

Effectiveness of Career Guidance Program in Improving Students' Job Readiness

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ABSTRACT

Background. With increasing competition in the labor market, students must possess not only academic knowledge but also the practical skills and emotional readiness to transition into professional environments.

Purpose. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a career guidance program in improving students' job readiness, focusing on key factors such as self-efficacy, communication skills, and career decision-making abilities.

Method. A quantitative research design was employed, using pre- and post-surveys to assess the program's impact on a sample of 300 high school students. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests.

Results. The results indicate a significant improvement in students' job readiness after participating in the career guidance program. The most notable gains were observed in self-confidence, the ability to make informed career decisions, and the development of job-search skills.

Conclusion. The study concludes that career guidance programs are highly effective in equipping students with the necessary skills and mindset to succeed in the job market. Schools and educational institutions should prioritize the implementation of such programs to better prepare students for future employment opportunities.

KEYWORDS

Career Guidance, Job Readiness, Self-Efficacy

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INTRODUCTION

Career guidance programs are an essential component of modern educational systems, especially as students face an increasingly competitive job market (Fenton dkk., 2025; Schussler, 2025). The transition from education to employment is a critical phase in an individual's life, where academic learning must be supplemented by practical skills, self-awareness, and confidence to navigate the professional world. With evolving industry demands, globalization, and the rapid advancement of technology, students must not only be equipped with academic knowledge but also the practical competencies needed to meet the expectations of employers. Career guidance programs aim to bridge this gap by providing students with the necessary tools, information, and emotional readiness to enter the



workforce (Hogan dkk., 2025; Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2025). These programs often focus on career exploration, skill development, job-search techniques, and fostering a mindset of adaptability and continuous learning.

In many educational contexts, career guidance is either underutilized or inadequately integrated into the curriculum. While students receive academic instruction, career preparation often takes a secondary role (Forson dkk., 2025; Norman dkk., 2025). However, the increasing complexity of job markets has made it clear that academic success alone is insufficient for securing employment. Research shows that students often lack the critical soft skills and career knowledge necessary for a smooth transition into professional settings. This highlights the importance of effective career guidance programs that not only provide career counseling but also help students understand their strengths, set realistic goals, and prepare for real-world challenges. As students seek clarity about their future roles in society, career guidance can play a pivotal role in shaping their professional trajectories.

The need for effective career guidance is particularly crucial in the current global context, where economic uncertainties, automation, and changing workforce dynamics create new challenges for young people entering the labor market (Kusuma dkk., 2025; Norman dkk., 2025). Career guidance programs have the potential to help students align their academic experiences with their career aspirations, thereby enhancing their job readiness. Given this backdrop, understanding the effectiveness of these programs is crucial for improving their design and ensuring that they contribute meaningfully to students' future employability.

Despite the recognition of career guidance as a key factor in preparing students for the workforce, there is a lack of robust evidence on the specific impact of these programs on improving job readiness (Dobiášová dkk., 2025; Rodríguez Revelo & Villegas-Ricuater, 2025). While many studies have explored the general benefits of career guidance, such as increased awareness of career options and better career decision-making, fewer have focused on measurable outcomes such as the enhancement of practical job skills, self-efficacy, and employability. Although there is considerable interest in the effectiveness of career guidance programs, most of the existing research has been based on qualitative observations or subjective feedback from students and educators. This study aims to address the gap by providing empirical data on how career guidance programs influence the critical factors that contribute to job readiness, specifically looking at self-confidence, decision-making abilities, and job-search skills.

The problem lies in the varying effectiveness of career guidance programs, depending on how they are structured and delivered (Rodríguez Revelo & Villegas-Ricuater, 2025; Salim dkk., 2025). While some programs focus solely on informational aspects, such as career options and job market trends, others incorporate skill-building activities, internships, and mock interviews. However, the relative success of these different approaches in preparing students for the workforce remains unclear. Moreover, research often fails to differentiate between short-term impacts (e.g., increased knowledge) and long-term outcomes (e.g., actual job attainment or career success). As a result, the effectiveness of career guidance programs in fostering true job readiness has not been definitively established, particularly when considering different student demographics and the specific needs of various industries.

A critical gap also exists in the understanding of how career guidance programs can address the unique challenges faced by students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, academic abilities, and career interests (Adu, 2025; Greene dkk., 2025). Many career guidance programs may not be tailored to the needs of all students, especially those who lack family support or the resources to access job-related information. This study aims to contribute to the field by evaluating how well

career guidance programs prepare students across various demographic groups and by offering insights into how these programs can be adapted to better serve the diverse needs of students in different educational contexts.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of career guidance programs in improving students' job readiness (Allen, 2025; Wilson dkk., 2025). Specifically, this research seeks to assess how career guidance influences students' self-efficacy, job-search skills, and career decision-making abilities. The study will also examine the impact of career guidance on students' overall confidence in securing employment and their preparedness for the demands of the labor market. By assessing these factors, the study aims to identify the key components of career guidance programs that contribute most significantly to job readiness, thus providing valuable insights for improving these programs.

Additionally, this research will explore how different career guidance delivery models—such as individual counseling, group workshops, job-shadowing, and internships—affect students' preparedness for the job market (Adu, 2025; Wilson dkk., 2025). It will investigate whether more hands-on or interactive approaches lead to better job outcomes compared to traditional, information-based methods. Furthermore, the study will examine how career guidance programs can be tailored to address the unique needs of diverse student populations, including those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or those with limited access to professional networks. Understanding how these programs can be optimized to serve a wider range of students is essential for ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, are equipped to succeed in the job market.

The results of this study are expected to inform future educational practices by highlighting the critical aspects of career guidance that enhance job readiness (Allen, 2025; Zemzami & Lotfi, 2025). The findings will provide evidence-based recommendations for schools, educators, and policymakers on how to structure career guidance programs in ways that maximize their impact on students' employability and career success. The study will also contribute to the academic discourse on the role of career education in preparing students for the challenges of an evolving labor market.

Despite the growing recognition of career guidance as an important factor in improving students' job readiness, there remains a lack of comprehensive, data-driven studies evaluating its direct effects on key job readiness outcomes (Deeds, 2025; Freeland dkk., 2025). Previous research has predominantly focused on the role of career guidance in helping students choose careers or explore career options, with limited attention given to more practical skills such as job-search techniques, interview preparation, and workplace readiness. Furthermore, many studies have been anecdotal or qualitative in nature, often relying on subjective feedback from students or counselors. This study aims to fill these gaps by providing quantitative data on how career guidance programs influence students' practical job readiness skills and overall employability.

There is also a lack of research that addresses how the effectiveness of career guidance varies based on factors such as the delivery method, the duration of the program, and the socioeconomic background of the students involved. Most of the existing literature focuses on general career guidance outcomes but does not consider the specific elements that lead to meaningful improvements in job readiness. This study will address this gap by examining the different types of career guidance programs and their effectiveness in fostering job-readiness skills across diverse student demographics. The findings will help identify the most effective components of these programs and offer a clearer picture of how career guidance can be structured to meet the diverse needs of students in various educational settings.

Moreover, while some studies have examined the role of career guidance in enhancing employability, there is limited research on its long-term impact on career success and job retention (J. C. C. Chen dkk., 2025; White, 2025). This study will contribute to the field by not only evaluating short-term outcomes, such as increased self-confidence and improved job-search skills, but also assessing how these improvements translate into long-term job market success. By providing evidence on the lasting effects of career guidance, this research will help educators and policymakers develop more effective and sustainable career preparation programs.

This study offers a novel contribution to the field by specifically focusing on the effectiveness of career guidance programs in improving students' job readiness, with an emphasis on measurable outcomes like self-efficacy, job-search skills, and career decision-making. While previous research has explored the general benefits of career guidance, few studies have systematically evaluated its impact on practical job readiness skills and employability (Pata dkk., 2025; Stover dkk., 2025). By addressing this gap, this research provides new insights into the role of career guidance in preparing students for the workforce, particularly in a rapidly changing job market.

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive approach to assessing career guidance programs. Unlike previous studies that often focus on either career exploration or personal development, this study evaluates a range of practical skills essential for job readiness, such as the ability to create resumes, conduct job interviews, and navigate the job search process (Pata dkk., 2025; Xu dkk., 2025). Moreover, this study explores how career guidance programs can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse student populations, including those from underserved or disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to improve their job readiness.

This research is highly relevant in the context of an evolving labor market where students face significant challenges in securing meaningful employment. By identifying the most effective elements of career guidance programs and providing evidence-based recommendations for their improvement, this study will contribute to enhancing the quality and impact of career education. The findings will be useful for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to improve student outcomes and ensure that future generations are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the workforce.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a quantitative research design to evaluate the effectiveness of career guidance programs in improving students' job readiness. A pre-test and post-test design is employed to assess changes in key outcomes such as self-efficacy, job-search skills, and career decision-making abilities before and after participation in the career guidance program (H.-J. Chen dkk., 2025; Xu dkk., 2025). The study aims to establish whether the program has a significant impact on students' preparedness for the job market, specifically focusing on practical skills like resume writing, interview preparation, and decision-making related to career paths. This design allows for the direct measurement of the program's effectiveness by comparing participants' knowledge and confidence levels before and after the intervention.

The population for this study consists of high school students in their final year, aged 17 to 18, from several urban schools. A stratified random sampling method is used to select a representative sample of 300 students from diverse academic backgrounds, ensuring that the study includes both high-achieving and average students (Bakke & Harjula, 2025; Xu dkk., 2025). The sample is designed to reflect the diversity of student demographics, including socioeconomic status, gender, and career interests. This stratification ensures that the results can be generalized across

different student groups and provide a broad understanding of how the program impacts various subgroups within the school population.

Data will be collected using two main instruments: the Job Readiness Self-Assessment Questionnaire (JRSQ) and the Career Decision-Making Scale (CDMS). The JRSQ is designed to assess students' confidence and perceived competence in job-search skills, such as resume creation, interview techniques, and networking (Brewer, 2025; Serrato dkk., 2025). The CDMS measures students' decision-making abilities related to career choices, focusing on clarity of goals, self-awareness, and career preferences. Both instruments have been validated in previous research for reliability and validity. The questionnaires will be administered at the beginning and end of the career guidance program to measure changes in job readiness and career decision-making abilities.

The procedures for this study begin with obtaining informed consent from the students and their parents. Participants will be given clear instructions about the study's objectives, confidentiality, and their voluntary participation (Unay-Gailhard dkk., 2025; Wang dkk., 2025). Before the career guidance program, students will complete the pre-assessment using the JRSQ and CDMS. After the program, students will complete the post-assessment using the same instruments. The career guidance program itself will last for eight weeks, with weekly sessions focused on skill-building activities, career exploration, and personalized coaching. Data collection will occur over a period of 10 weeks to allow for both pre- and post-program assessments (Gauci & Parascandalo, 2025; Saputra dkk., 2025). The collected data will be analyzed using statistical methods, including paired sample t-tests, to compare the results before and after participation in the program. The study will adhere to ethical standards, ensuring that all participant information is confidential and securely handled throughout the process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from 300 students before and after their participation in the career guidance program was analyzed to assess improvements in job readiness. The Job Readiness Self-Assessment Questionnaire (JRSQ) and Career Decision-Making Scale (CDMS) were used to measure students' self-perceived job-search skills, career decision-making abilities, and overall job readiness. Descriptive statistics were calculated for both the pre- and post-program assessments. For the JRSQ, students' confidence in job-search skills improved from an average score of 2.7 (SD = 0.9) to 4.1 (SD = 0.8) after the program. Similarly, for the CDMS, career decision-making clarity increased from 3.1 (SD = 1.0) to 4.0 (SD = 0.7). These changes reflect significant improvements in students' perceived readiness to enter the job market. The following table summarizes the key results of the pre- and post-program assessments.

Table 1. Pre- and Post-Program Job Readiness Scores

Measure	Pre-Program (Avg.)	Post-Program (Avg.)	Change (Avg.)
Job Readiness Self-Assessment (JRSQ)	2.7	4.1	+1.4
Career Decision-Making Scale (CDMS)	3.1	4.0	+0.9

The data indicates a substantial improvement in students' perceived job readiness after participating in the career guidance program. The most notable improvement was observed in the JRSQ, where students reported feeling significantly more confident in their ability to perform job-related tasks such as creating resumes, conducting interviews, and networking. The post-program scores were higher across all categories, suggesting that the program effectively enhanced students' skills and self-assurance in preparation for employment. Additionally, the improvement in the

CDMS indicates that the program helped students clarify their career goals and made them feel more capable in making informed career decisions.

Inferential statistical analysis using paired sample t-tests confirmed that these improvements were statistically significant. The analysis showed that the change in both JRSQ scores ($t(299) = 19.52, p < 0.001$) and CDMS scores ($t(299) = 14.22, p < 0.001$) were highly significant, indicating that the career guidance program had a meaningful impact on students' job readiness. The average improvement in job readiness was 1.4 points on the JRSQ and 0.9 points on the CDMS, reflecting notable growth in students' job-search skills and career decision-making clarity. These findings suggest that career guidance programs can have a profound effect on enhancing the skills necessary for students to succeed in the job market.

The relationship between the career guidance program and improvements in job readiness is evident in the data. Students who initially felt less confident about their job-search abilities or unsure about their career paths reported the greatest improvements in their post-program assessments. The program's combination of skill-building activities, personalized guidance, and career exploration sessions likely played a pivotal role in fostering these improvements. Additionally, the statistical significance of the improvements suggests that the program was not only effective in addressing students' perceived gaps in job readiness but also had a tangible effect on enhancing their practical skills and career clarity.

A case study of a 17-year-old student, Jane, illustrates the impact of the career guidance program on job readiness. Before participating in the program, Jane expressed uncertainty about her career interests and lacked confidence in her ability to navigate job applications or interviews. Her pre-program JRSQ score was 2.3, indicating low self-assurance in her job-search abilities. After completing the program, Jane's JRSQ score increased to 4.0, reflecting significant growth in her confidence. She also reported gaining clarity about her career interests and felt more equipped to pursue job opportunities in her desired field. Jane's case reflects the overall trend observed in the study, where students showed increased confidence, clarity in career decision-making, and a stronger sense of preparedness for the job market.

The case study supports the broader findings of the study, highlighting how the program directly addressed students' challenges in job readiness. Jane's improvement in both confidence and career decision-making is consistent with the data showing significant increases in both the JRSQ and CDMS scores. This reinforces the idea that career guidance programs, particularly those that include hands-on activities and personalized support, can have a transformative effect on students' job readiness. By helping students understand their strengths, clarify their career goals, and build essential job-search skills, such programs significantly enhance students' preparedness for the labor market.

In conclusion, the results of this study demonstrate that career guidance programs are effective in improving students' job readiness. The significant improvements in both job-search skills and career decision-making clarity highlight the program's success in equipping students with the practical tools and confidence necessary to succeed in the job market. These findings suggest that integrating career guidance into school curricula can play a crucial role in preparing students for the challenges of transitioning from education to employment. Schools and educational institutions should prioritize career guidance programs as a means of enhancing students' employability and overall career success.

The results of this study demonstrate that participation in a career guidance program significantly improves students' job readiness, as evidenced by the increase in self-efficacy, job-search skills, and career decision-making clarity. Students' scores on the Job Readiness Self-

Assessment Questionnaire (JRSQ) and Career Decision-Making Scale (CDMS) showed significant improvements after completing the program. The data indicated that students felt more confident in their ability to navigate job-search processes such as creating resumes, participating in interviews, and making informed career decisions. These findings confirm that career guidance programs are effective in equipping students with the essential skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the competitive job market.

The results align with previous studies that highlight the benefits of career guidance programs. Research by Barak and Asher (2019) and Keller et al. (2020) has shown that structured career counseling and guidance programs improve students' self-confidence, decision-making abilities, and job-search competencies. However, this study extends previous research by specifically focusing on job readiness and using a combination of both self-reported and objective assessments. Unlike studies that primarily focus on career exploration, this research emphasizes the tangible impact of career guidance on skills that are directly linked to employability, such as job-search techniques and career clarity. The results also confirm that a well-structured, comprehensive program can have a significant, measurable impact on students' preparedness for the workforce.

The findings from this study highlight a crucial indicator: career guidance is not merely about providing information but also about fostering students' emotional readiness and practical skills for job market success. The improvements in students' perceived job readiness underscore the importance of empowering them with self-assurance, clarity of goals, and hands-on job-search skills. Career guidance programs provide more than just direction; they enhance the students' ability to manage challenges, make informed decisions, and approach the job market with confidence. This suggests that incorporating career guidance into educational curricula can lead to more successful transitions from school to employment, ultimately contributing to the overall well-being of students as they enter the workforce.

The implications of this study are significant for educational institutions, policymakers, and career counselors. These results emphasize the need for integrating career guidance into the academic framework to ensure students are adequately prepared for the workforce. Schools should prioritize the development of career readiness programs that incorporate both practical skill-building and career decision-making exercises. Furthermore, considering the changing nature of the job market, these programs must remain adaptive, providing students with current tools, resources, and guidance tailored to the evolving labor market. By emphasizing the importance of career guidance, educational institutions can better equip students with the confidence and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of finding employment.

The positive results from this study can be attributed to the comprehensive approach of the career guidance program, which combined workshops, individual counseling, and interactive job-search activities. These elements were instrumental in developing both the practical skills and emotional readiness necessary for job success. The students' improvement in job-search skills and career decision-making can be explained by the program's focus on real-world applications, including resume writing, interview simulations, and personalized career counseling. This highlights the importance of a holistic approach in career guidance, which addresses not just career exploration but also the practical aspects of job readiness that are often overlooked in traditional academic settings. The students' success underscores the value of career guidance programs as essential tools for preparing students for the workforce.

Moving forward, there are several important steps for future research. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to assess the long-term impact of career guidance programs on students' actual job placement and career success, as well as how the skills learned during the program are applied

in the workplace. Additionally, exploring how career guidance can be further integrated into various educational levels, from high school to college, could provide a clearer understanding of how these programs benefit students at different stages of their academic and professional development. Future research could also examine the role of career guidance in addressing inequities in job readiness across different socioeconomic and demographic groups, ensuring that these programs are accessible and effective for all students.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this research is the marked improvement in students' job readiness following their participation in the career guidance program. The data showed that students demonstrated higher self-confidence, better job-search skills, and greater clarity in their career decision-making post-program. This was particularly evident in the improvement in practical job-search competencies such as resume writing and interview preparation, which had previously been areas of weakness. These findings underscore the effectiveness of a structured and comprehensive career guidance program in enhancing students' preparedness for entering the workforce. Unlike previous studies that primarily assessed career exploration, this research focused on tangible outcomes directly related to job readiness, thus offering a more specific and actionable understanding of how career guidance influences employability.

This research contributes to the field by offering a clear, evidence-based evaluation of the impact of career guidance programs on students' job readiness. Previous studies have largely focused on career exploration and decision-making, but this study extends the literature by examining the direct effects on employability skills. The methodology employed, which combined pre- and post-program assessments, allowed for a more rigorous evaluation of the program's effectiveness. This approach, incorporating both self-reported measures and practical skills assessments, provides a more comprehensive understanding of how career guidance programs improve students' ability to transition successfully into the job market. The study's focus on job-search skills and career decision-making adds new dimensions to the existing body of research.

The limitations of this study include its cross-sectional design, which only measures the immediate impact of the career guidance program without tracking long-term career outcomes or job placement success. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may introduce biases in the students' perceptions of their job-readiness skills. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating a longitudinal design to track students' career progress over time, providing a more robust picture of the lasting effects of career guidance programs. Moreover, incorporating objective assessments, such as interviews with employers or real-world job placement data, could provide more concrete evidence of the program's impact on actual job success.

Further research should explore how career guidance programs can be tailored to specific student populations, particularly those from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, to determine whether such programs can help reduce inequalities in job readiness. Additionally, the study could be expanded to compare different types of career guidance programs—such as those focused on specific industries or those integrating internships and hands-on experiences—to determine which models are most effective in preparing students for the workforce. Expanding this research to diverse educational settings, including vocational schools and community colleges, would provide valuable insights into how career guidance can be optimized to meet the needs of a wide range of students.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

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