Exploring gender differences in self-confidence related to entering the workforce among Muslim college students

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Abstract

Self-confidence is an essential component of an individual's psychological well-being, shaped by various factors, including gender. While differences in self-confidence exist, both men and women seek positive self-understanding to navigate life's challenges. Recognizing these differences is crucial for supporting the development of healthy and positive self-confidence. This study investigates the self-confidence levels of male and female students and compares their confidence in entering the workforce. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive approach, the study found that, on average, women exhibited higher levels of self-confidence than men. However, the comparison of self-confidence regarding entry into the workforce revealed no significant gender differences. These findings suggest that the educational environment fosters equal conditions, preparing students to face career challenges irrespective of gender. This research emphasizes the importance of an inclusive and equitable educational approach, where the development of relevant skills and competencies for the workforce is prioritized alongside the enhancement of self-confidence, a vital factor in achieving professional success. The implications of this study contribute to career counseling services in higher education, highlighting the need to focus on gender-neutral strategies that build students' self-confidence and equip them for future professional roles.

Keywords: Self-Confidence, Gender Differences, Workforce Entry, Higher Education, Career Counseling

Abstrak

Kepercayaan diri adalah komponen penting dari kesejahteraan psikologis individu, yang dipengaruhi oleh berbagai faktor, termasuk gender. Meskipun terdapat perbedaan dalam kepastian diri, baik pria maupun wanita berusaha mencari pemahaman diri yang positif untuk menghadapi tantangan hidup. Mengenali perbedaan ini sangat penting untuk mendukung pengembangan kepastian diri yang sehat dan positif. Penelitian ini menyelidiki tingkat kepastian diri mahasiswa laki-laki dan perempuan serta membandingkan kepastian diri mereka dalam memasuki dunia kerja. Menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kuantitatif, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa, secara rata-rata, wanita menunjukkan tingkat kepastian diri yang lebih tinggi daripada pria. Namun, perbandingan kepastian diri terkait dengan masuk ke dunia kerja tidak menunjukkan perbedaan signifikan antara gender. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan pendidikan mampu menciptakan kondisi yang setara, mempersiapkan mahasiswa untuk menghadapi tantangan karier tanpa memandang gender. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pendekatan pendidikan yang inklusif dan setara, di mana pengembangan keterampilan dan kompetensi yang relevan dengan dunia kerja diprioritaskan bersama dengan peningkatan kepercayaan diri, yang merupakan faktor penting dalam meraih kesuksesan profesional. Implikasi dari penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada layanan bimbingan karir di perguruan tinggi, menyoroti perlunya strategi netral gender yang membangun kepastian diri mahasiswa dan mempersiapkan mereka untuk peran profesional di masa depan.

Kata Kunci: Kepercayaan Diri, Perbedaan Gender, Masuk ke Dunia Kerja, Pendidikan Tinggi, Konseling Karir

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INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving world, human needs continue to develop, resulting in increased competition in the labor market. As societal perceptions of life shift, individuals develop unique understandings of the workforce, which has become a necessity for everyone (Clarke, 2018; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). These needs are diverse, dynamic, and sometimes change without individuals being fully aware of them. As a result, the demand for work has become a fundamental aspect of human existence.

However, various barriers often prevent individuals from fully engaging with the labor market. These barriers include a lack of clear career goals, low self-esteem regarding job-related abilities, poor social skills, and insufficient work experience, particularly experience that is unrelated to the desired career path (Maynes & Grant, 2024). As Hegel argues, the essence of work lies in human consciousness. Work allows individuals to express their subjective identities objectively, which enables both the individual and others to understand their existence (Anoraga, 1992). The relationship between employment agencies and their employees can be compared to a two-way street (Dali & Caidi, 2016). Just as families contribute to building their children's self-confidence, organizations must also play a role in enhancing employees' self-confidence, as it is a crucial requirement for success in the workforce (Malureanu et al., 2021).

Self-confidence plays a key role in an individual's success. According to Angelis, self-confidence is the belief that any life challenge can be faced by taking the appropriate actions (Ifdil et al., 2017). Greenacre et al. (2014) emphasize that self-confidence reflects an individual's belief in their ability to perform specific actions to achieve a desired outcome. Similarly, argue that self-confidence can significantly influence decision-making processes (Yi et al., 2024). A person's self-confidence stems from their awareness of the choices they make and their understanding of the potential consequences of those choices.

The role of gender in shaping self-confidence has also been highlighted in various studies. Putri (2018), who identifies gender as one of the factors influencing self-confidence. Additionally, other internal factors such as self-concept, self-esteem, life experiences, and physical appearance play a role in shaping an individual's self-confidence (Permwonguswa et al., 2018). Externally, factors such as education, work environment, peer influence, and family dynamics contribute to the development of self-confidence (Quiroz Ávila & Fernández, 2025).

However, within the context of Islamic universities in Indonesia, particularly at UIN Ar-Raniry in Aceh, students' self-confidence is not only influenced by common social and psychological factors but also by the stringent application of Islamic law in daily life. Aceh, as the only province in Indonesia that enforces Sharia law, offers a unique environment where Muslim students often face challenges in balancing educational and career demands with religious values (Halim, 2022; Pohan, 2024). This creates a different dynamic in shaping their self-

confidence, especially when entering the workforce.

For Muslim students at Islamic universities like UIN Ar-Raniry, preparing for the workforce involves not only mastering technical and social skills but also mental readiness influenced by the moral and ethical values taught by Islam. Here, self-confidence is greatly influenced by how students navigate the tension between the expectations of the workforce, which sometimes conflicts with the principles of Sharia law. For example, self-confidence in interacting within the workplace, particularly in jobs that involve communication between genders, can become more complex when viewed from the perspective of the stricter Islamic values that they adhere to.

A preliminary study conducted on June 14, 2022, at the Islamic Community Development Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry revealed that some students experienced a lack of self-confidence and doubts about their readiness to enter the workforce, which were sometimes influenced by a conflict between their desire for professional success and adherence to religious guidelines. Interviews with students from the 2018 cohort provided insights into these challenges, forming the foundation for further research into self-confidence in the workforce within the context of Islamic Sharia.

While several studies suggest that men have higher self-confidence than women, other research indicates that there is no significant difference in work readiness between men and women. However, in the context of Muslim students at Islamic universities, does this difference still hold? Is men's self-confidence truly higher than women's when entering the workforce, or conversely, do women have higher self-confidence? This study aims to explore gender differences in self-confidence, with a particular focus on Muslim students preparing to enter the workforce, in an environment heavily influenced by the values of Islamic Sharia.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach utilizing a descriptive quantitative design. The primary objective of this research is to compare and contrast the self-confidence of male and female students in entering the workforce, specifically within the context of the Islamic Community Development Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry. The independent variable in this study is gender, while the dependent variable is self-confidence, with the world of work serving as a supporting variable. The decision to use this research approach stems from the need to understand how self-confidence, particularly in terms of entering the workforce, differs between male and female students in the Islamic Community Development Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of 44 students from the Islamic Community Development Study Program, Class of 2018. Given the relatively small number of students in this cohort, a census sampling method was employed, meaning that all members of the population were included in the sample. As a result, the sample size in this study is 44 students, with both male and female respondents represented.

Data Collection

To collect the necessary data, a closed-ended questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was designed to assess the

self-confidence of students regarding their readiness to enter the workforce. The questionnaire included multiple-choice questions, intended to capture students' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions related to their self-confidence in the context of entering the labor market. This format was chosen for its ability to generate quantifiable data, which is essential for conducting the statistical analysis needed for this study.

Research Instrument

The data required for this research were obtained through the administration of a questionnaire to the students of the 2018 cohort of the Islamic Community Development Study Program. The questionnaire was distributed to both male and female students. To measure self-confidence, the Likert scale was employed. This scale is widely used in social science research to gauge attitudes, opinions, and perceptions, and it allows for the collection of ordinal data that can be analyzed quantitatively. The Likert scale provides a systematic way to measure the intensity of students' agreement or disagreement with a series of statements related to self-confidence.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected data involved several steps. First, the data were grouped according to variables such as gender and other demographic information. Next, the data were tabulated to organize and present the findings for each variable under study. Following this, the data were analyzed to answer the research questions, which focused on understanding the differences in self-confidence between male and female students entering the workforce. Lastly, hypothesis testing was carried out to determine whether there was a significant difference in self-confidence between the two genders.

To test the hypothesis, which posited that there is a comparison of self-confidence in entering the workforce between male and female students in the Islamic Community Development Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed. This non-parametric test was selected because it is suitable for comparing two independent samples with ordinal data. The Mann-Whitney U test is particularly useful when the sample sizes are small or the data do not meet the assumptions of normality. In this study, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied to compare the self-confidence of male and female students in entering the workforce.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Islamic Guidance and Counseling Study Program (BKI) at UIN Ar-Raniry. This approval ensures that the study adheres to the necessary ethical guidelines concerning participant consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. All respondents were fully informed about the purpose of the study and provided their consent before completing the questionnaire. Additionally, the privacy and anonymity of the participants were maintained throughout the research process.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study regarding the self-confidence of male and female students in entering the workforce, specifically within the context of the Islamic Community Development Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry. The analysis includes a normality test, categorization of self-confidence levels, and hypothesis testing to determine whether there is a

significant difference in self-confidence between male and female students.

Normality Test

To assess the distribution of the data, a normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results showed that: Male Students: The significance value was 0.027, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the data for male students do not follow a normal distribution. Female Students: The significance value was 0.200, which is greater than 0.05, suggesting that the data for female students follow a normal distribution. Since the data for male students did not meet the assumption of normality, a Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric test, was used to compare the self-confidence of male and female students.

Descriptive Statistics and Categorization of Self-Confidence

The mean score for self-confidence in this study was 162, with a standard deviation of 36. To better understand the distribution of self-confidence, scores were categorized into five levels: very high, high, medium, low, and deficient. The categorization results revealed that the majority of students scored in the high and medium categories, with 52.27% of the students categorized as having high self-confidence, and 31.82% in the medium category. Notably, no students were categorized as having low or deficient self-confidence. This suggests that most students in the Islamic Community Development Study Program exhibit a strong sense of self-confidence when entering the workforce. The categorization of self-confidence scores for male and female students revealed the Table 1.

Comparison of Self-Confidence Between Male and Female Students

To determine whether there is a significant difference in self-confidence between male and female students, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed. The results of the test are in Table 2. The Z value obtained was -1.887, and the significance value (p) was 0.059, which is greater than the critical value of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted, meaning that there is no significant difference in self-confidence between male and female students at a 95% confidence level. This suggests that while there may be a difference in the mean self-confidence scores between male and female students, the difference is not statistically significant. The results of this study indicate that while female students exhibited higher self-confidence compared to male students, the difference was not statistically significant. This finding suggests that gender does not have a significant effect on self-confidence in entering the workforce among students in the Islamic Community Development Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry.

While the study shows no significant difference between the self-confidence of male and female students, it also opens avenues for future research into other potential factors that may influence self-confidence, such as cultural influences, educational background, and the specific socio-religious context in Aceh. Further studies could explore these aspects in greater depth to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape students' self-confidence in preparing for their careers.

Table 1. Self-Confidence Between Male and Female Students

Category	Formula	Frequency		Percentage	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Very high	M + 1,5 SD < X	4	4	9.1%	9.09%
Tall	M + 0,5 SD < X ≤ M + 1,5 SD	11		25%	
Currently	M - 0,5 SD < X ≤ M + 0,5 SD	3	11	6.8%	25%
Low	M - 1,5 SD < X ≤ M - 0,5 SD	0	11	0	25%
Deficient	X ≤ M - 1,5 SD	0	0	0	0
Total		18	26	40.9%	59.09%

Table 2. Differential test results of students self-confidence

Results of Male and Female Self-Confidence	
Mann-Whitney U	155.000
Wilcoxon W	506.000
Z	-1.887
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.059

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the self-confidence of male and female students in entering the workforce, specifically within the context of the Islamic Community Development Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry, Aceh. The findings provided valuable insights, revealing that although female students had a higher average self-confidence score compared to their male counterparts, the statistical analysis showed that there was no significant difference in self-confidence between male and female students in this program. This section discusses the findings in relation to existing literature and provides an academic debate on the implications, particularly in the context of Muslim students in Aceh, where cultural and religious factors significantly shape students' attitudes and behaviors.

Men's Self-Confidence in the Islamic Community Development Study Program

The self-confidence of male students in this study was categorized as low, with a mean score of 19.46. This finding contradicts some earlier studies that suggest men generally possess higher self-confidence than women, particularly in their abilities

and roles (Dewi & Prasetya, 2020). For example, Ring, Neyse, Barett, and Schmidt argue that men tend to have greater confidence in their abilities, believing that their capabilities provide more significant benefits to their families and society (Dewi & Prasetya, 2020). However, this study contradicts these findings, as male students in the Islamic Community Development Study Program demonstrated lower self-confidence than their female counterparts.

The discrepancy between this research and earlier studies may be attributed to the unique socio-cultural environment in Aceh, where Islamic values and local cultural norms play a dominant role in shaping self-perception and self-confidence (Pohan et al., 2024). The application of Sharia law in Aceh, along with its influence on gender roles and societal expectations, may lead male students to exhibit lower self-confidence in certain academic or professional situations compared to their female peers, especially when navigating challenges related to societal expectations and Islamic principles. Interestingly, this result aligns with other findings that suggest gender roles in specific cultural contexts can shape self-confidence differently than generalized global studies would suggest (Aristei & Gallo, 2022; Litzler et al., 2014; Sriwahyuningsih & Barseli, 2023). Hidayati et al. (2018) also found that female students' self-confidence in certain contexts is higher than that of male students, supporting the idea that gender-related factors are deeply intertwined with cultural and religious contexts.

Women's Self-Confidence in the Islamic Community Development Study Program

In contrast, the self-confidence of female students in this study was categorized as high, with a mean score of 26.89, which was significantly higher than

their male counterparts. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that female students generally report better self-efficacy and confidence in interpersonal skills, friendly personality, and organizational abilities (Federičová et al., 2018; Papyrina et al., 2021). Despite traditional views that women often have weaker self-confidence than men (Wijayanti et al., 2020), this study suggests that female students at UIN Ar-Raniry tend to have higher self-confidence in entering the workforce.

This finding is noteworthy because it challenges the conventional view that male students inherently possess more self-confidence (Perets et al., 2023; Wofford, 2021). It can be argued that Islamic values instilled in the students at UIN Ar-Raniry, combined with the socio-cultural setting in Aceh, may encourage women to be more confident in academic and career-related situations, potentially contributing to their higher self-confidence. This result is consistent with the conclusions of Hidayati et al. (2018), who found that female students' self-confidence is generally higher than that of male students, suggesting that gender does not always follow the expected patterns of self-confidence in all cultural settings (Robson * et al., 2004).

Comparison of Men's and Women's Self-Confidence in Entering the World of Work

While descriptive statistics showed that female students had higher self-confidence compared to male students, hypothesis testing using the Mann-Whitney U test revealed no significant difference between the two groups. The Z value obtained was -1.887, and the p-value was 0.059, which is greater than the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) was accepted, meaning that there is no significant difference in self-confidence

between male and female students at a 95% confidence level. This suggests that while there may be a perceived difference in self-confidence between male and female students, this difference is not statistically significant.

This result implies that, despite the perceived difference in self-confidence between male and female students, gender does not play a significant role in shaping self-confidence in entering the workforce for students in the Islamic Community Development Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry. This aligns with previous research indicating that gender equality in academic performance and career readiness is improving, although challenges remain in achieving full equity in professional settings (Efe & Hallegraeff, 2020).

Interestingly, although this study found no significant difference in self-confidence between males and females, gender gaps in self-confidence may still exist due to cultural and religious influences shaping how students perceive their roles in society (Pohan et al., 2025; Tandrayen-Ragoobur & Gokulsing, 2022; Van de gaer et al., 2012). As mentioned by Jahanbakhsh et al. (2015), women with androgynous roles (combining masculine and feminine traits) have a lower level of self-confidence compared to women with more traditional gender roles. This finding may be particularly relevant in the context of Aceh, where gender roles are more pronounced.

Gender, Self-Confidence, and Cultural Context in Aceh

The findings from this study highlight the complexity of gender and self-confidence in a Muslim-majority region like Aceh, where cultural and religious norms significantly influence gender roles and expectations. While many global studies assert that men typically exhibit higher self-

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confidence than women, this research challenges that notion in the context of Aceh (Hildingh et al., 2006; Jahanbakhsh et al., 2015; Zuliani et al., 2025). Self-confidence in entering the workforce is shaped not only by gender but also by cultural factors, including Islamic teachings and the socio-economic environment in Aceh.

Self-confidence in both male and female students is influenced by various factors beyond gender, such as personal experiences, social acceptance, and educational opportunities. It is important to recognize that self-confidence does not develop in isolation but is affected by the environment in which individuals live and study (Barak et al., 2008; Hidayatullah et al., 2025; Van Breda, 2015). In this case, the educational environment at UIN Ar-Raniry, which is shaped by Islamic values, appears to foster an atmosphere where both male and female students can develop high self-confidence, although the factors driving that confidence may differ.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides valuable insights into the self-confidence of male and female students, there are several limitations that should be noted. First, the sample size was limited to 44 students from the Islamic Community Development Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry, which may not fully represent the broader population of students in Islamic universities. Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalizable to all Islamic universities in Indonesia or other countries with different socio-cultural contexts.

Additionally, this study only measured self-confidence in entering the workforce without considering other factors that may influence self-confidence, such as work experience, social support, or professional training. The study also did not

delve deeply into the influence of religious values that may vary among students based on their family backgrounds and local community.

Implications for Career Counseling in Islamic Universities

This study has important implications for career counseling in Islamic universities. The results indicate that while there is no significant difference in self-confidence between male and female students, career counseling programs should consider the perceived differences and expectations that exist between genders. To enhance students' self-confidence, it is crucial for educational institutions to develop interpersonal skills training programs, leadership development, and effective communication programs, particularly for female students who show higher self-confidence in interpersonal and organizational skills.

Career counseling in Islamic universities should focus on creating a supportive environment where students can develop comprehensive self-confidence in facing the workforce, while still considering the Islamic values and cultural context present in Aceh.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, it is recommended to expand the sample size by including students from various programs and universities to strengthen the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, future studies could explore other factors influencing self-confidence, such as work experience, family support, and the influence of social media. Additionally, it is crucial to explore the role of religious values in shaping self-confidence, particularly in the context of Muslim-majority conservative regions. Such research could employ qualitative methods to gain a

deeper understanding of the influence of religion and local culture on students' career readiness.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that while female students in the Islamic Community Development Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry exhibited higher average self-confidence than their male counterparts, the difference was not statistically significant, indicating that gender does not play a decisive role in shaping students' self-confidence in entering the workforce. These findings suggest that cultural and religious factors unique to Aceh, particularly the influence of Islamic values and gender norms, may contribute to shaping perceptions of confidence differently than global trends. The absence of a significant difference highlights the potential of Islamic educational environments in fostering equal psychological readiness across genders. Therefore, career counseling in Islamic universities should prioritize inclusive strategies that build self-confidence regardless of gender, while remaining sensitive to local cultural and religious contexts. Future research is encouraged to explore broader and more diverse samples, as well as additional factors such as religious values, family support, and personal experiences that may influence students' self-confidence and career readiness.

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Syaiful Indra: Conceptualization, Data curation, Funding, Writing-original draft, Writing-review & editing, **Silvia Fitri**: Writing-review & editing, **Azhari Azhari**: Conceptualization, Writing-review & editing, **Mahdi Mahdi**: Writing-review & editing, **Eko Sujadi**: Writing-original draft, **Juli Andriyani:** Writing-original draft, Writing-review & editing.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The Authors Declare No Conflict of Interest in This Paper.

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