**Students Perspective on Future Career**

**Devie Rahmawati, Amelita Lusia, N.Rangga Wisesa, Wiratri Anindhita, Nada Arina Romli**

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to identify students perspective on Future Career. The subjects of the qualitative study were a sample population of 61 students in a university from Communication Programs. Qualitative data were collected through in-person, audio recorded interviews.

The study found three findings related to the orientation of young people towards the future of their work. The first is the perspective of what profession promises a good future. Second, what skills are needed by them to enter the workforce. Third, their assessment of the ability to enter the workforce. The findings indicate that students, without a comprehensive guidance approach to career development will struggle to find job opportunities and struggle in a working environment, that could make a life-changing impact on their life futures.

Colleges must develop partnerships with industry, which are vital to improving the available human resources needed for business and industry to compete globally Government and schools need to prepare more skills especially soft skills to make students able to adapt with the industry need.

Keywords : Soft Skills, students, perceptions, future career

**BACKGROUND**

Forty percent of employers across the world indicate that they face a talent shortage crisis, the largest since the Great Recession of 2008 (Rice, 2018; Thornburg, 2016). This statistic, echoed what other newspapers and business publications have consistently mentioned for decades, which is that there are severe talent shortages in both technical and ‘soft skills’. A 2006 study found employers perceived new workforce entrants as “woefully ill-prepared for the demands of today’s (and tomorrow’s) workplace” (Rice, 2018).

Almost a decade later, in 1991, “more than half of young people leave school without the knowledge or foundation required to find and hold a good job” identified a shift from technical skills-based jobs to a more knowledge-based economy, which required a new set of skills from its workforce (Rice, 2018).

Although education has embraced an ever-evolving identity, higher education institutions have been less responsive to these shifting trends (Gonzales, 2017). Rather than adapting to the needs of its current clientele, many institutions cling tightly to tradition and avoid change, thus leaving many to question whether the high cost of a college degree is worth the investment (Gonzales, 2017). Higher education institutions are expected to provide college students with the basic skills necessary to prepare them to be competitive and workforce-ready (Gonzales, 2017). From skills needed to prepare a formal resume and interview well to professionalism and the hard and soft skills sought after by employers, undergraduate college students across the nation are expected to develop these abilities by the time they graduate with their Associate’s or Bachelor’s degree, and initiate their career search (Gonzales, 2017).

Though the cost of attendance continues to skyrocket, students continue to enter colleges and universities with the intention of being able to secure a better job upon graduation, earn more money, and satisfy their career goals (Gonzales, 2017). Its suggest that courses should require students to apply content knowledge to real-world problems and projects (Lawson, 2016). Its happen not only in developing country like Indonesia, but also develop countries.

Current labor trends project that professional and related occupations are expected to increase 23% by the year 2016, adding more jobs than any other major occupational group (Broussard, 2009). But we need to prepare more, especially the soft skills like communication. Even United States is far from adequate in providing students with opportunities to develop proficiency in languages and cultures (Wang, 2013).

The challenge for every agencies is to interpret federal policy into measureable and sustainable actions resulting in college- ready achievement for all students, as well as preparing career-ready graduates who meet the current demands of economic and workforce development (Ruhman, 2016).

**Theoretical Basis**

*Motivation*

Motivation is a dynamic construct that is linked to student performance in and out of the learning environment. Achievement motivation has focused on the beliefs, goals, and contexts that influence students’ choice of particular academic goals (Kirn, 2014). This theory shows three main beliefs required for motivated action: a) with enough effort, the performance can be achieved, b) if achieved, it will lead to desired outcomes, and c) those outcomes will lead to satisfaction (Kirn, 2014).

*Experiential Learning Theory*

John Dewey believed that all learning occurred in a social environment through social experiences, (Greathouse-Holman, 2016). This theory, the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), provides the theoretical framework for this study. The ELT is described as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”, explains that once a hands- on experience is gained by the learner, the student should then have the ability to internalize, reflect upon, and draw their own conclusions about the material (Greathouse-Holman, 2016).

*Soft Skills*

There are various definitions of the term ‘soft skills’; generally, these skills are defined as the interpersonal qualities such as teamwork, creativity, and communication that employers are looking for in job candidates (Rice, 2018). Over time, this set of skills has changed names and both added and omitted several skills to maintain relevancy to business, industry, and educational sectors. These skills have been termed ‘college and career ready skills’ in the world of education, to signal their importance; the exact set of skills, however varies across locations and contexts (Rice, 2018).

Jobs in the current economy require the workforce to possess more complex knowledge and skills than ever before (Rice, 2018). Thus requiring better education and preparation opportunities for young people across the country (Rice, 2018).

In addition to more rigorous coursework and postsecondary degrees, work-based learning has been viewed as one bridge to help further prepare the next generation (Rice, 2018). Work-based learning is defined as “an instructional strategy that helps students connect what they are learning in class with what is expected in the working world” (Rice, 2018).

It [work-based learning] is informed by professional workplace standards. It uses the workplace, or in-depth experience that includes employer or community input, to engage high school students and intentionally promote learning and access to future educational and career opportunities (Rice, 2018). The work-based learning continuum includes internships and apprenticeships, as well as lower-level engagements such as job shadows and worksite tours (Rice, 2018).

Internships, the most intensive type of work-based learning, allow students opportunities to: Expand their classroom knowledge; Apply their learning to the workplace with the resources and mentorship that the  professional environment provides; Learn and master professional skills; Explore careers within an organization (Rice, 2018).

Ultimately, these types of experiences should generate and nurture career interest while preparing students for their next step in the transition between school and the world of work (Rice, 2018). For those entering into the workforce, immediate job skills are required to get hired, “but they also need a range of career and cognitive competencies that will enable them to handle changing jobs and career contexts and to sustain their learning capacity” (Rice, 2018).

*Influencer*

Generally most of the people will have their own perception towards the profession and people likely to choose a job is slightly based on what has society represent the career (Khalid, et.al, 2018).

Moreover, past research discovered that students are more attracted to a career that offer personal benefits, which involve jobs that can interact or react with people, has a life balance and able give benefits to society (Khalid, et.al, 2018). But Students can easily be influenced by other people who are close and important to them like parents, friends and teachers (Khalid, et.al, 2018). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), beliefs there are two ways that develop the subjective norms. Firstly, a given referent or other individual will give the suggestion on the particular course of action and then the person who receive the information will make a decision based on the suggestion (Khalid, et.al, 2018).

**Methodology**

This study uses a qualitative approach against 61 students ranging from 18 – 20 years old, from various regions, and are currently studying as a communication student on one of the leading univerities in Indonesia; within 2 semesters.

The process of extracting information is carried out intensively on informants, carried out by conducting an in-depth interviews and confirming through observing their behavior inside and outside the classroom.

**Results**

The results of 1.5 years qualitative research found three findings related to the orientation of young people towards the future of their work. The first is the perspective of what profession promises a good future. Second, what skills are needed by them to enter the workforce. Third, their assessment of the ability to enter the workforce.

*Promising Profession*

The students have several criteria for their work or profession that they think would lead to a better future. The work must be a job that makes them able to live without the shackles of time. Flexible jobs, which allow them to continue their hobbies, are ideal jobs.

*"I'm so lazy to do complicated work. Ones that needed absency. I want a simple one”-Informant #11*

This generation feels that life should be relaxed and they wanted to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible to enjoy it. They are obsessed with jobs that provide ample opportunities to relax and are not burdened with routines such as bloggers, YouTube, content creators, where they imagine that this work can be done anywhere, without any restraining certain rules and are able to bring huge income, even bonuses to become famous.

Therefore, most informants does not find work in government offices and affiliates is a dream job. One of the factor is it’s space.

*"Just look at the offices. Makes me lazy. The design are lame, and not to mention the people. It is better not to work there unless you have no other choice.”-Informant #33*

The colorful and dynamic interior design has become one of the attractions that makes informants hope to work in private offices. Not only that, the behavior of government employees who they think are passive and not attractive, further dampens their orientation to choose government as a future career.

The symbolic factor of a company's big name is also their concern. They prefer to be able to work in modern digital companies (start-ups) with big names, even though the work they do is not align with the education that they have taken. Pride to be part of a well-known company and becoming a public discussion, able to make them willing to work for technical jobs. When faced with the choice of working in a smaller company but with a strategic portion of work, they still prefer to work in a large companies, even though it means working in a smaller team and division.

Jobs that consist of famous people also become a magnet for informants to start their career. They say that working with famous people makes them feel proud, inspired and makes them able to learn directly from these famous people. They feel that by working directly with famous people, success will get them faster.

*Working Skills*

The informants felt that studying at a well-known university was a guarantee that they would have a promising job after graduation. They also considered that no company would reject their application later when they wanted a job. The only threat, according to them, is foreign graduates. They feel that overseas graduates are well-established, who must have a broad network and are supported by qualified English skills.

The students believe that the knowledge they have gained on campus, which will be reflected in their GPA, can be a guarantee for them to get work. According to them, the skills that must be fulfilled for a career are the ability to use applications related to design; proficiency in using digital devices such as computers / other devices; expertise in mastering various social media; participatory experience in the event; parental network; and degrees from the alma mater.

Regarding questions about soft skills, they relate them to abilities related to the digital world and English proficiency. Only five informants mentioned that the soft skills needed by a worker were communication skills for example. However, communication understanding is still associated with the ability to have a high English assessment score.

*Self Ability*

The informants have a positive orientation about their future line of work. They do not see that the challenges of their work in the future require careful preparation. They have high confidence in their readiness to enter the workforce. As students at well-known universities in Jakarta, they feel that their degrees are a guarantee that they will definitely have a job. They also considered, that their personal ability to manage computers and design for example to be an ability that is definitely needed by the world of work.

Some informants who have various activities inside and outside of their campus feel that they will not find it difficult to get a job. Because according to them, their interactions in event organizing or campus organizations has made them familiar with many networks outside the campus.

Seven other informants who have worked while studying said that they are fairly confident they will not have any difficulty finding work, because so far they have also worked as freelancers in various places. Four other informants which claimed to have their own business also felt that after college they would not have a problem in finding a job, because they planned to continue their business.

**Analysis**

Variety of information on the digital era provides a bundance of information about modern life that are easy, comfortable and dynamic. Various information about the lives of modern workers in digital start-up companies have opened the eyes of the informants about the comfort of working in these companies. Various mottos such as YOLO (You Only Live Once) echoed by global millennials, have bewitched the informants that they too must have such lives. This situation encourages them not to prepare themselves for the life of the workforce, but instead prefers the life that is being lived now.

The image of well-known and wealthy people with digital means such as YouTuber, for example, has anesthetized informants that their opportunities to find work are so easy and broad. Their presence at school, more because of the doctrine of their parents who say that a degree is a guarantee of their future.

The informants are spoiled by digital technology, making them view visuals as a standard in various aspects of life including work. The interior design of a workspace that did not meet their visual standard, determine their willingness to work there.

Their daily lives live in the online world, always making them to be different in this digital age, including where they work. The needs to get appreciation on social media, encourages them to continue *post* a good image of themselves. This drives the factor of choosing which office to apply for a job based on its layout.

Related to the digital footprint that is inseparable on the informants' lives, encouraging them to continue dreaming of being able to work in large companies with global reputations such as unicorn companies. Having the status of an employee at the company makes them confident in appearing on social media. They feel they will get a lot of recognition from many parties when they can work in the big company, even though the scope of work is limited, even when it is not in accordance with their educational background.

The same motivation, behind why informants are looking to work with famous people. By displaying the picture that they are together with celebrities in their social media accounts, informants imagine their social status will improve from their previous SES (Social Economic Status).

The influence of the inferior character is seen in the responses of the informants who say that the biggest threat from their career opportunities are overseas graduates. The unique thing is that it does not make them to prepare themselves well, such as improving their english language skills. They are not aware that the industries emphasizes the ability of soft skills as one of the main requirements needed for a professional career.

The career choice tend to be based on the image of the industry (Kobina, 2014). That's why all the stakeholders need to transform the image to attract more talented young people to go over the job.

Study found that though students saw “supervisory relations”, “work surroundings” and “way of life” as important work issues of concern to them, most students were confident that they could attain general manager level within ten years (Kobina, 2014). And now its getting worse. Because this generation is has an instant way of life. Kelley-Patterson and George (2001) found that there were differences in perceptions and expectations of students who were already working in the industry compared to those who have no industry work experience, and therefore, students’ perception was influenced by work experience (Kobina, 2014).

Factors found in studies that influence career options include social status, industry-person congeniality, physical working conditions, remuneration and benefits, promotion opportunities, co-workers and managers, job competitiveness and job security.

College students generally do not want to start out in low-paying jobs for many years before working their way up (Kobina, 2014). Another factor is the unrealistic expectations of remuneration/benefits that students have or expect to receive (Kobina, 2014). They generally perceive that factors such as remuneration and/or benefits, including opportunities to travel, as favorable and assume that seeing other parts of the world will form part of their career (Kobina, 2014).

The existence of perceived career barriers and the level of one’s career decision self-efficacy may have a meaningful impact on the certainty of initial career choices among college students (Pulliam, 2014). Studies suggest that both perceived career barriers and career decision self-efficacy account for the ways by which students participate in career-related interventions, such as seeking counsel and advisement from career counselors and researching well-suited careers that match their values, interests, personality traits and skills (Pulliam, 2014).

**Suggestions**

Colleges must develop partnerships with industry, which are vital to improving the available human resources needed for business and industry to compete globally (Thornburg, M. (2016). There are many possible factors contributing to the lack of a skilled workforce. Among these factors, three are most pronounced: the failure of educational institutions to adapt programs and training to meet specific industry needs; (Thornburg, 2016). In addition, students are attending college at a higher rate today although many of these students lack the skills needed to be successful in college (Thornburg, 2016).

Studies have shown that on average, college graduates earn more annually and have greater long-term earning potential than high school graduates (Berardi-Demo, 2012). Educational attainment has also been linked to decreased unemployment, lower incarceration rates, increased civic engagement and higher quality of life (Berardi-Demo, 2012).

That's why we need more comprehensive guidance and counseling programs are supported by many researchers in the field as the most effective way of providing student support services in schools today (Cartan,2016).

**Bibliography**

Berardi-Demo, L. (2012). *Seventh graders' perceptions of college and career aspiration supports in two urban charter middle schools*(Order No. 3532774). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1222084014). Retrieved from https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/1222084014?accountid=17242

Broussard, J. T. B. (2009). *Factors limiting college opportunity for aspiring first -generation college students and the impact of school counselor interventions on increased college opportunity: A mixed methods analysis*(Order No. 3394549). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (305166508). Retrieved from https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/305166508?accountid=17242

Cartan, M. E. (2016). *A descriptive study of perceptions of high school guidance counselors of the factors that affect delivery of career counseling and career development opportunities to students*(Order No. 10044507). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1776177254). Retrieved from <https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/1776177254?accountid=17242>

Gonzales, M. (2017). *Examining institutional career preparation: Student perceptions of their workplace readiness and the role of the university in student career development*(Order No. 10258395). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1872363922). Retrieved from <https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/1872363922?accountid=17242>

Greathouse-Holman, A. (2016). *Career and technical education students' perceptions of preparedness for post-secondary opportunities*(Order No. 10139261). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1819571033). Retrieved from <https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/1819571033?accountid=17242>

Khalid, F. M., Rauf, F. H. A., Fuad, N. F. A., Saaibon, S., Mohd Asri, N. A., & Sharom, N. D. (2018). Factors influencing high school students to major in accounting.*Global Business and Management Research, 10*(3), 605. Retrieved from https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/2159618105?accountid=17242

Kirn, A. N. (2014). *The influences of engineering student motivation on short-term tasks and long-term goals*(Order No. 10159346). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1824674195). Retrieved from <https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/1824674195?accountid=17242>

Kobina Armoo, A., & Neequaye, K. (2014). Factors used by ghanaian students in determining career options in the tourism and hospitality industry: Lessons for developing countries.*Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes, 6*(2), 166-178. Retrieved from <https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/1515145663?accountid=17242>

Lawson, J. (2016). *Teachers' perceptions of advanced placement vertical alignment on college and career preparedness*(Order No. 10135785). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1818566806). Retrieved from <https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/1818566806?accountid=17242>

Pulliam, N. P. (2014). *The relationship between perceived career barriers and career decision self-efficacy on the certainty of initial career choice among educational opportunity fund program students*(Order No. 3614787). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1519694168). Retrieved from https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/1519694168?accountid=17242

Ruhman, D. A. (2016). *College-ready, career-ready or career- and college-ready: Do education stakeholder perceptions create barriers to student engagement?*(Order No. 11012939). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2155408415). Retrieved from <https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/2155408415?accountid=17242>

Rice, B. A. (2018). *The impact of internship structure on student perception of internship value*(Order No. 10976068). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2153851874). Retrieved from <https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/2153851874?accountid=17242>

Thornburg, M. (2016). *Perceptions of career and technical education held by high school career counselors*(Order No. 10002517). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1761843968). Retrieved from <https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/1761843968?accountid=17242>

Wang, Y. (2013). *Creating the global student: Increasing student perception of global competency and skills for international careers in a university international certificate program*(Order No. 3573172). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1433824966). Retrieved from https://remote-lib.ui.ac.id:2076/docview/1433824966?accountid=17242