

DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-DETERMINATION AS A KEY FACTOR IN CAREER PLANNING FOR VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how students can maximize self-determination to achieve clear career directions. The methodology of this study is designed to provide significant insights that can inform the development of more effective educational programs at the vocational level. The subject of the study was grade XII students at SMKN 1 Mantangai, selected through purposive sampling, with a sample of 20 students relevant to the study's focus. Data collection was carried out through observation and semi-structured interviews. The results show that students' career planning is influenced by their intrinsic motivation, self-reflection methods, and social support. This research provides a basis for designing more effective career guidance programs in vocational schools.

INTRODUCTION

Career planning can assist a person in achieving long-term professional goals. Therefore, it is necessary to consider as an alternative in career planning for students in the academic and non-academic learning process (Wendling & Sagas, 2020) Education plays a very important role in the process of sustainable development. The goal of education is to be able to improve cognition, motivation and social readiness which can improve students' ability to make career plans (Yuan & Yu, 2021) Although career planning is a very important factor in a good career transition process, in the learning process at school there are still shortcomings in improving students' ability to make career plans (Wendling and Sagas 2020).

Based on the current evaluation and analysis related to professional student career planning, it is necessary to have the right learning process and the right student learning curriculum standards to be able to improve students' ability to make career plans (Yilmaz et al., 2016). One way that can be done in improving students' career planning abilities is to encourage schools to pay more attention to the quality of learning, especially regarding soft competencies related to career planning (Wei et al., 2021).

A person's career planning can be supported by several factors, one of which is soft competence. Soft competence is a very important part to be developed by students because soft competence will be a reference for the transition period from school to the world of work or business (Gotlib et al., 2022).. In addition, by increasing soft competence, students will develop more because the better the soft competencies possessed by students will improve students' wisdom in making career plans (Tamsan & Yusriadi, 2022).

One of the soft competencies that can support students' career planning is self-determination. Self-determination is a theory about the high level of motivation possessed by each individual or

intrinsic motivation that has the purpose of explaining individual needs, and the level of social welfare (Chiu, 2022). Self-determination theory is a comprehensive theory of human motivation that has been used in various scientific fields, such as sports, education, and organizational psychology and human resources (Van den Broeck et al., 2021).. A student who has high intrinsic motivation will be able to develop the ability to manage self-determination well to be able to feel pleasure and satisfaction and be able to make career plans (Faraz et al., 2021).

Self-determination can be developed by students through various stages in the learning process. This can be known based on the learning results carried out to students through games that give students the choice to choose a suitable learning method about the development of self-determination (Sailer & Sailer, 2021). In addition, the theory of game-based learning has a positive effect on the development of self-determination in students (Sailer & Sailer, 2021). Game-based learning is learning that is carried out in the process of improving self-determination skills, in this game-based learning aims to increase motivation, social relationships and the ability to carry out certain activities (Mahmud et al., 2020).

The existence of social environment support can realize the ability of self-determination in students in planning their careers. Good social environment support will also have an influence on the psychological development of students which plays a role in the process of developing students' self-determination in planning their careers (Nazir et al., 2021). However, there are still many students who still do not have goals in their careers after graduation. Based on the results of initial observations in this study, there are various factors that cause many students to still not have clear career goals after graduation. These factors are still a lack of knowledge of students in recognizing their potential, lack of information on career choices, and lack of learning and environmental support in improving students' ability to develop determination. Furthermore, from the observation results, it was found that students are more likely to still follow the will of their parents so that they are still unable to make their own choices in planning their careers after graduating from school.

In addition, students have not been able to develop soft competencies optimally, one of which is self-determination. Self-determination is the ability to stay focused on goals, try to overcome obstacles, and keep moving forward despite failures or difficulties (Faraz et al., 2021). These skills are very important in supporting students' self-development, both in education and in planning future careers (Chiu, 2022). Unfortunately, many students have not been able to cultivate self-determination properly due to the factor of lack of motivation, support, and experience in facing challenges. In fact, self-determination is one of the keys to success to achieve long-term goals, both in completing studies and in entering the world of work. In the context of education, students need to be given space to learn to overcome failures, improve weaknesses, and increase perseverance in achieving predetermined targets (Ferrer et al., 2022). For this reason, the development of soft competencies such as self-determination must be an important part of the curriculum that is integrated with daily learning activities. By fostering self-determination early on, students are not only prepared to face academic challenges, but are also better prepared to plan and realize their future careers.

Many students lack intrinsic motivation in developing self-determination, even though these two aspects are very important in career planning. Intrinsic motivation, which is the drive from within to achieve goals, is the foundation for students to continue to strive and be committed despite facing challenges (Van den Broeck et al., 2021). Without this motivation, it is difficult for them to have strong self-determination, which is essential for pursuing career goals. Students who rely solely on external motivations, such as praise or rewards, tend to falter easily when faced with heavy obstacles. In fact, the world of work needs individuals who are able to survive and be consistent with their goals. Therefore, it is important for schools and family environments to create an atmosphere that supports

intrinsic motivation. With this encouragement, students can build self-determination that will help them plan and realize a successful career that suits their passions (Ferrer et al., 2022).

Students' self-determination is still not optimal in supporting their career planning, and this is a real problem that really happens. Many students tend to give up easily when faced with academic challenges or assignments that require continuous effort, showing a lack of determination in achieving goals. This certainly affects their career planning, because the world of work demands resilience and consistency in facing problems and achieving targets. Students who don't have strong self-determination are often confused about setting long-term goals or even hesitant to take important initial steps. This situation reflects the urgent need to increase attention to the development of self-determination as part of career education. Support from teachers, parents, and an inspiring environment as well as programs that train mental toughness can help students to be more prepared and confident in planning their future careers.

Students still do not get the social support of the environment that can develop self-determination. Social support, both from family, peers, and the school, is very important in shaping character and providing encouragement for students to achieve their goals. However, often the surrounding environment does not pay enough attention to these needs. The lack of in-depth communication as well as the view that education is limited to academic achievement makes many students find it difficult to develop self-confidence and intrinsic motivation. Without adequate support, students tend to experience confusion in setting their life and career goals for the future.

This study aims to explore how students can maximize self-determination to achieve clear career directions, contributing significantly to the literature on self-determination and career planning, particularly within vocational education. It seeks to address research gaps by focusing on the development of self-determination in vocational school students, especially in Indonesia, where such studies are limited. The research emphasizes the need for effective evaluation and implementation strategies that help students make informed career decisions. Additionally, it aims to serve as a foundation for developing soft competencies related to student self-determination, specifically targeting students at SMK 1 Mantangai to better understand the dynamics of self-determination development. Ultimately, the study hopes to enable students to identify career steps that align with their potential and interests.

This research on the development of self-determination as a key factor in career planning for vocational high school students introduces several novel contributions: it uniquely integrates self-determination with soft competencies (such as communication and adaptability) specific to career planning, addressing a gap not widely explored in existing literature (Çakiroğlu et al., 2024; Goncharenko & Semenkova, 2021; Jiang et al., 2022). The study focuses on the context of vocational school students in Indonesia, providing empirical insights on how low intrinsic motivation affects their ability to make independent career choices. Additionally, it offers practical recommendations for curriculum development aimed at enhancing career guidance programs tailored to the needs of vocational students, thereby filling significant gaps in the understanding of self-determination's impact on career planning.

METHODS

The methodology of this study is designed to reveal the role of self-determination as a key factor in the career planning of vocational school students. The research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to explore the phenomenon in depth. The subject of the study was grade XII students at SMKN 1 Mantangai, selected through purposive sampling, with a sample of 20 students relevant to the study's focus.

Data collection was carried out through observation and semi-structured interviews. Observation was used to directly observe students' behavior in decision-making and career-related problem-solving skills. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually to explore students' perceptions of self-determination's importance in career planning, guided by self-determination theory. Observations occurred during learning activities and career planning events, while interviews aimed to provide deeper insights from students.

Data were analyzed using triangulation to ensure validity and reliability, comparing data from observations and interviews, and integrating both types for a holistic understanding. Theoretical triangulation utilized self-determination theory as the main conceptual framework for data interpretation. Data analysis followed a thematic approach, progressing from initial coding to theme identification and interpretation to reveal key themes related to students' self-determination. This research adheres to ethical principles, obtaining official permission from the school and written consent from students and parents, maintaining confidentiality, and using data exclusively for research purposes. The methodology aims to provide significant insights that can inform the development of more effective educational programs at the vocational level.

RESULTS

The study found that although there are students who have goals or career plans after graduation, the number is still far from adequate. Because most students do not yet have clear career goals, which can indicate an urgent need for intervention in career guidance in schools. This is in contrast to previous studies that focused more on academic aspects without considering the specific career goals of students.

The results of interviews conducted with 20 students of SMKN 1 Mantangai show that 75% of students still tend to be influenced by their parents and families in making decisions related to their career planning. Only a small percentage of them show a high degree of independence in determining career paths. Meanwhile, another 25% of students expressed confusion regarding the steps to be taken in the future. The majority of students feel shackled by family expectations and lack clarity in planning their careers. These findings demonstrate the importance of developing self-determination in students to improve their decision-making abilities that are more independent and based on personal potential and interests, as the key to more effective career planning in the future.

In addition, the results of this study show that students' soft competencies, such as communication skills, cooperation, and adaptability, are still not well developed. Students tend to prioritize hard competencies, such as technical knowledge, in their learning process. These soft competency skills are closely related to self-determination, as the ability to communicate and cooperate with others can increase students' confidence in making decisions related to their careers. In addition, adaptability to changes and challenges is also part of self-determination that is important for planning a successful career. This finding highlights the importance of integrating soft competency development in the vocational school curriculum, which has not been widely discussed in the previous literature.

The results of interviews conducted with 20 students of SMKN 1 Mantangai regarding soft competencies that can support self-determination in career planning show several significant findings. Of the 20 respondents, as many as 60% of students revealed that they still lack good public speaking skills, which is an important competency in communicating effectively in the world of work. In addition, about 70% of students stated that they tend to work individually and lack coordination in teams, a weakness that can hinder collaborative performance in a professional environment. Finally, as many as 65% of students find it difficult to adapt when placed in a new environment or position,

indicating the need for better adaptation skill development. These findings indicate that although there is potential in students, there are several aspects of soft competencies that need to be strengthened to support their success in career planning and facing challenges in the world of work.

Furthermore, this study also found that students' intrinsic motivation is still low. Many students follow their parents' directions and wishes more than explore their own interests and talents. This indicates the need for a more personalized approach to career guidance, which can help students find their intrinsic motivation. In addition, students are still not able to make decisions independently, which negatively impacts their ability to plan their careers. This inability indicates that students need training and support in decision-making, which is an important aspect of the development of self-determination. Previous research has often overlooked this dimension, so these findings make a new contribution to the understanding of career planning.

Through semi-structured interviews with 20 students, it was found that the majority of students (60%) had no deep interest in the subject, largely due to monotonous teaching methods. Learning motivation is dominated by extrinsic drives, such as the need to get grades or avoid punishment (75%), while only 10% of students learn out of personal interest. When faced with difficulties, 60% of students tend to avoid assignments, indicating a lack of problem-solving skills that are important for career planning. In addition, the lack of relevance of the subject matter to real life (50%) and low self-confidence (35%) are the main barriers to intrinsic motivation, which can hinder the exploration of students' interests and talents in the context of careers.

Finally, research reveals a lack of social support from the student's environment in the development of self-determination. Support from family, friends, and teachers is essential to building students' confidence in planning their careers. These findings emphasize the need for collaboration between schools and the community to create an environment that supports students' career development. Overall, this study succeeded in achieving its goal by identifying factors that affect students' self-determination in career planning. Although there are some results that cannot be fully explained, such as variability in student motivation, these findings provide new insights that can be used to design more effective career guidance programs at SMKN 1 Mantangai. By connecting various findings, this study shows that the development of self-determination is a key element that needs to be considered in efforts to improve students' career planning.

The results of interviews with 20 students revealed that social environment support in students' career planning is very limited, especially from family, peers, and school. Most students (70%) stated that their parents did not give clear direction regarding career choices and were more focused on the academic aspect, as one student put it: "My parents are more focused on academic grades, they don't really care about what I want in the future." Peers also provided only limited support, with 60% of students admitting to never discussing career planning in depth with their peers. On the other hand, the role of schools is also not optimal, with 65% of students feeling that teachers and counselors lack career-related guidance. Many students feel that career guidance programs at school are less effective and do not touch the practical aspects of planning a professional future".

Discussion

The results of this study show that the development of self-determination of SMKN 1 Mantangai students is very important in their career planning. These findings are in line with the existing literature, but they also highlight some aspects that have been under-examined in previous studies. The following is a discussion of the findings that have been described, by comparing and contrasting with relevant literature data. This study found that in order for students to make a measurable career plan, they must have their own decisions in determining the career to be pursued.

This is in line with the concept proposed by Van den Broeck et al. (2021), which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in decision-making. When students have autonomy in choosing a career, they tend to be more engaged and committed to their choices. However, the results of this study also show that many students are still dependent on parental direction, which can hinder the development of their self-determination.

In addition, soft competencies are very important to be developed as a basis for students in making career planning in support of research by Chiu (2022), which shows that interpersonal and communication skills contribute to student engagement in learning. Soft competencies, such as adaptability and cooperation, not only support career development but also play a role in increasing students' self-determination. This study highlights the need to integrate soft competency development in the vocational curriculum, which is often overlooked in previous literature. The study also found that students must have intrinsic motivation to develop self-determination abilities. This is in line with the findings of Faraz et al. (2021), which show that intrinsic motivation is positively related to proactive behavior in a career context. Strong motivation can encourage students to explore their career options more deeply, thereby improving their ability to plan for the future. However, the results of this study also show that students' intrinsic motivation is still low, which indicates the need for strategies to increase this motivation.

This study also identifies several learning models that can be applied to develop students' self-determination skills, including self-reflection methods and emotional support from teachers. This is in line with research by Wei et al. (2021), which shows that support from educators can increase student engagement in the learning process. Strong emotional support can help students feel more confident in making career decisions, which is an important aspect of self-determination. Furthermore, good social environment support can improve students' ability to develop self-determination, supporting the literature that shows that a positive social environment contributes to individual self-development (Nazir et al., 2021). Support from family, friends, and community can provide additional motivation for students to pursue their career goals. This research emphasizes the importance of collaboration between schools and the community to create an environment that supports students' career development.

The findings of this study have great significance in the context of vocational education. By emphasizing the importance of self-determination, soft competence, and intrinsic motivation, this research provides new insights that can be used to design more effective career guidance programs in vocational schools. Implications of these findings include:

1. Curriculum Development: Schools need to integrate the development of soft competencies and intrinsic motivation in their curriculum to support students' career planning.
2. Teacher Training: Educators must be trained to provide emotional support and use learning methods that encourage student self-reflection.
3. Collaboration with the Social Environment, Building partnerships with parents and communities to create an environment that supports students' career development.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the development of self-determination is crucial for the career planning of SMKN 1 Mantangai students, revealing that while some have career goals, many lack a clear plan, highlighting the need for more structured career guidance. It identifies underdeveloped soft competencies—such as communication, cooperation, and adaptation—as essential for boosting students' confidence in making career decisions. Additionally, low intrinsic motivation and suboptimal social support from family, friends, and teachers hinder students' ability to independently

plan their careers. The findings suggest the necessity of integrating self-determination development, soft skills, intrinsic motivation, and social support into vocational school curricula and career guidance programs. Future research could investigate the effectiveness of structured career guidance initiatives focused on enhancing these areas, exploring various intervention strategies and the role of support networks, while also considering longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact on students' career planning and decision-making.

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