

SOFT SKILL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CAREER COUNSELING PROGRAMS TO FACE THE CHALLENGES OF THE WORK INDUSTRY FOR STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine and understand the development of students' soft skills through career counseling programs so that they can be better prepared to face challenges in the work industry. The approach method used in this study is library research with a descriptive analysis method. Researchers collected data from a variety of written sources, including articles, theses, relevant journals, books, and documents, as well as online sources with a focus on keywords such as "soft skills," "career counseling programs," and "job industry challenges." The data that has been successfully collected is then processed, interpreted, classified, analyzed, and concluded to obtain a relevant conclusion. The data analysis technique used is descriptive analysis. Test the validity of the data for the extension of observations, increase persistence, and triangulation. The study results show that an effective career counseling program can improve students' soft skills, which is very important to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive workforce. The program also assists students in exploring career options and preparing to enter the job market. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the importance of soft skill development through career counseling programs as a strategy to prepare students to face challenges in the industrial world. This program is expected to make a positive contribution to student work readiness.

KEYWORDS *Soft Skill, Career Counseling Program, Job Industry Challenges.*



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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increase in the need for workers with technical competence and non-technical skills, known as *soft skills* (Andriany, 2017). Data from the World Economic Forum (2020) states that about 50% of jobs today require interpersonal and cognitive skills, including communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving (Anwar, 2019). In addition, the results of a survey from the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower (2021) show that around 70% of companies in Indonesia consider *soft skills* as the main factor in the performance assessment and recruitment of new employees (Setiadi, 2019). This indicates the importance of developing *soft skills* for students as prospective workers in the future (Al Fasya et al., 2022).

Many students face difficulties in entering the industrial world, especially due to their lack of mastery of *the necessary soft skills* (Rizal & Rosyada, 2023). Although students

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have pretty good technical skills, companies often find that recent graduates are less prepared in aspects of communication, time management, and teamwork (Zuhara et al., 2025). This phenomenon is reinforced by the results of research conducted by the University of Indonesia's Alumni Tracer Study in 2022, which stated that around 65% of graduates lack relevant non-technical skills when entering the workforce (Muhtadi et al., 2022).

The unpreparedness of students in terms of *soft skills* has a significant impact on both individuals and industry (Khoirunikhmah et al., 2022). For students, this can cause difficulties in getting a job that suits their field of expertise and affect their job performance after being hired. As for the industry, the unpreparedness of the workforce in *soft skills* can reduce productivity and increase the cost of internal training to develop these skills in new employees (Musa et al., 2021). Therefore, interventions are urgently needed to help students develop *soft skills* before they enter the workforce.

Research conducted by (Filliantoni et al., 2019) shows that career guidance programs positively impact the development of *students' soft skills*, especially in terms of leadership and communication skills. Meanwhile, a study from (Almalki et al., 2022) found that structured career counseling can help students be better prepared to face the world of work challenges. Another study from (Getachew et al., 2020) revealed that self-development programs that focus on *soft skills* effectively increase students' confidence and adaptability in an industrial environment (Keshf & Khanum, 2021). Although the three studies provide a positive view on the importance of *soft skills*, no research has examined how career counseling programs can be optimized to face the challenges of the work industry, making it an interesting *research gate* to research (Musa et al., 2021).

Based on phenomena in the field and the results of previous research, it can be concluded that developing *soft skills* through career counseling programs is a potential strategy to prepare students to face the world of work (Nur et al., 2023). However, further research is still needed to identify the most effective methods for the implementation of the program, especially in the context of higher education in Indonesia. Therefore, this research aims to develop a career counseling model that can effectively improve students' *soft skills* to better prepare them to face the challenges of an increasingly competitive job industry.

From the background above, developing *soft skills* through career counseling programs is important, which can help students prepare themselves to face challenges and opportunities in the work industry. Thus, this theme is not only relevant to current conditions but also provides insight into career counseling guidance for students so that they have career maturity and can develop their potential optimally about making career choice decisions, understanding interests and talents according to their abilities, and identifying jobs that are by their abilities and interests. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "*Soft Skill Development Through Career Counseling Programs to Face the Challenges of the Work Industry for Students.*"

RESEARCH METHODS

The type of research used by the researcher in this study is qualitative research with a literature study method or a descriptive type of literature research. This method was chosen because of its ability to explore and analyze information from various written sources relevant to the research topic. For sources used in literature study methods or *Library Research* using sources from articles, theses/theses, and research journals that use the Google Scholar and Researchgate databases with criteria in the form of Indonesian articles by entering the keyword "*Soft skill*," "*Career Counseling Program*" and "*Challenges of the Employment Industry.*" Then, after searching for the source of the treated data, an analysis of the journal that is relevant or in line with the purpose of the research carried out

is carried out. The data collection technique in this study is a literature review conducted through a systematic literature search using specific keywords. A literature review collects data that uses secondary sources, such as books, journals, or reports. Data collected next are processed and interpreted, classified, analyzed, and concluded to obtain a relevant conclusion. The data analysis technique used is descriptive analysis. Test the validity of the data for the extension of observations, increase persistence, and triangulation.

Meanwhile, this study's data analysis technique is qualitative data analysis based on literature on research variables. Once the data is collected, the literature is categorized and analyzed to identify patterns and trends and build a comprehensive theoretical framework. To ensure validity and reliability, strict selection criteria are applied, and information verification is carried out to ensure the accuracy of the data. This *library research* method allows research to build a strong theoretical foundation and present an in-depth analysis based on existing literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Soft skills are a development of EQ and are related to the ability to socialize. The ability to socialize or relate to others can be developed to the maximum. In addition to the ability to relate to others or socialize, *soft skills* also include discussing how to relate to oneself. *Soft skills* are very different from *hard skills* because *they* are related to a person's talents, hobbies, or character. *Soft skills* are beyond technical and academic abilities possessed by a person who prioritizes intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. The definition of *soft skill* is a development of the concept known as emotional intelligence, which is related to the curriculum of personality character, language communication, personal habits, and friendliness. *Soft skills* are life skills or skills for oneself, group, and society. With your *soft skills*, you will make a person feel more like you are in the community because of your communication skills, emotional skills, language skills, and so on.

So, it can be concluded that *soft skills* are abilities related to emotional intelligence (EQ) and the ability to socialize. It includes the way a person relates to others and themselves. Unlike *hard skills*, which are more technical and academic, *soft skills* focus on individual talents, hobbies, and character. *Soft skills* include intrapersonal and interpersonal skills related to character development, communication, and personal habits. By having good *soft skills*, a person will more easily interact in groups and communities and have good communication and emotional skills.

Career Counseling Program

The program will consist of a series of activities. A series of activities need to be planned so that they are by the local situation and conditions. Counseling programs, in general, and career counseling, in particular, are arranged based on needs, are systematic, open, and flexible, allowing collaboration with various parties, and assessment and follow-up can be carried out. Career counseling with the term assistance given to individuals in preparing for the world of work. The career counseling program includes a plan of activities that will be carried out to help individuals have a career according to their considerations and decisions. For this reason, an analysis is needed from the school to identify student needs so that the provision of services can be right on target.

Career counseling programs are planned based on the study/analysis of needs (*need assessment*) felt by individuals at each level of education. Career counseling program planning consists of two major steps: Need-and-problem mapping or *needs assessment* and designing a program that suits the needs and problems. In planning career counseling service programs/activities, things that need to be considered are, first, determining career counseling service materials/activities tailored to the needs and/or problems of students subject to services. The materials provided are adjusted to the level of student development

or, if necessary, adjusted to the demands of the school or the surrounding environment. Second, goals or results need to be set. Third, set service goals. Fourth, determine the materials, sources of materials, resource persons, and related personnel. Their respective games. Fifth, determine the methods, special techniques, media, and tools to be used by the planned activities. Sixth, determine the assessment plan. Seventh, consider the difference between the planned service or activity and other services or supporting activities. Finally, the time and place of implementation should be determined.

In this case, planning a career planning program to increase career exploration. Counseling guidance teachers plan career counseling programs so that students can improve their career exploration. Career counseling program planning is needed as an integral part of guidance and counseling, which can help students overcome and solve career problems so that students have the understanding to improve their career exploration.

Techniques for compiling career counseling programs: Based on guidance and counseling techniques, several steps can be followed. Here are some of the main steps, including needs identification, orientation services, information services, placement and distribution guidance, individual and group counseling, client self-development, career planning, follow-up, and evaluation. These steps will help ensure that the career counseling program is well-designed to meet clients' needs and guide them toward greater career success.

The career counseling program provides materials for career counseling that are adjusted to the needs and level of student development. Certain. In addition, the material that will be provided is associated with what competencies will be achieved. Career counseling materials at each level include:

1. Elementary school career counseling materials according to Prayitno in SPPBKS in elementary school, the main materials given in career counseling in elementary schools include an initial introduction to the world of work and efforts to earn income to meet their needs, introduction, orientation, and career information in general in a simple way, initial introduction and self-understanding regarding career trends to be developed, simple orientation and information towards higher education, especially in relation to the career to be developed.
2. Career counseling materials at SLP include an introduction to self-concept related to talents and tendencies in choosing positions and career development directions, an introduction to work/career guidance, especially regarding job choices, orientation, and information on positions and efforts to earn income, and an introduction to various jobs that can be entered by junior high school graduates.
3. Career counseling material in high school is meant to strengthen self-understanding. With the tendency of the career to be developed, the consolidation of orientation and career information in general, especially the career to be developed, orientation and information towards higher education, especially in accordance with the career to be developed, who should?
4. Career counseling material at vocational schools includes strengthening self-understanding regarding tendencies, career and job choice, development and consolidation of major skills, educational and occupational orientation with regard to additional or higher education in accordance with career and vocational choices, service to graduates to achieve employment, or organizing independent businesses.

The Decree of the Minister of Justice no. 84/1993 emphasizes that the main task of the supervisor is to prepare a guidance program, implement the guidance program, evaluate the implementation of guidance, and follow up on the guidance program for the students for whom he is responsible. Thus, it can be understood that a supervisor teacher (now called a counselor according to Law No. 20/2003 article 1 paragraph 6) is responsible for starting

his activities by compiling a program. The program that has been planned is implemented through the First preparation for implementation, which includes physical/venue and furniture preparation, hardware, personnel preparation, preparation of applying skills using methods, special techniques, media and tools, and administrative preparation. Second, the program's implementation is by the plan, which includes the application of methods, special techniques, media, and tools, delivery of materials, utilization of material sources, activation of material sources, activation of resource persons, time efficiency, and implementation administration. Third, assessment of career counseling programs and follow-up. It is carried out as an effort or process to determine the degree of quality of progress related to the program's implementation.

Challenges of the Work Industry

Technological advances have allowed automation to occur in almost all fields. New technologies and approaches that combine the physical, digital, and biological worlds will fundamentally change human lifestyles and interactions. Industry 4.0, as a phase of the technological revolution, changes the way human activities are conducted in terms of time, scope, complexity, and transformation from previous life experiences. Humans will even live in global uncertainty. Therefore, humans must be able to predict a future that changes very quickly. Every country must respond to these changes, especially Indonesia, which has a majority Muslim population, must also respond in an integrated and comprehensive manner. The response must involve various global political stakeholders, ranging from the public sector, the private sector, academics, and Islamic boarding schools to civil society so that industry 4.0 challenges can be managed into opportunities.

Wolter identified the challenges of Industry 4.0: first, information technology security issues. Second, reliability and stability. Third, the lack of skills; and Fourth, the reluctance to change by stakeholders and the loss of many jobs due to automation. In contrast to Irioanto, Irioanto seeks to simplify the challenges of Industry 4.0, namely the availability of industry, reliable workforce, ease of regulation of cultural issues, and diversification and job creation. According to (Irianto, 2017), the opportunity is innovation in existence, a competitive industrial base, investment in technology, and the integration of small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurship.

Soft Skills Development Through Career Counseling Programs to Face the Challenges of the Work Industry for Students

Development of "*soft skills*" such as the ability to collaborate or work together in a team, communicate well, time management, and think critically and creatively. These *soft skills* are needed in the workplace because many jobs require interaction and collaboration. Employees with good *soft skills* tend to be more successful in their careers because students must adapt quickly, solve problems, and work effectively in a dynamic environment.

In developing a career guidance program for students, counselors must pay attention to several career guidance principles. First, job selection is more of a process of an event, which means that career guidance is an activity that is carried out continuously or continuously. Second, job selection and adjustment begins with knowledge of oneself. This means that it does not only emphasize the work aspect but also the individual aspect. Third, career guidance must be a process for developing self-concept. Adjustment to oneself and adjustment to work should give students a clear description of themselves. Fourth, career guidance makes it easier for students to understand the world of work and job duties. Through career guidance, it is hoped that students can get information about the type of job. Fifth, career guidance will help students understand some of the obstacles that may arise due to efforts to achieve goals and

How to overcome these obstacles. Sixth, students are invited to plan their careers for the present and the future in accordance with the data obtained through the activities that have been carried out. After obtaining various information about themselves and the work environment, students will be able to plan and choose a career that will sustain their lives in the future.

Career guidance and counseling seeks to help students have career maturity so that they get the following things such as an understanding of the right conditions and self-abilities, awareness of the value that exists in themselves and others as well as in community groups, introduction to various types of work related to talents and interests, types of education and training intended for certain areas of expertise, awareness of the desires of developing societies and countries, decision-making and planning skills to realize the decisions taken, preparations that can help them enter the world of work, the ability to solve special problems related to their careers, and a healthy appreciation for work.

Career guidance and counseling are very important for students in providing provisions to prepare themselves to enter the world of work according to the needs of the world of work so that their competencies can develop properly. In addition, with this career guidance, final semester students, fresh graduates, graduates or alumni who are in the waiting period to get a job will be better prepared to face the demands of work so that they can minimize problems that will arise related to worries that are not ready to enter the world of work. Career guidance is one way to guide students so that they have career maturity and can develop their potential optimally related to personal, social, educational, and career or vocational aspects. In the career development stage, students in the exploration stage are expected to know and be aware of the need to make career choice decisions, understand their interests and talents, identify job opportunities that match these abilities and interests, and participate in education or workshops to prepare for work.

Program Counseling Career In higher education is a useful program to help students develop skills *and skills* needed to face challenges and opportunities in the world of work, such as teamwork, effective communication, and adaptation to a changing work environment. It also prepares to meet the challenges of modern industries that require adaptability, conflict resolution, and cooperation. Career counseling in colleges and universities used as a preparation for the challenges of modern industry is an important aspect of education today. Modern industry expects individuals to have more than technical knowledge; they must also master the associated social skills, empathy, and critical thinking skills. This is because, in a dynamic world of work, individuals need to adapt to rapid changes, collaborate in teams, communicate effectively, and face the pressures and challenges that come together. With the help of the services of this career counseling program, students can understand themselves better. Then, prepare yourself for challenges in the world of work and make wise decisions. To conduct career counseling for students, universities should use several approaches to training *soft skills*, which can be done in the form of workshops, seminars, online training, or activities designed to develop skills needed in the job market. The focus of the training on the inequality between the competencies of graduates and the needs of the world of work is a very important step in preparing students to succeed in their careers. The focus of the training included self-development, ethics, communication, and teamwork.

After completing the period of study, college lectures can also form an association in career guidance that is useful for graduates by providing information on job vacancies, seminars, or training that support the needs in the world of work and make graduates become individuals who are ready to take steps to face job challenges that are not easy.

CONCLUSIONS

The study's results show that developing soft skills through career counseling programs is very important in preparing students to face challenges in the world of work. The study also shows that students who take career counseling programs can develop their soft skills by improving adaptability, communication, and teamwork, all of which are in-demand skills in the workplace.

A well-designed career counseling program can help students understand themselves, explore career options, and improve their communication and interpersonal skills in the job market. Thus, the program not only assists students in understanding themselves and the job market conditions but also enhances their ability to make wise career decisions. Graduates in career counseling programs become more prepared and competitive in the job market.

The suggestions conveyed by the author in this study are expected to add insight into developing soft skills through career counseling programs to help students face the challenges of the work industry. The author also suggests that universities should be more active in implementing structured and sustainable career counseling programs so that students can develop the skills needed to work more optimally. In addition, further research is expected to be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of this program as well as identify the best strategies for improving students' soft skills. Structured and ongoing career counseling. In addition, it is recommended that various *soft skills* training activities, such as workshops and seminars, be held to help students develop the skills needed in the world of work. Universities are also expected to form networks with industry to provide relevant job vacancies and training information for graduates.

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