

EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY STUDENTS' INTERESTS AND TALENTS IN SUPPORT OF CAREER ASPIRATION AWARENESS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOLLOW-UP COUNSELING SERVICE ACTION PLANS BY SCHOOL COUNSELORS AT SMP NEGERI 1 VII KOTO SUNGAI SARIK

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ABSTRACT

This community service program addresses the limited self-understanding of students regarding their interests, talents, and career aspirations, which often affects their ability to plan future careers realistically. The program aimed to identify students' interests and talents, introduce relevant career aspirations, and formulate follow-up counseling action plans implemented by guidance and counseling teachers. The method employed a participatory approach through orientation activities, presentations, interest and talent assessment forms, group discussions, individual assistance, and reflective evaluation. The program was conducted with junior high school students at SMP N 1 VII Koto Sungai Sarik and involved guidance and counseling teachers as facilitators. The results indicate an improvement in students' self-understanding, broader knowledge of the world of work, clearer career aspirations, and enhanced ability to formulate personal career plans. In addition, guidance and counseling teachers gained structured action plans to support sustainable career counseling services. The program concludes that systematic identification of interests and talents combined with career information services effectively supports early career development and strengthens the quality of school-based counseling services.

Keywords: career aspiration, interests and talents, career counseling, self-potential

ABSTRAK

Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rendahnya pemahaman peserta didik terhadap minat, bakat, dan aspirasi karir yang berdampak pada kurang optimalnya perencanaan karir sejak dini. Kegiatan ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi minat dan bakat peserta didik, mengenalkan aspirasi karir yang relevan, serta menyusun action plan pelayanan konseling lanjutan oleh guru bimbingan dan konseling. Metode pelaksanaan menggunakan pendekatan partisipatif melalui kegiatan orientasi, penyampaian materi, pengisian instrumen identifikasi minat dan bakat, diskusi kelompok, pendampingan individual, serta evaluasi reflektif. Sasaran kegiatan adalah peserta didik SMP N 1 VII Koto Sungai Sarik dengan melibatkan guru bimbingan dan konseling sebagai fasilitator utama. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman diri peserta didik terhadap potensi dan kelemahan diri, meningkatnya wawasan tentang dunia kerja, terbentuknya aspirasi karir yang lebih jelas, serta meningkatnya kemampuan perencanaan karir. Selain itu, guru bimbingan dan konseling memiliki action plan yang terstruktur untuk memberikan layanan konseling karir berkelanjutan. Simpulan menunjukkan bahwa identifikasi minat dan bakat yang sistematis dan terintegrasi dengan layanan informasi karir efektif dalam mendukung perkembangan karir peserta didik sejak dini.

Kata kunci: aspirasi karir; minat dan bakat; bimbingan dan konseling; potensi diri

INTRODUCTION

The increasingly dynamic nature of the labor market requires individuals to develop career readiness from an early stage, not only in terms of academic achievement but also through a clear understanding of their interests, talents, and career aspirations. Students at the junior secondary school level are at a critical phase of career development, during which they begin to form initial conceptions of future goals and career choices. Therefore, guidance and counseling services in schools play a strategic role in assisting students in recognizing their personal potential and in planning their career pathways in a more systematic and directed manner (Hadi, 2023).

Numerous studies indicate that career aspirations constitute an integral component of the career development process, shaped by self-understanding, environmental influences, and access to career-related information. Individuals with well-defined career aspirations tend to demonstrate higher learning motivation and greater readiness in making career-related decisions. According to Apriyanti et al., early identification of interests and talents serves as a crucial foundation for ensuring that emerging career aspirations are realistic and aligned with individual potential (Apriyanti et al., 2023). Hadi further emphasizes that school-based guidance and counseling services aim to support students in achieving their optimal potential, including the identification of interests and talents (Hadi, 2023).

Nevertheless, practical conditions in schools reveal that systematic programs designed to assist students in identifying their interests and talents and linking them to career aspirations in a sustainable manner remain limited. Constraints such as insufficient resources, limited access to career information, and suboptimal utilization of assessment instruments constitute major challenges. Research findings suggest that the growing emphasis on career readiness among students must be accompanied by adequate access to career information (Lestari, 2025). The gap between research and practice highlights the need for community service models that integrate the identification of interests and talents with the development of follow-up counseling service action plans by school guidance and counseling teachers (Agungbudiprabowo et al., 2025; Pratiwi et al., 2025). This integration is essential to address the challenges faced by students in planning appropriate and future-oriented career pathways.

METHOD

This community service activity employed a descriptive-participatory approach. The participants were students of SMP Negeri 1 VII Koto Sungai Sarik, with school guidance and counseling teachers serving as the primary partners. Data were collected through the administration of interest and talent identification instruments, observations, group discussions, and reflective evaluations of the activities.

The implementation stages comprised: (1) a planning phase involving coordination with the school and a needs analysis of the students; (2) an implementation phase consisting of the delivery of materials on interests, talents, and career aspirations, completion of assessment instruments, group discussions, and individual mentoring; and (3) an evaluation phase to assess changes in students' self-understanding and readiness for career planning. The general and standardized methods applied referred to non-test assessment concepts and career guidance services as described in the guidance and counseling literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results indicate an improvement in students' self-understanding regarding their interests and talents. Students were able to identify their strengths and limitations as a basis for formulating career aspirations. These findings suggest that the use of identification instruments accompanied by mentoring contributes significantly to students' ability to recognize themselves more objectively. This is consistent with studies emphasizing that self-awareness of personal potential is a critical initial step in effective career planning (Kartianti & Asgar, 2021; Nurjanah & Subhan, 2020).

Furthermore, students demonstrated increased awareness of the world of work, including types of occupations, educational requirements, and necessary skills. This knowledge positively influenced the development of clearer and more realistic career aspirations, aligning with research indicating that appropriate information and guidance can enhance students' readiness to enter the workforce (Latifah & Susanti, 2023; Winarsih & Gufron, 2022). For example, structured guidance in

vocational school settings has shown that students are better prepared to face workplace challenges (Novalinda et al., 2023; Rahayu & Rifqi, 2022).

Guidance and counseling teachers also obtained a structured action plan for follow-up counseling services, enabling career guidance to be delivered in a sustainable and well-directed manner. Research suggests that preventive actions and careful planning by guidance and counseling teachers can broaden students' understanding of their career options (Amsury et al., 2023; Ramadani et al., 2024). Accordingly, the implementation of integrated guidance and counseling programs not only supports students' self-recognition but also prepares them to navigate the dynamic realities of the world of work.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that integrating interest and talent identification with career information services and counseling support contributes positively to students' career development. This is consistent with career development theories that emphasize the importance of self-understanding and career exploration during adolescence. Studies examining career competencies among adolescents further indicate that programs designed to enhance self-potential awareness and understanding of the world of work can effectively guide students toward achieving their career aspirations (Latifah & Susanti, 2023; Novalinda et al., 2023; Ramadani et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This community service program concludes that systematic identification of interests and talents effectively enhances students' self-understanding, clarifies career aspirations, and improves career planning abilities. In addition, the development of follow-up counseling service action plans strengthens the role of guidance and counseling teachers in providing sustainable career services. The program is therefore effective as a model for strengthening career guidance services at the junior secondary school level.

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