

# The Correlation Between Parental Involvement and Career Interest Tendencies of Students with Learning Disabilities (LD) in Vocational Schools

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## Abstract

This study aims to identify the relationship between parental involvement and career interest tendencies of student with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools. They need to be applied with career interests that are appropriate to the vocational field of education they are following. Parents are the closest individuals to students with learning disabilities (LD) and play an important role in influencing their career interests. This study was conducted through a review involving 256 students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools in the north, east and west zones. Xplorasi Inspirasi Kerjaya Impian (Dream Career Inspiration Exploration) by Salleh (2012) was used to identify the career interests of student with learning disabilities (LD), while the Adolescent-Parent Career Congruence *Scale* questionnaire by Sawitri et al (2012) was used to determine the level of parental involvement. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Windows version 23.0) software. The Spearman Rho Correlation was used to study the relationship between parental involvement and the career interest tendencies of in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools. Career interests of student with learning disabilities (LD) were identified based on Holland's Career Theory (RIASEC). The findings of the study show that student with learning disabilities (LD) are more inclined to the Social field of work, followed by Conventional and Realistic compared to Artistic, Enterprising and Investigative. In addition, 76.2% of student with learning disabilities (LD) showed that the level of parental involvement from the perspective of student with learning disabilities (LD) is high. The Spearman Rho Correlation analysis also showed that there is a moderate positive correlation for parental involvement from the perspective of student with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools. The implications of this study are expected to help identify the factors of parental involvement in increasing the career interest tendencies of student with learning disabilities (LD) so that they can be interested in fields that are appropriate to their abilities and capabilities.

**Keywords:** Parental Involvement, Career Interests, Holland's Career Theory, Student with Learning Disabilities (LD), Vocational.

## Introduction

Students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools

should have access to careers that match the field of vocational education they are pursuing. However, in reality, not all students graduating from these schools obtain the desired careers. A well-prepared career is important for students with special needs to obtain jobs that match their abilities and skills (Bari et al., 2013). To address this issue of career readiness for students with special needs, the Ministry of Education of Malaysia has implemented various initiatives, programs and skill institutions to help them prepare for career opportunities. The government has also formulated a Special Education Curriculum more systematically by creating Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools, formulated the Secondary School Standard Curriculum and implemented the Middle-Upper Skill Development Program (Perintis Industri Menengah Atas). These alternative programs aim to provide learning opportunities for students with special needs to be more inclined towards vocational skills rather than academic qualifications alone.

Research has shown that vocational education also helps students with special needs to acquire knowledge and skills, and make preparations for future job market competition (Millner et al., 2015; Ibrahim et al., 2016). However, to meet the vocational job market after graduation, students with special needs should be applied with deep interests in the vocational field. However, studies have found that lack of parental involvement causes students with special needs to have difficulty obtaining vocational career information and eventually they are less interested in the field. This is because parents do not have enough vocational career information to share with their children (Rowe et al., 2014). In addition, there are also parents who make decisions and choose careers for themselves and set high expectations without considering the interests and abilities of their children (Doren et al., 2012). Parents should play their role in the involvement of their children's career interests because they can help in the development of their children's careers (Garcia et al., 2015; Rogers et al., 2016; Sawitri et al., 2012).

If issues related to vocational career interests of special needs students are not handled well, it can have a big impact on the development of the country. Additionally, the vocational field also makes a big contribution to the knowledge-based economy of the country, technological progress, and workforce mobility that is in line with global economic growth, as well as providing competent workforce to meet industry demands. Furthermore, the government's desire in the OKU Action Plan (2016-2022) announced by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development to increase the ability of OKU in the open market by encouraging OKU participation in vocational training and other government support programs is not achieved. Individuals with disabilities working in the public sector in this country is only 0.31% compared to 1.0% targeted by the government (KPWKM, 2018). This shows that this policy is still poorly implemented due to employers assuming that individuals with disabilities have less skills and are not productive (Omar et al., 2020).

### **Problems Statement**

Students with learning disabilities (LD) in Malaysia face challenges in obtaining suitable employment opportunities in the vocational field that they studied. The government has introduced vocational education to develop the abilities of students with special needs as a preparation for entering the workforce. However, many students with special needs who have graduated from Vocational Special Education Secondary School do not obtain jobs based on the vocational field they studied and some of them still unemployed (Data Pendidikan Khas

Vokasional, 2018). The issue is that most students with learning disabilities (LD) do not tend to choose the vocational field as their career interest (Ibrahim et al., 2016; Turner et al., 2011). This is because, interests play a role in choosing a vocational career field because an individual's attitude and interests give an idea about the level of readiness to venture into a certain field. Most students with learning disabilities (LD) were found to have inadequate career information, lack of knowledge and did not have sufficient career experience (Dipeolu, 2013; Murugami & Nel, 2012). Additionally, with learning disabilities (LD) were also found to have low self-confidence levels (Yusof et al., 2015; Wehman et al., 2014) which causes them to be less confident in making career choices that are suitable for their interests and potential.

However, the issue is that students with special needs state that they do not receive sufficient involvement from their parents in choosing a career field that they are interested in and that is suitable for their potential. Satisfying involvement from parents is important in increasing vocational career interests (Rigopoulos et al., 2021). However, the level of unsatisfying involvement from parents in providing support and encouragement for vocational careers for students with special needs is very concerning (Zainol & Ghazali., 2020). Parents show a lack of interest in involvement in school, especially involving their children because they are too busy with their own work that they leave the task of educating and providing career information to the teachers alone (Abdullah et al., 2015). Parents should also actively involve themselves in guiding and helping teachers as well as practicing skills training at home so that students with special needs are more interested in the vocational field they are studying. However, the problem of lack of parental involvement indirectly causes students with special needs to feel marginalized, less motivated and less able to obtain career information in identifying their career interests (Viola & Daniel, 2017).

### **Research Objective**

- a. To identify the tendency of career interest of students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary School.
- b. To identify the level of parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary School.
- c. To identify the relationship between parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities (LD) towards career interest tendencies.

### **Literature Review**

Vocational education is one of the government's efforts to develop the abilities of students with special needs as a preparation for entering the workforce. Issues of unemployment and mismatch in job opportunities among students with special needs can be reduced by realizing the government's aspirations through offering programs that allow students with special needs to have potential as semi-professionals in various fields, whether in technical, vocational and skills (Bahagian Pendidikan Teknik Vokasional, 2012). This is important so that the goal of vocational education to produce skilled and semi-skilled workforce that is needed for the development of the country is achieved.

Students with special needs who have learning problems need to be nurtured with suitable career interests so that they choose a vocational field after finishing school. Vocational skills acquired can provide a great opportunity for students with special needs to obtain a job that is suitable for their abilities (Isa and Kadir, 2014; Lee et al., 2011). Students with special needs

also need to prepare by obtaining sufficient vocational skills so that they can compete in the job market after completing their studies in that vocational field. Therefore, the selection of a suitable and compatible career with the interests and abilities of students with special needs should be given attention (Ibrahim et al., 2016).

In addition, studies have found that parental support also affects students with special needs in making career plans and choices (Ginevra et al., 2015). Parents are a source of social support that affects students with special needs in the development of their career interests and goals. The results of parental support may be influenced by how students with special needs interpret the responses and supportive behaviors received from their parents. This is because a person's career can be determined from the influence of their parents. This is because good and satisfactory parental involvement will be a measuring stick or model path for children's careers. Furthermore, many studies have proven that parental behavior greatly affects the education and careers of their children (Koumoundourou et al., 2011; Kounenou, 2020). Additionally, parental involvement has been found to have a positive and significant relationship with children's career decision-making skills (Guan et al., 2016).

### Methodology

This study involves four Special Vocational Secondary Schools in Malaysia representing four zones, namely the Eastern, Northern, Western and Southern zones. The total number of students with special needs involved in the study is 743, consisting of 506 male students and 237 female students. The study also involves three zones, namely the Northern, Western and Eastern zones, while one school in the Southern zone is used as a pilot study. Generally, this study is conducted on students with learning difficulties in Special Vocational Secondary Schools who are aged between 16 and 19 years old. All these students with special needs were selected as the study sample because the number is not sufficient if only certain ages are selected as respondents. This is because the sample size must be sufficient for the implementation of statistical procedures (Chua, 2014).

This study is a survey study that uses questionnaires to answer the research questions. The aim is to identify the involvement of parents from the perspective of students with learning difficulties (LD) in Special Vocational Secondary Schools towards their career interests. All of these instruments are administered in Malay language. The career interest questionnaire, for example, was adapted and modified based on the instrument "Xplorasi - inspiration for dream careers" by Salleh 2012 consisting of 90 questions. While the parent involvement questionnaire was adapted and modified from the *Adolescent-Parent Career Congruence Scale* by Sawitri et al (2012) that contains 12 items. These instruments need to be translated into Malay from their original language, which is English.

This study uses descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to describe and interpret the data. Techniques used include percentages, frequency, minimum scores, and standard deviation of the data of independent variables of the students' career interests and parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning difficulties (LD) in Special Vocational Secondary Schools. On the other hand, inferential statistics are used to examine the relationship between parental involvement and career interests of students with learning difficulties (LD). According to Creswell (2012), inferential statistics play a role in making generalizations about the population, involving the concept of probability of error based on a predetermined significant rate. The Spearman Rho correlation two analysis is used because it is a non-parametric analysis to measure the relationship between parental

involvement from the perspective of students with learning difficulties (LD) in Special Vocational Secondary Schools and their career interests.

### Result and Discussion

Objective 1: To identify the tendency of career interest of students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary School.

Table 1 below shows the findings for the frequency distribution of career interest trend among students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools.

Table 1

*Distribution of Frequency of Career Interest Tendency of Students with Learning Disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools*

Career Interest Tendency of the Students with Learning Disabilities (LD)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Realistic (R)	54	21.1
Investigative (I)	14	5.5
Artistic (A)	23	9.0
Social (S)	82	32.0
Enterprising (E)	19	7.4
Conventional (C)	64	25.0
Total	256	100.0

Table 1 shows the findings of the study regarding the career interest tendencies of students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools. The findings show that the tendency towards a career in the social field is the highest category, with a total of 82 people (32.0%) respondents. This is followed by a tendency towards a career in the Conventional field, with a total of 64 people (25.0%) respondents. Meanwhile, the tendency towards a career in the Realistic field is a total of 54 people (21.1%) respondents. The Artistic field only involves a total of 23 people (9.0%) respondents. It is also followed in the Enterprising field, with a total of 19 people (7.4%) respondents. The study found that the category that is least chosen by students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools is the Investigative field, with only a total of 14 people (5.5%) respondents.

Objective 2: To identify the level of parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary School.

Table 2 shows the scores for the level of parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools.

Table 2

*Parental Involvement Level Score from the perspective of students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools*

Parental Involvement Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	11	4.3%
Medium	50	19.5%
High	195	76.2%
Total	256	100.0

According to Table 2, it was found that the score for the level of parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools was mostly high, with 195 people (76.2%) of the respondents. This is followed by a score indicating moderate parental involvement in the students' career interests, with 50 people (19.5%) of the respondents. Only 11 people (4.3%) of the respondents showed a low score for parental involvement in their career interests. Overall, the study findings indicate that the level of parental involvement received by students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools is high.

Objective 3: To identify the relationship between parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities (LD) towards career interest tendencies.

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities towards career interest tendencies.

Based on the findings obtained from the analysis of the relationship between parental involvement and career interest tendencies of students with learning disabilities (LD) in vocational schools, it was found that parental involvement has a moderate relationship with career tendencies with a value of .413 ( $p < .05$ ). This interpretation of the correlation value is based on the index translated by Cohen (1988). Table 3 shows the analysis of the relationship between parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities in vocational schools and career interest tendencies.

Table 3

*Correlation analysis using Spearman Rho to examine the relationship between parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities (LD) in vocational schools and career interest tendencies*

Construct	r	Sig.	Relationship Strength Levels
Involvement of parents	.413	.000	Medium

## Summary and Discussions

High vocational interests allow students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools to be more likely to choose related careers after completing their education. However, the study results show that students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Special primarily do not tend to choose the vocational field, specifically Realistic. The study found that the majority of respondents tend



to choose the Social field followed by Conventional and Realistic in third place as their career interests. This study is in line with a study by Nota, Ginevra & Carrieri (2010) on 129 students with learning disabilities (LD) who also did not choose the vocational field of Realistic but chose the Conventional field as their career interests. Similarly, a study by Turner et al 2011 found that most students with learning difficulties chose the Artistic field followed by Realistic, Social, Investigative, Conventional and Enterprising. However, according to Holland (1985), career interests in the Realistic field are more suitable for students with learning difficulties who follow vocational fields because individuals categorized as Realistic (R) are more suitable to learn in fields involving manipulation of machines and tools such as reflexology, clothing making, laundromats, farming, baking and pastry, electrical.

The study findings also indicate that the level of parental involvement is high. This finding is in line with the findings of studies conducted by Mei et al (2021); Neuenschwander (2020) which found that the level of parental involvement in students' career choices is high. Parents and guardians of students with special needs should apply practical practices starting from home by giving them space and opportunities to interact better. This is because the study results show that there is an imbalance between parental involvement at home and at school (Salim & Khairuddin, 2020). Therefore, the role of parents and families is important in helping teachers guide students with special needs with practical skills training at home to create continuity of the skills that have been obtained in school. Indirectly, students can master these skills perfectly and effectively (Omar et al., 2017). Therefore, students with special needs requires the support and involvement of parents not only at school but also starting from home (Gunir & Alias, 2021).

The study also found a significant relationship between parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools and their career tendencies. Parental involvement refers to parents helping their children with their learning activities at school by providing support, encouragement, and creating a suitable home environment for their career development according to their needs and career development at school (Latashia, 2012). It takes many forms including good parenting at home, providing a safe and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussions, building social skills, high educational aspirations, and related personal characteristics, communicating with the school to share information and participating in school activities and school management (McKenna & Millen, 2013). Indirectly, parents play a role in determining the future direction of their children's careers. Therefore, the relationship between parents and children greatly influences their career tendencies, particularly in encouraging them to choose vocational fields (Nwawube, 2021). The vocational education they receive can also help students with learning difficulties to prepare and ready themselves for the working world after graduation (Nordin et al., 2012; Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010; Paul, 2011). They also tend to choose the same field as the course they took (Zakaria, Ismail, & Ana, 2016). Additionally, students with learning difficulties who are actively involved with their parents tend to have a more positive attitude towards school and are in a better position to develop their career (Cheung & Pomerrantz, 2015).

High interest in vocational careers is important for students with learning disabilities (LD) particularly for those in vocational education programs. According to Zainudin et al (2020), the decision to make a career choice or field of study is a critical issue faced by adolescents. Vocational interests and job compatibility are factors that influence an individual in making a career decision. Holland's Career Theory is one of the career theories that helps individuals understand their own career personality and then helps them make career decisions.

Students with special needs also often face difficulties in choosing a field of education that is suitable for their abilities and capabilities. (Ibrahim et al., 2016). This is because students with special needs cannot determine career tendencies and interests and are confused about their direction and goals (Dipeola et al., 2013; Murugami & Nel, 2012). As a result, students with special needs choose fields of education that are not suitable for their abilities, namely the Investigative field (Ibrahim et al., 2016). Therefore, it is the responsibility of all parties to nurture a deep interest in vocational careers for students with special needs, especially parents. In addition, parental involvement in providing career education to their children is critical, especially during the transition phase after schooling.

### **Conclusions**

In summary, the findings of the study show that students with learning disabilities (LD) in the Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools mainly tend to choose Social interests, followed by Conventional and thirdly Realistic careers. Meanwhile, the level of parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools is at a high level. The study also showed that there is a significant positive and moderate correlation between parental involvement from the perspective of students with learning disabilities (LD) in Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools and their career interest tendencies. The findings of this study are expected to help parents and special education teachers to identify the career interest tendencies of students with special needs in order to increase their career interest tendencies towards vocational fields (Realistic). This is important for the compatibility between career tendencies and fields of study after completing vocational studies. With high interest, an individual will be more motivated to work, reduce work pressure and the individual will stay longer in that field of work.

In conclusion, this research findings are expected to provide some explanations and knowledge that can be used as reading materials and references for researchers who are interested in exploring more knowledge in fully government-aided schools, particularly those involving special education schools. In addition, this study is also expected to provide knowledge to all parents on how to help students with special needs to make good and appropriate career choices according to their level and abilities. Parents should also involve themselves in activities in schools, especially those related to their children's careers by providing support and exposure to career information sources to their children.

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