naturally occurring relationships among variables without manipulating any factor (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research Setting

The study was conducted in two satellite campuses of a state university in Northern Mindanao, Philippines, herein referred to as Campus A and Campus B to maintain institutional confidentiality. These campuses offer teacher education programs designed to prepare future educators through academic coursework, field experiences, and internship opportunities.

Research Participants

The participants consisted of 60 graduating pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education programs, with 30 respondents selected from each campus through purposive sampling. The respondents were chosen because they had already engaged in career-related activities such as teaching internships, mentoring programs, and career preparation initiatives, making them suitable for examining career self-efficacy and career exploration. The inclusion criteria included: (1) currently enrolled in a teacher education program, (2) graduating pre-service teacher, and (3) completion of internship or mentoring experiences. Students who were not enrolled in teacher education programs, had not undergone internship or mentoring activities, declined participation, or submitted incomplete responses were excluded from the study.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire consisting of three sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including age and gender. The second section measured career self-efficacy using an adapted version of the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Taylor and Betz (1983). The instrument assessed respondents' confidence in performing career-related tasks such as goal setting, occupational decision-making, self-appraisal, information gathering, and problem-solving. Responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Low) to 5 (Very High). The third section measured career exploration using an adapted version of the Career Exploration Survey developed by Stumpf, Colarelli, and Hartman (1983). The instrument assessed various dimensions of career exploration, including environmental exploration, self-exploration, information seeking, employment outlook, career certainty, and exploration behaviors. Higher mean scores indicated higher levels of career exploration. Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent content validation by experts in educational research and guidance counseling to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study. Reliability analysis was likewise conducted to determine the internal consistency of the instrument.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, approval was secured from the concerned institutional authorities. The researchers coordinated with program administrators to identify qualified participants based on the inclusion criteria. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. The survey questionnaires were administered during scheduled class periods to ensure accessibility and maximize participation. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the instrument, after which the accomplished questionnaires were retrieved, checked for completeness, and prepared for data analysis.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the level of career self-efficacy and career exploration of pre-service teachers from two satellite campuses of a state university in Northern Mindanao?

Table 1. Career Self-Efficacy and Career Exploration Levels of Pre-Service Teachers

Career Dimensions	Campus A	Campus B	Overall Mean
Career Self-Efficacy	3.1 (Much Confidence)	3.63 (Much Confidence)	3.37 (Much Confidence)
Career Exploration			
Exploration Process	3.25 (Moderate)	2.93 (Moderate)	3.09 (Moderate)
Reactions to Exploration	1.84 (Low)	1.71 (Very Low)	1.78 (Very Low)
Beliefs	2.98 (Moderate)	2.95 (Moderate)	2.97 (Moderate)
Average (Career Exploration)	2.69 (Moderate)	2.53 (Low)	2.61 (Moderate)

The findings revealed that pre-service teachers demonstrated a high level of career self-efficacy, with an overall mean of $M = 3.37$, interpreted as "Much Confidence." This suggests that the respondents possess confidence in performing career-related tasks such as career planning, goal setting, decision-making, and information seeking. The result supports the findings of Kwon and Kwon (2021), who reported that higher levels of self-efficacy contribute to stronger career commitment and professional readiness among pre-service teachers. In terms of career exploration, the respondents demonstrated a moderate level ($M = 2.61$). Among the dimensions, exploration process obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.09$), indicating that respondents actively engage in gathering career-related information. However, reactions to exploration obtained the lowest mean ($M = 1.78$), suggesting that respondents may experience uncertainty or limited confidence regarding the outcomes of their exploration activities. This finding is consistent with Zhao et al. (2022), who emphasized that career exploration among pre-service teachers is influenced by confidence, adaptability, and willingness to engage in career-related activities. Overall, the results suggest that while pre-service teachers possess confidence in their career-related abilities, their engagement in career exploration activities remains moderate. This indicates the need for career guidance initiatives that encourage deeper exploration of professional opportunities and career pathways.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference between pre-service teachers from Campus A and Campus in terms of career self- efficacy and career exploration?

Table 2. Comparison of Career Self-Efficacy and Career Exploration Between Campuses

Dimensions	Campus A	Campus B	t-value (df=58)	p-value	Cohen's d
Career Self-Efficacy	M=3.81 SD=.69	M=3.63 SD=.59	1.080	.285	.28
Career Explorations	M=2.69 SD=.45	M=2.53 SD=.47	1.324	.191	.34

The independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant differences between the two campuses in terms of career self-efficacy, $t(58) = 1.080$, $p = .285$, and career exploration, $t(58) = 1.324$, $p = .191$. These findings indicate that pre-service teachers from both campuses possess comparable levels of confidence in performing career-related tasks and engage in similar career exploration activities. The

absence of significant differences may be attributed to similarities in teacher education curricula, internship experiences, and career preparation opportunities provided by the university. According to Kwarteng and Servoh (2024), career-related competencies and self-efficacy among pre-service teachers are often shaped more by shared educational experiences than by institutional location. Furthermore, Yusran et al. (2021) emphasized that access to career information and exploration opportunities significantly influences students' career development regardless of educational setting. Although Campus A obtained slightly higher mean scores, the corresponding effect sizes ($d = .28$ and $d = .34$) indicate only small practical differences. Therefore, institutional affiliation alone does not appear to substantially influence career self-efficacy or career exploration among the respondents.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between career self-efficacy and career exploration among pre-service teachers?

Table 3. Relationship and Predictive Influence of Career Self-Efficacy on Career Exploration

Analysis	Statistic	Value
Correlation	Pearson's r p-value=	.679 .000*
Regression		
Constant	B	.790
	SE	.262
	t-value (58) p-value	3.010 .004*
Self-Efficacy	B	.489
	SE	.069
	Beta t-	.679
	Value (58) p-value	7.037 .000*

The Pearson product-moment correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between career self-efficacy and career exploration ($r = .679$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that pre-service teachers with higher levels of confidence in performing career-related tasks are more likely to engage in career exploration activities. The result supports the findings of Tadele and Terefe (2018), who reported that career self-efficacy significantly influences students' willingness to participate in career exploration behaviors. Similarly, Brew and Ngman-Wara (2018) found that students with stronger self-efficacy beliefs demonstrate greater engagement in exploring educational and occupational opportunities. Regression analysis further revealed that career self-efficacy significantly predicts career exploration, accounting for 46.1% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .461$, $F(1,58) = 49.522$, $p < .001$). Specifically, a one-unit increase in career self-efficacy corresponds to a .489-unit increase in career exploration ($B = .489$, $p < .001$). These findings support Social Cognitive Career Theory, which posits that self-efficacy serves as a key determinant of career-related behaviors and decisions. Zhao et al. (2022) similarly found that career self-efficacy enhances career exploration through increased adaptability and work volition. The findings suggest that strengthening career self-efficacy through mentoring, internship experiences, and career development programs may significantly enhance the career exploration activities of pre-service teachers.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Institutional permission was obtained prior to data collection, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were treated with strict confidentiality. The identities of the participating campuses were likewise protected by referring to them as Campus A and Campus B throughout the study. Data were used solely for academic and research purposes and were stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

Conclusion

The study concluded that career self-efficacy plays an important role in influencing the career exploration of pre-service teachers. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers generally demonstrated

high levels of career self-efficacy and moderate levels of career exploration. Moreover, no significant differences were observed between the two participating campuses, indicating that institutional location did not significantly affect the respondents' career self-efficacy and career exploration. However, a significant positive relationship was found between career self-efficacy and career exploration, suggesting that pre-service teachers with higher confidence in performing career-related tasks were more likely to engage in career exploration activities. Furthermore, career self-efficacy significantly predicted career exploration, highlighting its importance in shaping students' career development behaviors. These findings emphasize the need for teacher education institutions to strengthen initiatives that enhance students' confidence in their career-related abilities to support informed career planning and professional growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that teacher education institutions strengthen career development programs through mentoring, career guidance services, internship experiences, and professional exposure activities that promote career self-efficacy among pre-service teachers. School administrators may provide additional opportunities for career planning, career counseling, and professional development programs to help students explore various career pathways within the teaching profession. Faculty members and academic advisers are encouraged to support students in developing confidence in their career-related competencies through continuous guidance and feedback. Additionally, pre-service teachers are encouraged to actively participate in career development activities that enhance self-awareness, career planning, and professional preparedness. Future researchers may conduct similar studies using larger and more diverse samples and explore other factors that may influence career exploration, such as career adaptability, motivation, professional identity, and career commitment.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191–215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191>
- Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. W. H. Freeman. <https://archive.org/details/selfefficacyexero000band/page/n5/mode/2up>
- Brew, M., & Ngman-Wara, E. I. D. (2018). Influence of career self-efficacy on career exploration among senior high school students in relation to gender. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary and Current Research*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.14741/ijmcr/v.6.4.28>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Elwakil, F. R. (2023). Social entrepreneurship and career adaptability: The mediating effect of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. *Educational Studies*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2023.2255343>
- Greenhaus, J., & Callanan, G. (2006). *Encyclopedia of Career Development*. Encyclopedia of Career Development. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412952675>
- González, A., Conde, Á., Díaz, P., García, M., & Rico, C. (2018). Instructors' teaching styles: Relation with competences, self-efficacy, and commitment in pre-service teachers. *Higher Education*, 75(4), 625–642. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0160-y>
- İnce Aka, E., & Taşar, M. F. (2020). Prospective science teachers' views on career planning and their self-efficacy levels for career decision-making. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching*, 7(3), 960–975. <https://iojet.org/index.php/IOJET/article/view/947>
- Kim, Y., Lee, H. M., & Kim, Y. M. (2019). The influence of pre-service teachers' career barriers and career resilience on career identity and career decision-making self-efficacy: A moderated mediation model. *Journal of Learner-Centered Curriculum and Instruction*, 19, 1127–1145. <https://scholar.kyobobook.co.kr/article/detail/4010027473060>
- Kwarteng, J. T., & Servoh, M. W. K. (2024). Implications of career preference on teaching self-efficacy: Insights from preservice accounting teachers. *Cogent Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2352274>
- Kwon, H., & Kwon, Y. (2021). The effect of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy and teaching experience on their career commitment. *Studies in Linguistics*, 58, 359–384. <https://doi.org/10.17002/sil.58.202101.359>
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45(1), 79–122. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1994.1027>
- Stumpf, S. A., Colarelli, S. M., & Hartman, K. (1983). Development of the Career Exploration Survey (CES). *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 22(2), 191–226. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791\(83\)90028-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(83)90028-3)



- Tadele, G., & Terefe, E. (2018). Influence of career self-efficacy beliefs on career exploration behaviours among TVET college students in Wollega Zones Town. *Science, Technology and Arts Research Journal*, 5(1), 108–117. <https://doi.org/10.4314/star.v5i1.17>
- Taylor, K. M., & Betz, N. E. (1983). Applications of self-efficacy theory to the understanding and treatment of career indecision. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 22(1), 63–81. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791\(83\)90006-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(83)90006-4)
- Yusran, N. A., Mohd Puad, M. H., & Omar, M. K. (2021). Role of career exploration in influencing career choice among pre-university students. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 29(S1), 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.29.s1.05>
- Zhao, F., Li, P., Chen, S., Hao, Y., & Qin, J. (2022). Career exploration and career decision self-efficacy in Northwest Chinese pre-service kindergarten teachers: The mediating role of work volition and career adaptability. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, Article 729504. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.729504>