

# Career orientation of senior secondary school students

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# Career orientation of senior secondary school students

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**Abstract.** The main purpose of this study is to portray career orientation of Senior High School (SMA) and Vocational High School (SMK) students and the role that school counselors should play in providing vocational guidance. This study used a survey method involving 278 students from both SMA and SMK di Jakarta. Career Orientation Inventory (COI) and Counselor Role in Career Guidance Inventory were used as an instrument of data collection. Descriptive statistics and t-test were conducted to analyze the data. The findings of the study reveal that majority of SMA and SMK students wanted to further their study to university and only small number of them wanted to find out jobs or run their own business. The findings also show that school counselors play a very important role in providing vocational guidance services for senior secondary students. Therefore, in order for students to have a bright career in future, school counselors should improve the quality of vocational guidance services and plan comprehensive vocational guidance programs.

Key words: career orientation, vocational guidance, school counselor

## 1 Introduction

The importance of providing career orientation to students has been studied in numerous researches [1-5]. Savickas found that career orientation explicitly fosters students' awareness of tasks to be faced and decisions to make [1]. Krumboltz and Worthington pointed that learning is essential not only for students to develop the basic employability skills required for the school-to-work transition, but also for the development of work habits, beliefs, interests, and values[2].

Similarly, Lent and Worthington said that responding to national and local initiatives, the career development profession has been engaged in efforts to aid understanding and facilitation of the school-to-work (STW) transition process [3]. Kuijpers, Meijers, and Gundy indicated that career guidance in school, in which a dialogue takes place with the student about concrete experiences and which is focused on the future, contributes to the presence of career competencies among students [4]. A recent study by Loan and Van

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showed that career guidance aimed at assisting students to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labor market and education system, and to relate their needs in life and to become responsible global citizen [5].

Previous studies also revealed that there are various factors affecting students' career orientation [6-8]. According to Patton and Creed career orientation is mostly affected by career maturity [6]. Heslin pointed certain factors that affected career orientation which included both contextual and individual factors. The potential role of two contextual factors: whether the career is being pursued in a winner-take-all market as well as the organizational culture in which a person is working. Two individual factors are work orientation and goal orientation [7]. In addition, Sovet and Metz pointed out that toward the end of their high school years, young people face numerous personal decisions that can have wide-ranging and long-lasting effects on their lives. Some of these decisions are career related: joining the military, finding a job, obtaining an apprenticeship, going to college, choosing a major, or gaining skills through volunteer service [8]. Fortunately, adolescents are not alone in their career decision-making. In the context of Indonesia secondary school system, the role of school counselors in career orientation is very important.

The present study is aimed to portray career orientation of Senior Secondary School (SMA) and Secondary Vocational School (SMK) students and the role that school counselors should play in providing vocational guidance services. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that for secondary students to have a bright career in future, school counselors should improve the quality of vocational guidance services and well planned vocational guidance programs are required.

## **2 Methods**

The present study applied a descriptive survey design, which is a non-experimental design used to describe students' career orientation and counselor role. The participants were 278 students from two Senior High Schools (SMAN 87 and SMAN 34) and two Vocational High Schools (SMKN 57 and SMKN 20) in Jakarta. The participants of the study were Grade X to XII students in the academic year 2016/2017. The participants consisted of 186 (67%) girls and 92 (33%) boys, aged 14 to 18 years.

The research instruments used for data collection were Career Orientation Inventory (COI) and Counselor Role in Career Guidance Inventory written in the form of a Likert scale. The Counselor Role in Career Guidance Inventory had 9 items and the Career Orientation Inventory had 40 items. Descriptive statistics, was used to analyze the data related to students' career orientation and school counselors' role. T-test analyses were conducted in order to determine differences between demographic subsets of student respondents (school and gender).

## **3 Findings and Discussion**

### **3.1. Students' career orientation**

As mentioned earlier, this study involved students from two senior high schools (SMAN 87 and SMAN 34) and two vocational high schools (SMKN 57 and SMKN 20) in Jakarta. Respondents from SMK took four types of study program, namely catering (16.9%), dance (5%), office administration (12.2%), and accounting (20.9%). As for respondent from SMA, they were from natural sciences (22.3%) and social sciences (22.7%). Analysis was also done to find out career orientation after graduating from schools as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Student career orientation after graduating from the schools

Career orientation	SMA	SMK
Going to college	114 (91.2%)	105 (68.6%)
Finding jobs	0 (0%)	23 (15%)
Being entrepreneur	0 (0%)	3 (2%)
Others	10 (8%)	17 (11.1%)
Undecided	1 (0.8%)	5 (3.3%)
Total	125 (100%)	153 (100%)

Data on Table 1 show that almost all SMA students wanted to go to college or university after they graduated from schools with percentage of 91.2%. On the other hand, SMK students have various career choices after they graduated from schools. About 68.6% of them decided going to college, followed by 15% decided finding jobs, and 2% decided being entrepreneur, and 11.1% decided other career not mentioned in this study, and about 3.3% undecided. In order to find out whether SMA students differed from SMK students in their career orientation, independent sample T-test was run and the results of analysis is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Results of T-test analysis for student career orientation based on school type

		Levene's Test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means		Sig. (2-tailed)
		F	Sig.	t	df	
Career orientation	Equal variances assumed	.008	.928	5.089	276	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			5.112	269.214	.000

Data on Table 2 indicate that there is a significant difference between SMA and SMK students in their career orientation with significance value of 0,000. However, when the analysis was done based on gender, significant difference was not found as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Results of T-test analysis for student career orientation based on gender

		Levene's Test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means		Sig. (2-tailed)
		F	Sig.	t	df	
Career orientation	Equal variances assumed	.295	.587	-1.497	276	.136
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.466	172.061	.144

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Data on Table 3 show indicate that there is no significant difference between boys and girls in their career orientation with significance value of 0,136. This means that the null hypothesis which said that there is no difference between boys and girls in their career orientation was accepted.

### 3.1.2 Role of school counselor in providing career guidance

This section is aimed to describe roles that school counselors should play in providing vocational guidance and how important the role is. There were nine statements that described the role of school counselors in vocational guidance and students' responses to each is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** The importance of school counselor role in providing vocational guidance

Counselor Role	1	2	3
1. Counselor meets with individual students to discuss career information and/or to help students in career planning.	3 (1%)	25 (9%)	250 (90%)
2. Counselor conducts a class size of large group workshop for students to help them develop resume writing, interview, and job seeking skills.	8 (2.8%)	48 (17.3%)	222 (79.9%)
3. Counselor assists student to seek employment (part-time or full-time employment).	17 (6%)	56 (20.1%)	205 (73.9%)
4. Counselor administers to an individual or a class size or a large group of students a career inventory to assess students' career potential.	11 (4%)	42 (15%)	225 (81%)
5. Counselor consults with community agencies (education department, social services department) about job vacancies.	13 (4.6%)	35 (12.6%)	230 (82.8%)
6. Counselor plans activities (discussion, field trip) to stimulate interest in the world of work.	14 (5%)	61 (22%)	203 (73%)
7. Counselor provides vocational information to students wishing to explore career.	10 (3.5%)	67 (24.1%)	201 (72.4%)
8. Counselor helps students relate their abilities to future career choices.	5 (1.7%)	28 (10.1%)	245 (88.2%)
9. Counselor provides information on the qualifications needed for jobs.	14 (5%)	40 (14.4%)	224 (80.6%)

In general, data on Table 4 indicate that majority of SMA and SMK students felt that the role of school counselors in providing vocational guidance services is very important. More specifically, out of nine roles of school counselors, based on respondents' opinions, five roles were perceived to be very high priority with the percentage of more than 80

percent. The other four roles of school counselors were perceived as the second order of importance by the student respondents. These roles include item number 2, 3, 6, and 7.

### 3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that both SMA and SMK students were concerned with their future career, however they differed significantly in career choices. Majority of SMA students wanted to go to college and none of them who wanted to find jobs or be an entrepreneur. SMK students, on the other hand, made choices for finding jobs and being entrepreneur. Surprisingly, more than half of SMK students also decided to go to college. In fact, the capacity of university or college for new students is only 30 percent of the total population of graduates from senior secondary schools (SMA and SMK). This means that SMA and SMK graduates who are not accepted in the college will contribute to the increasing number of unemployment in Indonesia.

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) indicated that the number of unemployment in February 2017 from SMK graduates was higher than SMA with the percentage of 9.27 percent and 7.03 percent respectively [9]. This number of unemployment can be considered as a great challenge for senior secondary school teachers and counsellors to equip and prepare their students with attitudes, knowledge, and skills as expected by work agencies and industrial sectors.

The findings of this study also indicate that both SMA and SMK students felt that the role of school counselors in providing vocational guidance services is very important. The findings support a previous study by Suryadi which found that it is very important for school counselors to provide vocational information to students and meet with students to discuss career information [10]. The only difference is that the present study was conducted in the Jakarta as Capital City of Indonesia, while the previous study was done in the Province of East Java.

This study also supported the regulation made by the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 111 year 2014 which emphasizes on the importance of vocational guidance for secondary students [11]. According to this regulation in relation to the implementation of 2013 Curriculum, every student has to choose his or her academic and vocational interest with assistance from school counselors. Furthermore, the regulation said that the purpose of vocational guidance services is to facilitate students in order to develop, explore, and make career choices.

The present study also gives certain implications for both policy makers and school counsellors. As for policy makers, especially the Minister of Education and Culture as well as Provincial and District Education Officers, they should facilitate secondary schools with professional counselors who meet the academic qualification and competences as required by the regulation. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 27 year 2008, the academic qualifications for school counselors are having a bachelor degree (S1) from guidance and counseling study program and a certificate of counselor education program. As for counselor competences, they have to fulfil four competencies, namely, pedagogic, professional, personal, and social competences [12]. However, in the implementation process, the regulation compliance was not obediently done as many school counselors were recruited from many other study programs.

As an implication for school counselors, it is strongly recommended to have a grand design and road map for career development programs. According to Tang, Pan, and Newmeyer career development programs should provide meaningful learning experiences that facilitate the development of self-efficacy in students' aspired careers. School counselors also should consider individual variants such as gender, self-efficacy, interests, and outcome expectations, and contextual factors such as socioeconomic background, when developing career intervention plans. School counselors have to be cognizant of the role of

self-efficacy and learning experiences in shaping high school students' career interests and choices [13].

## 4 Conclusion

Senior secondary school students were concerned with their future career orientation. Two important career choices found in this study were going to college and finding jobs. However, due to limited study opportunity at university as well as limited job opportunity at work place, senior secondary student graduates have contributed to the increasing number of unemployment. As a consequence, school counselors are challenged to define their role and function in vocational guidance more clearly.

Obviously, vocational guidance has existed on senior secondary schools for a long time and in this study the roles of school counselors in providing career guidance services were highlighted. The aim of vocational guidance is to help students discover their potentials and make the best of their choices, plans, and adjustment in their vocational life. To meet the above challenges, professional counselors have to conceptualize student career concerns from their perspective and worldview, and provide comprehensive vocational guidance services by considering the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills.

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