

The Relationship Between Self-Confidence And Future Anxiety In Early Adulthood

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Abstract

The level of anxiety about the future experienced in early adulthood varies from person to person, but self-confidence is part of the emotional and cognitive factors that protect against anxiety about the future. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between self-confidence and future anxiety in early adulthood. Early adulthood is a developmental phase characterized by major life transitions, increasing responsibilities, and uncertainty regarding career, relationships, and long-term life planning, which may heighten vulnerability to psychological distress. The research method used was quantitative, with data collected using a self-confidence scale and a future anxiety scale. The sample was selected based on accidental sampling with criteria of being between 18 and 40 years old and having a minimum education level of high school, resulting in 70 participants. Hypothesis testing used Spearman's rho correlation. The results indicated a negative correlation between the variables of self-confidence and anxiety with a sig. value (2-tailed) of 0.012 and a correlation coefficient value of -0.298. The hypothesis stating that there is a correlation between self-confidence and anxiety about the future in early adulthood was accepted. These findings emphasize the importance of developing psychological interventions that focus on increasing self-confidence, strengthening adaptive coping strategies, and enhancing emotional regulation as preventive measures in reducing anxiety about the future and improving overall psychological well-being.

Keywords: *Emerging Adulthood, Future Anxiety, Self-Confidence, Psychological intervention, Anxiety management*

1. INTRODUCTION

Early adulthood is a developmental phase characterized by various demands and complex life transitions from dependence to independence, so that the individual is in a state of vulnerability to the appearance of anxiety (Iqomah et al., 2023). Early adulthood includes the age of 18 years to about 40 years which is the period when individuals are required to adapt to new lifestyles and social expectations (Hurlock, 1990). Individuals at this stage are expected to be able to occupy a social position as adults, take on new roles such as being a life partner, being a parent, and earning a living (Wood et al., 2018) In addition, early adulthood is also characterized by physical and psychological maturity, as well as peak physical performance accompanied by readiness to accept responsibilities as individuals in productive age (Hurlock, 2017). However, Arnett (2000) states that in early adulthood individuals are often in a state of "emerging adulthood", which is a feeling of oscillation between dependence and independence, which can lead to uncertainty and fear of future commitments.

In the emerging adulthood phase, individuals face various major transitions involving aspects of career, interpersonal relationships, marriage, and the formation of self-identity (Bleidorn & Schwaba, 2017). The pressure to succeed in different areas of life, the fierce competition in the world of work, the uncertainty of obtaining a job, the demands of parents, as well as the tendency to compare one's own achievements with others, are significant sources of psychological stress (Matud et al., 2020). Hammad (2016) found that early adult individuals who are unable to control the direction of their lives can trigger the emergence of ongoing future anxiety. Zaleski (1996) explained that future anxiety is a psychological state characterized by the presence of anxiety, uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and concern for negative changes in the future. While Nevid, Rathos, Green (2005) defines anxiety about the future as a psychological condition characterized by feelings of worry, fear, and uncertainty about future events, which arise due to

an individual's belief that he or she does not have adequate resources or abilities to deal with the demands and situations that are perceived to be coming.

The results of world mental health statistics conducted by the National Institutes of Health (2024) and World Health Organization (2025) shows that anxiety disorders are the most common form of mental disorders in various early adult age groups. Salih et al. (2022) also found that college students in the early adulthood age range were found to have significant anxiety about the future. These findings indicate that individuals in the early adulthood age range, defined as 18–40 years, belong to an age group that is prone to mental health disorders, particularly anxiety disorders, thus confirming the urgency of studying psychological determinants in this developmental phase. It is also complemented by Gustavson et al. (2018) who reported that about 9.6% of men and 26.7% of women experienced anxiety disorders in the age range of 19 to 36 years.

In Indonesia, Basic Health Research data shows that 18.5% of the population aged 15–34 years have a mental-emotional disorder, where *the emerging adulthood* group falls into the early adulthood age range (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2019). Empirical findings also show high anxiety in the early adult group, as shown by the research of Gustina, Badri, dan Putri (2023) which reported that 51.9% of individuals were in the high anxiety category. Correspondingly, Ramdani et al. (2025) found that most early adults were at moderate (68.2%) and high (18.5%) levels of anxiety, while Johari (2025) and Rosyida (2025) reported that more than half of participants experienced future anxiety in the high category, respectively (Johari, 2025; Ramdani et al., 2025; Rosyida, 2025).

Overall, the findings confirm that anxiety about the future is a real and significant psychological problem in the early adulthood age group. Although the data illustrate the prevalence of anxiety in general, various studies show that in the early adulthood phase, anxiety is often oriented towards future uncertainties, such as career, relationships, and life stability (Duffy et al., 2025; Mukaromah & Sastri, 2025; Öztekin et al., 2025). Therefore, anxiety about the future is seen as a form of anxiety that is relevant to be studied specifically at this stage of development. This research specifically focuses on anxiety about the future as a distinct psychological construct.

The empirical findings are also strengthened by a preliminary study conducted by researchers on 35 early adult students on November 9–10, 2024 via Google Form, showing that 97.1% of students in the age range of 21–22 years and 23–25 years have a significant level of future anxiety. These data suggest that future anxiety is a real and widespread subjective experience experienced by early adult individuals.

Anxiety about the future in early adulthood has significant psychological and social impacts, including decreased self-esteem, low interest and career clarity, and increased risk of stress and depression (Puspita & Puspitadewi, 2026; Yuliza et al., 2025). This condition becomes increasingly crucial considering that early adulthood is a productive age group that plays a strategic role in the world of work, career development, and family formation. If future anxiety is experienced in a sustainable manner, it not only has an impact on individual well-being, but also has the potential to hinder the achievement of the *Sustainable Development Goals*, especially Goal 3 regarding healthy living and well-being. At the macro level, high anxiety in the productive age group can also weaken the quality of human resources, thus having implications for the achievement of the Human Development Index (HDI) nationally. Therefore, it is necessary to identify protective psychological factors that play a role in lowering future anxiety.

One of the psychological factors that plays a role in reducing anxiety is self-confidence. Panisoara et al., (2019) stated that self-confidence is an internal factor that can reduce anxiety, because individuals with good self-confidence tend to have confidence in their ability to deal with challenging situations (Chirca et al., 2019) This is in line with the opinion of Charness et al. (2018) who define confidence as a belief in

one's ability refers to the subjective evaluation of an individual's capacity to face certain demands and challenges, which is reflected in the courage to make choices, readiness to make important decisions, and the ability to face the risks that accompany these decisions, such as in career choices, business initiation, and other strategic actions. Research by Dimenggo & Yendi (2020) also proves that self-confidence plays an important role in reducing anxiety in early adulthood in Indonesia, as it allows individuals to assess life's challenges more adaptively and realistically, thereby reducing the tendency to have a negative view of the future.

A number of studies in Indonesia have examined future anxiety with diverse focuses, such as religiosity in early adulthood (Qolbi, 2020), a literature review in Sherlina, (2024), and the relationship between self-confidence and communication anxiety in Pili et al., (2025). However, these studies have not specifically placed future anxiety in the context of early adult developmental roles, which are the phases when individuals are required to make important decisions related to career, economic independence, intimate relationships, and long-term life planning. In addition, studies linking self-confidence as a protective psychological factor with future anxiety in the context of transition and early adult roles are still very limited. Therefore, this study is important to fill the gap in the literature by examining the role of self-confidence in dealing with future anxiety in early adult individuals in the context of developmental demands and responsibilities typical of that phase (Pili & Mazdalifah; Ramadhani, 2025; Sherlina, 2024).

Based on this description, anxiety in early adulthood is an important psychological problem to study, and self-confidence is seen as a protective factor that has the potential to help individuals in dealing with future anxiety in a more positive and adaptive way. In contrast to previous studies that generally examined anxiety in general or focused on the academic context of students, this study specifically places anxiety about the future as a psychological construct oriented to the early adult developmental phase (18–40 years), which is a transitional phase characterized by long-term decision-making related to career, relationships, and independence. Thus, this study does not simply replicate the relationship between self-confidence and anxiety, but makes a conceptual contribution by placing self-confidence as a protective factor in the context of the demands of early adult development.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative method with a correlational approach. This method was chosen by the study with the aim of finding out whether or not there is a correlation between two or more variables in a study, by avoiding manipulation or changes in the data that has been obtained (Arikunto, 2010). The participants of this study were 70 adult individuals aged 18–40 years, consisting of males and females selected based on accidental sampling techniques. The inclusion criteria in this study include (1) being in the early adult age range (18–40 years), and (2) having a minimum level of high school/vocational education. Participants were recruited online and participated voluntarily after meeting the research criteria. Data collection was carried out in the period of 10-14 June 2025. The number of participants of 70 people was considered sufficient to meet the objectives of this study's analysis, especially since the data were not normally distributed and were analyzed using a nonparametric statistical approach that did not require a large sample size. In addition, the focus of this study is not on the generalization of the population at large, but on understanding the relationship of variables in the context of the role of early adulthood which is still relatively rarely studied.

The data collection method in this study uses the Likert scale, namely the Confidence scale measured using the Confidence Scale developed by Putri (2022) totaling 23 items (17 favorable items and 6 unfavorable items), and developed based on the confidence aspect according to Lauster (2012), which includes confidence in self-ability, optimism, objectivity, responsibility, and rationality. This scale uses a Likert format of four response options, namely Very Appropriate (SS), Appropriate (S), Not Appropriate

(TS), and Very Not Appropriate (STS). Higher scores reflect higher levels of confidence. Meanwhile, the future anxiety scale consisting of 22 items (17 favorable items and 5 unfavorable items), is compiled based on the theory of Nevid, Rathus, and Greene (2005) which includes physical, behavioral, and cognitive aspects. Higher scores indicate a higher level of anxiety about the future (Nevid et al., 2005). The anxiety scale used measures anxiety in general with an emphasis on cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects related to anticipation of future events. Items on this scale are contextually modified by adjusting the wording of the statement to future situations and uncertainties relevant to early adult developmental phases, such as career, independence, and life planning. Before being used in the main study, the instrument has gone through the trial stage to ensure the readability of the item and meet the criteria of construct validity and reliability (Putri, 2022).

The reliability of the measuring tool was analyzed using an Alpha Cronbach coefficient of 0.925 for anxiety about the future, and 0.861 for the confidence scale. Differential power tests were also carried out which moved from 0.314 to 0.731 for the scale of anxiety about the future, while 0.312 to 0.611 for the scale of confidence. for both scales. Data analysis was conducted using correlational statistics with the rho spearman technique to test the relationship between confidence and anxiety about the future. Before hypothesis testing, an analysis prerequisite test was carried out which included a normality test and a linearity test. All statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS software.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the descriptive analysis showed that the confidence variable in 70 respondents [4.1][4.2] had a minimum score of 56 and a maximum of 71 with an average score of 71.88 and a standard deviation of 6.90. Meanwhile, anxiety about the future has a minimum score of 32 and a maximum of 47 with an average score of 47.14 and a standard deviation of 7.02. The calculation of the mean value and standard deviation was carried out to determine the categorization of the level of anxiety about the future and confidence. Meanwhile, the results of the normality test using Kolmogorov–Smirnov showed that the data on confidence ($p = 0.012$) and anxiety about the future ($p = 0.002$) were not normally distributed, so the next analysis was carried out using a nonparametric statistical approach.

Based on the results of the normality test carried out, the data was not normally distributed, then the hypothesis test used the Rho Sperm technique because it did not meet the requirements for the hypothesis test assumption with parametrics. Based on the results of the normality test above, it shows that the Sig value of the confidence variable (X) obtained a result of 0.012 and the variable of anxiety about the future (Y) had a result of 0.002. The data of this study is distributed abnormally because it does not meet the significance requirement, which is > 0.05 (Purnomo, 2016).

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Anxiety About the Future

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Low	8	11.4	11.4
Moderate	50	71.4	82.9
High	12	17.1	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Based on table 1, it was found that the level of anxiety about facing the future in early adulthood was dominated by the moderate category, while the low category was the least proportion and the high category was in the minority. These findings show that most respondents are at a fairly controlled level of anxiety, although there are still groups with high anxiety that need attention. Furthermore, it can be seen based on table 4 that as many as 9 people or 12.9% of 70 people have a low level of confidence, as many as 47 people or 67.1% of 70 people have moderate confidence, and as many as 14 people or 20% of 70

people have a high level of confidence. So, it can be concluded that the majority of early adulthood has a moderate level of confidence.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Self-Confidence

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Low	9	12.9	12.9
Moderate	47	67.1	80.0
High	14	20.0	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Based on the results of the Spearman test, it is known that the variables of confidence and anxiety about the future have a sig value of 0.012 and a correlation coefficient value (r) of -0.298. A significance value of less than 0.05 means that the confidence variable has a relationship with anxiety about the future. Thus, the hypothesis that there is a relationship between confidence and anxiety about the future is accepted. The results of the Spearman test showed that the direction of the relationship between confidence and anxiety about the future showed a negative relationship. This means that the higher a person's confidence, the lower his anxiety in facing the future. On the other hand, the lower a person's confidence, the higher his anxiety in facing the future.

The results of this study show that self-confidence has a significant relationship with anxiety about the future in early adult individuals. These findings indicate that while anxiety is a natural experience for every individual, especially when facing an uncertain future, confidence levels play an important role in determining the extent to which it can be managed adaptively. Anxiety about the future itself is a psychological condition that reflects the worries, uncertainties, fears, and anxieties experienced by individuals regarding possible negative changes or undesirable outcomes in the future, so that they can affect individual thinking and behavior in anticipation of events that have not yet occurred (Dalmış et al., 2025; Jannini et al., 2024).

This condition is commonly found in early adulthood, which is a developmental phase characterized by various important transitions in life, such as entering the world of work, building long-term relationships, and determining the direction and goals of life independently (Kranzler et al., 2019). Thus, emerging adulthood is a crucial period that is vulnerable to future anxiety due to the great demands for adjustment and setting long-term life goals independently. The findings of this study are consistent with recent studies that report that the majority of early adult individuals tend to experience moderate levels of anxiety in facing the future, which is understood as a normative psychological response to the demands of developmental transition in the emerging adulthood phase (Mora & Ningsih, 2021; Salih et al., 2022).

The results of the correlation analysis showed a negative relationship between confidence and anxiety about the future, which means that the higher the individual's confidence, the lower the level of anxiety felt in facing the future. In contrast, individuals with low self-esteem tend to experience higher anxiety. These findings reinforce the results of previous research that stated that self-confidence has a significant role in reducing anxiety, particularly related to readiness for the world of work and future careers (Fadilah Tambak & Rohmadani, 2024). Individuals who have confidence in their abilities, competencies, and values will be better able to face uncertainty and future demands without being accompanied by excessive worries. (Anisa Masyitoh et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the findings of this study show that self-confidence plays a protective factor against the appearance of anxiety. Individuals with high self-confidence tend to be better able to manage negative thoughts, have better self-control, and are less easily affected by social pressures and external expectations (Swari & Tobing, 2024). In addition, confident individuals generally have clearer and more directed long-

term goals, thus being able to relate current conditions to future plans more realistically (Anggraini et al., 2025). This condition helps individuals reduce the uncertainty that is often a major trigger for future anxiety.

Theoretically, these findings are in line with the view of Bandura (1998) who explains that an individual's belief in his or her capacity influences the way individuals think, feel emotions, and act in the face of challenges. Individuals with good self-confidence tend to have a more adaptive mindset, are able to assess challenges as something that can be overcome, and are not easily caught up in negative anticipation of the future. Thus, the future is not perceived as a frightening threat, but rather as a realistic and manageable challenge.

In addition to self-confidence, previous research has also shown that early adult individuals who have a high future time perspective tend to have a clearer and more structured picture of the future. This allows individuals to associate current activities with long-term goals, thus reducing the uncertainty and fear of failure that contributes to future anxiety (Priastanti & Pratitis, 2021). These findings corroborate that confidence and future orientation are intertwined in helping individuals manage anxiety more adaptively.

Research by Risnia and Sugiasih (2019) also found that students with low confidence tend to experience high anxiety in facing the world of work, which is characterized by the emergence of feelings of fear, stress, confusion, and excessive worry about the future. Similar findings were also reported by Hanifah and Hakim (2023) which showed that the higher the confidence in early adult individuals, the lower the level of anxiety felt in facing the career world. In addition, Nuryono et al., (2026) explain that confidence crises in early adulthood are often triggered by negative social comparisons, academic pressure, anxiety about the future, and high family expectations (Hanifah & Hakim, 2023; Nuryono et al., 2026; Risnia & Sugiasih, 2019).

Although this study provides an overview of the relationship between confidence and anxiety about the future in early adulthood, there are limitations that need to be considered, especially in the use of anxiety instruments that are still general and have not specifically measured the construct of future anxiety. Although the anxiety items have been modified to reflect orientation towards the future and tested before use, the instruments in this study still depart from the general anxiety framework. Therefore, further research is recommended to use the future anxiety scale which was specifically developed to measure future-oriented anxiety in order to gain a more specific understanding. In addition, these findings also confirm the importance of developing psychological interventions that focus on increasing self-confidence, accompanied by strengthening emotion regulation and adaptive coping strategies, as a preventive effort in reducing anxiety about the future. The next drawback was that the study did not collect more detailed demographic data such as gender and socioeconomic background, as the focus of the study was directed on the general relationship between confidence and anxiety about the future in the early adulthood phase. This limitation limits the possibility of analyzing differences in individual characteristics that may also affect the dynamics of relationships between variables.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis, it can be concluded that there is a significant negative relationship between confidence and anxiety about the future in early adulthood individuals. These results suggest that the higher the level of confidence an individual has, the lower the level of anxiety perceived in facing the future, and conversely, individuals with low confidence tend to experience higher future anxiety. Thus, the hypothesis of this study is acceptable.

Self-confidence plays an important role in helping individuals assess themselves more objectively, have a positive attitude towards themselves, and understand their capacities and limitations

without having to make excessive social comparisons. This self-understanding is the basis for individuals to set goals, make decisions, and adjust to the reality of life, so that they are able to prepare themselves more adaptively to face the future. Conversely, a lack of confidence in one's abilities can hinder individuals from planning for the future and setting life goals, ultimately triggering the emergence of anxiety.

However, the findings of this study also indicate that anxiety about the future is not only experienced by individuals with low self-esteem. Early adulthood individuals with high levels of self-confidence still have the potential to experience anxiety, especially when faced with high demands and expectations, such as career pressure, financial independence, and family expectations, if not balanced with adaptive coping strategies. Therefore, the development of self-confidence in early adulthood needs to be accompanied by the ability to regulate emotions, stress management, and realistic life planning so that anxiety about the future can be optimally minimized.

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