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Career Exploration Skills Among Male and Female Boarding Students: A Survey Study at SMAK Santo Albertus (Dempo) Malang

Navikha Ramadhani, Mitta Manggala Devi, Mia Damayanti, Juli Antonius Sihotangi, Hylmi Eko Bachtiar

State University of Malang, Jl. Semarang No. 5 Malang, East Java, Indonesia

Email: mitta.manggala.2601118@students.um.ac.id

Abstract

Career exploration is a crucial process in adolescents' career development as it helps individuals understand their personal characteristics and obtain information about various educational and career alternatives. This study aims to describe the career exploration skills of students living in the dormitories at SMAK Santo Albertus (Dempo) in Malang. The study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive survey design. The study sample consisted of 183 boarding school students aged 14–17 years, comprising 96 males and 87 females. Data were collected using a career exploration ability scale in the form of closed-ended statements with a Likert scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage. The results showed that career exploration ability scores ranged from 61 to 95, with a mean of 79.12 and a standard deviation of 7.58. A total of 133 students (72.68%) fell into the moderate category, 26 students (14.21%) into the low category, and 24 students (13.11%) into the high category. The findings indicate that most students already possess career exploration skills, but these have not yet developed optimally. The research results imply the importance of career guidance and counseling services that strengthen students' self-exploration, career information search, and future planning.

Keywords: career exploration; high school students; boarding school students; guidance and counseling

1. Introduction

Adolescence, particularly during high school, is a transitional period from adolescence to adulthood. During this period, high school students are at a crucial stage in their developmental journey. According to Diananda (2019:117), adolescence is a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood characterized by rapid changes and development, both physically and psychologically. During this developmental phase, students experience various changes physical, cognitive, emotional, and social that require them to become more independent, particularly in making decisions that will shape the course of their future lives.

One of the key developmental tasks during adolescence is preparing to enter either higher education or the workforce. This developmental process aligns with what Super outlined in Suprihyatin & Rahmawati (2024), where adolescents aged 15 to 24 are in the exploration phase, a stage in which individuals are already considering various alternatives regarding both career paths and further education but have not yet made a binding decision. According to Yu (2025), career decision-making is one of the important developmental tasks for students at the high school level. This process involves determining the job or career path one wishes to pursue and can have long-term impacts on an individual's professional, psychological, financial, and social life. In this phase, students are expected to be able to recognize themselves, understand their interests and talents, and seek information about

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various opportunities, whether further education or professions—that align with their potential.

However, not all students are able to navigate this process successfully. A student's inability to plan their career exploration effectively can affect the career decisions they make. This is evident in the large number of adolescents who experience doubt and confusion when faced with career decisions, leading them to sometimes rely on friends when choosing a career path or make haphazard career choices. According to Awaliyah, Supriatna & Saripah (2023:375), students in their teenage years must possess the skills to explore various occupations and understand their interests, talents, and abilities, which will influence their overall career planning and decision-making.

Career exploration is a crucial component of high school students' career development because it helps them understand themselves and the working world, serving as a foundation for making career decisions. Career exploration involves activities such as seeking, obtaining, and evaluating information about oneself and the career environment. According to Sakina (2023), the purpose of career exploration is to enhance self-understanding, assess one's suitability for the workforce, and plan activities that support career development. Therefore, students' readiness to engage in career exploration is crucial for making informed and independent decisions. Furthermore, academic achievement and school performance also predict adolescents' ability to capitalize on career and economic opportunities in adulthood (Tasman et al., 2024, p. 329).

One key aspect of career exploration is students' awareness of their interests and talents, which facilitates mapping out career decision-making options. Furthermore, a crucial factor in supporting students' career exploration is the ease of gathering career information and knowledge from various sources. Career exploration behavior comprises two dimensions: self-exploration and environmental exploration. According to Stumpf, as cited in Afifah & Salim (2020), self-exploration relates to understanding one's interests, experiences, and career goals, while environmental exploration focuses on seeking information about jobs and career options as considerations in determining a career path.

Career exploration helps students identify their interests, abilities, values, and job options that suit them. Through information gathering and evaluating their experiences, students can better understand their career goals and plan for the future more effectively. According to El Barusi and Suharso (2024, p. 13), in addition to external support from parents, teachers, and peers, internal factors specifically career exploration behaviors also play a crucial role in students' career planning. However, limited access to accurate information about vocational interests can hinder students from making the right career decisions (Artosandi, Prijowuntato, & Kadir, 2025:155)

2. Method

This study employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive survey design. The survey design was used to systematically collect data from a number of respondents using a structured instrument (Morissan, 2012). All respondents were presented with the same statements and predetermined response options so that the collected data could be analyzed quantitatively.

A descriptive survey was chosen because the study was not intended to test cause-and-effect relationships or the effectiveness of an intervention, but rather to obtain an empirical picture of the career exploration abilities of boarding students at SMAK Santo Albertus. With this design, the study can reveal trends in the level of career exploration ability as well as its distribution across specific respondent characteristics.

The study population consisted of all students residing in the SMAK Santo Albertus (Dempo) Malang dormitory during the 2026–2027 academic year. The study sample comprised 183 dormitory students, including 96 male students and 87 female students. *Simple random sampling* was used as the sampling technique. The respondents were aged 14–17 years. By grade level, the respondents consisted of 84 10th-grade students, 67 11th-grade students, and 32 12th-grade students. This composition indicates that the respondents encompassed students across three educational levels, allowing for an overview of career exploration ability to be obtained from the entire range of boarding school students.

The instrument used in this study was a career exploration ability scale. The instrument was designed as a closed-ended questionnaire using a Likert scale. It was developed based on the concept of career exploration, which encompasses two main dimensions: self-exploration and environmental exploration.

Table 2.1 Career Exploration Scale Item Matrix

Variabel	Aspek	Indikator
Career Exploration	Self-Exploration	Career Interests
		Personal Values
		Experience
		Career Goals
	Environmental Exploration	Career Information

Before being used in data collection, the instrument first undergoes a testing process to ensure the quality of the measurement tool. Instrument testing includes content validity, empirical validity, and reliability. Content validity is assessed through *expert judgment* to determine the alignment of items with the construct and indicators of career exploration ability. Next, empirical validity is assessed by examining the relationship between item scores and total scores based on pilot test data. Instrument reliability is used to assess the internal consistency of the measurement tool.

Data collection was conducted using an online questionnaire via Google Forms. The instrument was administered to respondents selected as the research sample. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents received an explanation of the research objectives and instructions for filling out the instrument. Respondents were asked to provide answers based on their own circumstances and experiences. The collected data was then checked for completeness and used for analysis. A total of 183 responses were used as research data.

The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive analysis was used to obtain an overview of the career exploration abilities of students at the Santo Albertus High School boarding school. The analysis included the minimum, maximum, *mean*, standard deviation, as well as frequency distribution and percentages.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Result

This study was conducted to obtain an overview of the career exploration abilities of boarding students at SMAK Santo Albertus (Dempo) in Malang. Data collection was carried out using a career exploration ability scale distributed via Google Forms. There were 183 student respondents aged 14–17 years, consisting of 96 male students and 87 female students.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	96	52.46%
Females	87	47.54%
Total	183	100%

Based on Table 1, the study respondents consisted of 96 male students (52.46%) and 87 female students (47.54%). There were 9 more male respondents than female respondents.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to obtain an overview of the students' career exploration skills. The analysis included the minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution, and percentages.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Career Exploration Skills

Statistics	Value
Number of Respondents	183
Minimum value	61
Maximum score	95
Average	79.12
Standard deviation	7.58

Based on Table 2, students' career exploration ability scores range from 61 to 95. The mean score for career exploration ability is 79.12, with a standard deviation of 7.58.

Furthermore, students' career exploration skills were grouped into three categories: low, moderate, and high. The results of this categorization are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Categorization of Career Exploration Skills

Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	$X < 71$	26	14.21%
Medium	$71 \leq X < 87$	133	72.68%
High	$X \geq 87$	24	13.11%
Total		183	100%

Based on Table 3, the majority of students fall into the moderate category, totaling 133 students (72.68%). Furthermore, 26 students (14.21%) fall into the low category, and 24 students (13.11%) fall into the high category. Thus, the distribution of students' career exploration abilities is most concentrated in the moderate category.

Career exploration skills in this study encompass self-exploration and environmental exploration. Self-exploration includes career interests, personal values, experiences, and career goals, while environmental exploration includes career information.

Table 4. Distribution of Career Exploration Abilities by Gender

Gender	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Male	13 (13.54%)	76 (79.17%)	7 (7.29%)	96
Women	13 (14.94%)	57 (65.52%)	17 (19.54%)	87
Total	26	133	24	183

Based on Table 4, in the male group, the majority of students fell into the moderate category, namely 76 students (79.17%). In the female group, the majority of students also fell into the moderate category, namely 57 students (65.52%). The high category consisted of 7 male students (7.29%) and 17 female students (19.54%), while the low category consisted of 13 male students (13.54%) and 13 female students (14.94%).

Overall, the research results indicate that the career exploration skills of boarding students at SMAK Santo Albertus (Dempo) in Malang are predominantly in the moderate category.

3.2 Discussion

The research results indicate that the career exploration abilities of boarding students at SMAK Santo Albertus generally fall into the moderate category. The average score of 79.12 suggests that students have generally engaged in the career exploration process, but these abilities have not yet developed to an optimal level. This finding is significant because career exploration is a process that helps individuals gain an understanding of themselves and their career environment.

The research findings align with the conceptualization by Stumpf et al. (1983), who view career exploration as a process involving the search for and development of knowledge about both the self and the environment. The *Career Exploration Survey* developed by Stumpf et al. has become a key instrument in career exploration research and has served as the foundation for various subsequent studies.

Kleine et al. (2021) emphasize that career exploration encompasses both self-exploration and environmental exploration. Environmental exploration involves activities such as seeking information about career opportunities, jobs, or fields of interest, while self-exploration relates to reflection on an individual's values, goals, experiences, and characteristics in relation to career choices.

In the context of this study, the predominance of the "moderate" category indicates that most students are already aware of the importance of thinking about their future but have not yet fully developed the ability to engage in in-depth career exploration. Students may already be aware of certain fields of work that interest them or have obtained information about colleges and universities, but they have not consistently linked that information to their own characteristics, interests, and abilities. This situation can lead students to experience

uncertainty in making career choices, thus requiring a more in-depth exploration process to enable them to make appropriate career choices (Khairun & Sulastri, 2016:2).

This situation warrants attention because career exploration is not merely an activity of gathering information. The information obtained must be processed and connected to self-understanding. Effective exploration enables individuals to gain a more realistic understanding of potential career options. A meta-analysis by Kleine et al. (2021) indicates that career exploration is associated with *career decidedness* and various other career outcomes.

A longitudinal study by Haenggli et al. (2025) provides an additional perspective that environmental exploration and career knowledge have a dynamic relationship. Increased environmental exploration may be followed by increased career knowledge and *career decidedness*. Conversely, increased career knowledge can also encourage individuals to engage in further environmental exploration. These findings suggest that the career exploration process should be understood as an evolving process, not a one-time activity prior to graduation.

In the context of high school students, the "moderate" category can serve as a strategic point of intervention. Students cannot be assumed to be completely unfamiliar with career options, nor can they be considered to have achieved optimal readiness for exploration. Therefore, guidance and counseling services can be directed toward deepening the exploration that students have already begun.

Research findings indicate that students' career exploration generally falls into the moderate category. Career exploration encompasses two main aspects: self-exploration and environmental exploration. Kleine et al. (2021) explain that career exploration is an individual's effort to understand themselves and their environment in order to obtain career-related information. Self-exploration helps students understand their interests, abilities, values, experiences, and goals, while environmental exploration involves seeking information about education, jobs, and various career opportunities. Both aspects need to be developed in a balanced manner so that students have a stronger foundation for determining their career paths.

The dominance of the "moderate" category indicates that students already possess initial abilities in career exploration, but there is still room for development. This finding aligns with the research by Ashshafwan et al. (2025) on high school students in Makassar, which showed that career planning was at a fairly good level, but aspects of career exploration and knowledge about the working world still needed to be strengthened. These findings suggest that students not only need awareness regarding career choices but also need to gain broader information about education and the world of work.

Career exploration is also related to students' internal factors. Sahar and Mulyana (2025) found that grit is positively and significantly associated with career exploration among Madrasah Aliyah students. These findings show that students' engagement in seeking and considering career options is inseparable from their ability to persevere and navigate the exploration process. Therefore, guidance and counseling services need to help students not only in obtaining career information but also in building the readiness to actively explore various alternatives.

When analyzed by gender, the "moderate" category was the dominant one among both male and female students. Female students in the "high" category accounted for 19.54%, while male students accounted for 7.29%. This difference is merely a descriptive finding and cannot yet be used to conclude that there are gender-based differences in career exploration, as this study did not employ inferential tests. This is also supported by the research of Ashshafwan et al. (2025), which found no significant differences based on gender in several aspects of students' career planning.

The social environment also plays a crucial role in students' career exploration process. Support from parents, teachers, and peers can provide information, encouragement, and opportunities for students to discuss career choices. El Barusi and Suharso (2024), through a study of 10th and 11th-grade high school students in the Greater Jakarta area, found that career exploration behavior plays a role in the relationship between social support and self-efficacy in career decision-making. Thus, students need to be guided to utilize environmental support positively, while still considering choices based on their interests, abilities, values, and personal goals so as not to merely follow others' choices.

Based on these findings, guidance and counseling services need to be provided in a targeted and sustained manner to strengthen students' career exploration. These services can be delivered through interest and ability assessments, self-reflection, career goal setting, providing information about higher education institutions and the workforce, discussions with alumni, and the use of digital media. Thus, the "moderate" category identified in this study can serve as a foundation for developing services that help students strengthen their self-exploration and environmental awareness. These efforts are expected to help students obtain relevant information and make career decisions that are better aligned with their individual circumstances.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that the career exploration skills of boarding students at SMAK Santo Albertus (Dempo) in Malang generally fall into the moderate category. Of the 183 respondents, 133 students (72.68%) fell into the moderate category, 26 students (14.21%) fell into the low category, and 24 students (13.11%) fell into the high category. The mean score for career exploration skills was 79.12 with a standard deviation of 7.58.

Based on gender, the moderate category dominated among both male and female students. However, descriptively, the proportion of female students in the high category was greater than that of male students. These findings suggest that career exploration skills exhibit individual variations that need to be considered in service planning.

Overall, the majority of students have established a foundation in career exploration skills, but there is still room for development so that self-exploration and environmental exploration can be conducted in a more in-depth and focused manner. Therefore, guidance and counseling services need to provide systematic, ongoing exploration experiences that are aligned with students' developmental characteristics.

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