

Career Awareness among Students of Islamic Secondary School: A Case Study

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Abstract

Career is an important aspect for every individual. This study aims to identify the personality, interests, and jobs that are suitable for the students. Additionally, it seeks to explore students' knowledge about careers and assess their awareness of their preferred career paths. Personality and interests are crucial factors in developing one's career awareness, and knowledge about different careers plays a significant role in achieving this awareness. This mixed-methods study incorporates interviews and utilizes the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) instrument to provide insights into participants' personalities and their compatibility with preferred careers. Six respondents from Sekolah Rendah Agama Seri Cheeding, Banting, Selangor participated in this study. The findings revealed several themes, including career interests, personality in career selection, parental support, career knowledge, and preparation for achieving a career. In conclusion, fostering career awareness from an early age is essential to ensure a brighter future.

Keywords: Career Awareness, Case Study, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Secondary School

Introduction

Career is a field that is very important in the life of every individual and is a process of implementation to obtain returns or income with the aim of supporting oneself and one's family. Career is generally defined as the journey or progress of an individual in a particular field of life. In a classic study conducted by Donald E. Super more than 60 years ago, it is argued that early preparation should be done before entering the workforce, during the career, until retirement (Super, 1957). It can be seen that early exposure to careers greatly helps individuals to avoid difficulties in choosing a career of interest. As such, career counseling is defined as a process that involves interpersonal skills designed to help and provide guidance to individuals who have problems in career selection and development. Career counseling is a lifelong psychological process that dynamically interacts with other roles in an individual's life. Problems in career selection include difficulties in choosing a career, stress, and adjustment in making career choices (Noah, 2006).

Primary schools also play a crucial role in guiding students who face career awareness issues. In a study by Ibrahim (2017), it is stated that career awareness among students is crucial in determining the direction of their careers. Career awareness can provide early exposure to the types of jobs that can serve as a source for them to make career choices. In addition, according to the Malaysian Labour Force Department, the number of unemployed individuals recorded a decrease of 588,700 people, amounting to 3.5 percent (myMetro, 2023). Meanwhile, according to the Ministry of Human Resources, there are many issues related to job mismatch, leading to many individuals being unwilling to work and increasing the unemployment rate (Muzamir, 2022). If they are given exposure to career information, issues of unemployment and job mismatch can be addressed.

Research Background

Personality plays a significant role in career selection. Individual differences and job characteristics will evoke feelings of acceptance or rejection of a career and influence decision-making in job selection (Holland, 1973). A study by Yahaya et al. (2005) states that personality is crucial in career selection and influences students' learning styles in academic achievement. This indicates that if individuals can understand themselves, they will strive to pursue a career that aligns with their personality. It is also seen as a step toward achieving satisfaction in their careers. Career counselors and guidance and counselling teachers should organize activities or programs related to careers to provide early exposure to students (Yahaya et al., 2005).

Moreover, a clear knowledge of career fields will encourage individuals to make the right career choices that align with their interests and abilities, ensuring a future that suits them (Noah, 2006). Furthermore, exposure and explanation of various career options are highly encouraged among students so that they can make informed choices in line with their interests and capabilities (Subhan et al., 2015). A study by Osman and Mubarak Ali (2022) states that it is crucial for students to make informed career decisions because if the chosen career does not align with their interests and abilities, it will impact their work, potentially leading to job changes in search of a more suitable career.

Super (1980) mentions that career maturity involves preparation before entering the workforce, including one's attitude during career selection. On the other hand, some researchers like Ismail and his colleagues (2018) argue that career maturity is dynamic and varies over time, reflecting an individual's ability, knowledge, competence, skills, adaptability, enthusiasm, and success in their career. It can be seen that career maturity stems from career choices and an individual's personality, whereby to achieve a high level of maturity, awareness of one's career should be prioritized. Thus, school counselors or guidance and counseling teachers should be sensitive to students' characteristics when planning programs involving career guidance and counseling (Ismail et al., 2018).

In order to prove all these points of previous research works among students in the Islamic school setting, this research was conducted with objectives to:

- a. identify the personality, interests, and career environment that are suitable for the students
- b. determine the students' knowledge about the preferred career

- c. assess the students' awareness in achieving their preferred career

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods in a case study design. Four face-to-face group counseling sessions were conducted. The analysis of the study involved data from interviews, observations, and instruments analyzed using thematic processes and coding to generate themes for the six respondents. In the first counseling session, the painting technique was employed, where respondents were asked to introduce themselves through a drawing. In the second session, respondents were given a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) screening. The focus of the second session is to determine whether the respondents are aware of whether their desired careers are suitable for their personalities. Some respondents were unfamiliar with MBTI, requiring a bit of guidance to complete the given MBTI test. For the third session, respondents were asked to list jobs they felt were suitable for them. The respondents provided positive responses and were able to list jobs they felt were suitable for them. The fourth session, on the other hand, aimed to examine the strategies employed by the respondents in achieving their desired careers.

All the four sessions were conducted on June 10, 2023, at Sekolah Rendah Agama Cheeding, Banting, Selangor. The counseling group sessions were planned systematically with goal setting based on idea sharing and discussion. The first session began at 12:00 PM and lasted until 1:00 PM, focusing on self-introduction. The second session started at 2:00 PM and ended at 3:00 PM, focusing on the MBTI test and an introduction to their personalities. The third session, from 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM, concentrated on knowledge of careers. The final session, from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM, focused on discussing the strategies they employ to achieve their desired careers.

Results and Discussion

Personality in Career Selection

Personality is one of the factors that influence career selection. Najmuddin (2005) indicates that the closer the alignment between personality and job requirements, the higher the likelihood of success for an individual. Table 1 revealed the personality profile (based on MBTI coding) of the research respondents.

Table 1
Respondents' Personality (MBTI) Profile

Respondent	Age	MBTI Code
R1	12 years old	INFJ
R2	12 years old	INFJ
R3	12 years old	ENFP
R4	12 years old	ENFP
R5	12 years old	ENFP
R6	12 years old	INFP

Comparison with qualitative feedback confirmed that three of them (50%) are extroverts whereas the remaining three (50%) are introverts. The feedback are as follows:

"So being a veterinarian is okay for me because I feel calm when I am with animals. I am shy when I am around people" – (R1)

"I feel like becoming a teacher but I am embarrassed to speak in front of people" – (R2)

"I want to become a nurse because I feel like I can help people. Plus, I like the smell of medicines" – (R3)

"Miss, after answering this MBTI test, I feel like becoming a soldier. I can help people and receive recognition" – (R4)

"I already guessed that I'm extroverted because I like being with a lot of people" – (R5)

"I like tranquility miss. If I become a pilot, I can travel and enjoy the scenery" – (R6)

All in all, the results from the second group counseling session, which focused on personality introduction, show that the respondents were able to understand themselves at a greater level.

Career Interest

Interest is a crucial element in creating awareness of career choices. The interests of each individual vary. According to the respondents, the factor that motivates them to enter a career field is their interest in that particular field, and it is reflected in their feedback as follows:

"I want to become a veterinarian because I like animals" – (R1)

"If I become a teacher, I would like to teach my friends. But I am also interested in the police field because I can catch the bad guys" – (R2)

"I want to be a flight attendant because then I'll look pretty, but I'm also interested in being a nurse. I'm a bit confused about which one to choose" – (R3)

"I'm very interested in being a soldier. Besides, I've watched a lot of war movies, and I have a dream of holding the M16" – (R4)

"I'm interested in becoming an ustaz (religious teacher) or a football player because as an ustaz, I would have a lot of knowledge, and as a football player, I would stay healthy." – (R5)

"If I become a pilot, I can travel to different places. There are many beautiful places. That's what makes it great." – (R6)

Consequently, it can be seen that each respondent has interests and is aware of the jobs they are interested in. In addition, family support also plays a crucial role in achieving the career they are interested in. as stressed out by R5:

"My father is an ustaz; he often goes to give lectures. That's what makes me want to become an ustaz, like Ustaz Wadi Anuar." – (R5)

Career Knowledge

In the third group counseling session, respondents were asked to list preferred jobs. All respondents were familiar with various fields of work, but they had limited knowledge about current job trends, as illustrated in their feedback such as:

"We never meet the school counsellor because we don't trust her" – (R2)

"I never knew there was a job about computers. This is the first time I've heard of it" – (R4)

"Miss, I have never heard of all these jobs about coding and computers" – (R5)

"Actually, I'm interested in many jobs, but I don't know whether those jobs can generate a good income or not" – (R6)

The results from the third group counseling session indicate that the respondents are aware of the existence of counselors in their school, but they do not trust their school counselors. This session also revealed that the respondents lack knowledge about jobs related to skills and technology.

Career Preparation

The fourth group counseling session discussed the strategies to achieve the desired careers for the respondents. All respondents agreed that once awareness of a career exists, readiness in achieving that career needs to be presented, as indicated in their feedback as follows:

"I have to be diligent and earnest. I will go to school to study. I will choose good friends. I will always help my parents. I will respect the teachers at school" – (R1)

"I have to strive hard to be a good student. I will uphold the good name of my school and its environment. I will be a good friend and make friends with my classmates. I need to listen to my parents. I will respect the teachers at school" – (R2)

"I have to be diligent. I need to have good manners. I need to be honest. I will not skip school. I have to come to school every day. I need to listen to my mother and father. I need to find good friends. I need to listen to the teachers" – (R3)

"I need to work hard to become a soldier. I have to go to a school that suits my aspirations. I have to choose friends who are kind. I have to take care of my family's reputation and when I meet a teacher, I have to greet them" – (R4)

"I have to work hard. I have to come to school at the scheduled time. I have to choose good and nice friends. I have to take care of the reputation of my family and myself. I have to respect and be courteous to the teachers" – (R5)

"I have to study seriously, not skip school, and respect my parents. I have to choose good friends and respect the teachers who teach me" – (R6)

Before ending the group counseling session, the respondents expressed that all the sessions were beneficial as they allowed them to acquire new knowledge and learn about their personalities and careers.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the awareness of careers should be emphasized from a young age. This is to provide exposure to information about the evolving job market according to the changing eras. The roles of parents, teachers, and counselors are crucial in guiding and providing appropriate support. It can also be seen that they need extensive exposure to contemporary careers. Schools and school counselors should plan programs or activities that can raise awareness about careers. Choosing a career field of interest will lead to career satisfaction. Ultimately, career awareness will ensure a brighter future for students by instilling an understanding of the importance of careers.

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