

# Exploring The Student Experience Using The Career Tree to Choose an Advanced School (Case Study at SMP Negeri 2 Bululawang)

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to explore students' experiences of using career trees to choose a school. This research is qualitative research with a case study research type. Data sources in this study include primary data obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, as well as secondary data taken from relevant documents or literature. The population in this study were all grade 8 students totaling around 225 people. The technique used was a purposive sampling technique. The sample consisted of three grade 8 students who actively participated in making career trees and one counseling teacher. Data collection methods applied in this study include interviews, observation, and documentation techniques. Data obtained from interviews and observations were organized into main themes that emerged using thematic analysis. The type of triangulation used was method triangulation. The results showed that there were significant changes in the exploration of students' experiences of using career trees to choose schools after graduating from junior high school. Students were able to increase students' understanding of career choices, the impact of using career trees, and the challenges faced when working on career trees.

**Keywords:** Exploration; Experience; Various Majors; Career Tree

## 1. Introduction

Guidance and counseling is a forum for students in schools/madrasas to develop personality, social interaction, learning activities, and plan and develop careers. After completing education in junior high school (SMP), students must continue their education by registering for Senior High School (SMA) or equivalent. Every student needs to prepare themselves to choose an education that suits their abilities. Interest is also a major factor in the selection of advanced schools. Interest is something that a person likes and something that attracts their attention without any coercion. The choice of advanced school cannot be suppressed by any party against a person. However, some parents often impose the choice of advanced school on their children without considering the child's interests and abilities.

That is where the role of guidance and counseling is indispensable. Guidance and counseling are a place for students who need help to know themselves, understand their social environment, and plan for the future. Guidance and counseling also play a role in fostering students' interest in the advanced school and helping them in choosing and determining their future careers.

The 2013 curriculum prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture emphasizes the importance of a process in which students choose and focus on a particular field of study based

on their interests, talents, and potential. Student specialization services can be described as learning centered on the student's interests, depending on the learning opportunities available at the educational unit; (2) the process of selecting and determining the material given to students based on the student's specialization; (3) taking subjects based on the potential of students; (4) facilitate students in achieving the success of the learning process and outcomes as well as optimal development. The role of BK teachers in student specialization is to pursue student learning activities, especially the seriousness to continue to a higher level. With this direction of specialization, students are expected to be able to easily determine their choice of further study (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).

Education is the right process for an individual to achieve goals and ideals, these results can help shape the personal character of students. Students in Junior High School (SMP) are at the right age to choose a career based on their potential and ability. Therefore, in this process, students need to get help from teachers, especially BK teachers to find an understanding of their potential. This will help them understand themselves better. Handatama (2017) said that the competencies that students must achieve to achieve career maturity are having an attitude of willingness towards further study and career and having readiness related to their career planning by developing knowledge and skills according to their potential.

Adolescence is a time when individuals can find their best potential, by finding their best potential, an individual can understand himself well. Desmita (2006) explained that in general, the future orientation of adolescents is confused when deciding on their choice of further study, because education is the right bridge for an individual to go to the world of work. Adolescence is the right time to discover your potential, talents, and interests to find a job that suits the individual's passion. Self-understanding, especially related to the potential talent of their interests, can reduce the individual entering the wrong major and further reduce the phenomenon of the wrong major which is increasingly rampant. Difficulties in making decisions related to further studies will be avoided if students can understand themselves. This is strengthened by research conducted by Wibowo, Santoso, and Apriani (2023), on grade XI students at SMP Negeri 13 Malang, showing that some students still doubt career options related to advanced school. Of the 35 students, 6 stated that they were not sure of their choice. A discussion with 5 students in class XI H also revealed that they were still undecided about the advanced school they were chosen. This confusion can be seen from the questions they ask about potential suitability with available majors, entry opportunities, and job opportunities from their chosen majors. For this reason, guidance and counseling are present as a forum for individuals, especially students who still have difficulty understanding themselves, both their potential and the talents and interests of students.

Salahudin (2010) explained that further study is one of the programs that aims to help students in continuing their education. Walgito (2010) added that further study provides opportunities for students to continue their education and help in their career development, which can start from the time they continue their studies. The ability to choose advanced studies refers to the ability of students to choose which advanced studies to choose, and students must choose advanced studies based on their abilities and potential. Students who have a good self-understanding will have no difficulty in choosing further study. Gunawan (2013) mentioned four other study problems: 1) dropping out of school or not continuing education; 2) learning difficulties; 3) having problems at school; and 4) learning problems.

Students are expected to be able to understand themselves first before solidifying their choice in further study.

In helping students understand more related to further study, it is necessary to do several ways so that students can easily receive information related to further study. The information obtained is also valid information and information that is easy for students to digest. One way that can be used is with career tree media. In this media, students are required to be creative and explore information, especially information related to further studies. Students can also easily get information related to further studies because students themselves are the ones who search for and get the information. This media also has a long durability, because this media can be stored and displayed as a reminder related to further studies.

In the process of working on this career tree media, students have valuable experience, both from working on the media and the results of working on the media. From the experience of students working on media, of course, students will face various challenges that need to be solved in groups, and then students are required to understand the material or theme of their career tree media. After working on the career tree media, students are expected to get the desired results, namely being able to understand related to further studies, career planning, and self-understanding related to choosing further studies that are by their potential.

Based on the results of observations and interviews at SMP Negeri 2 Bululawang. Career tree media helps students in finding information related to further studies, be it high school, vocational school, or university. This can help students to make choices in their further studies. Most students choose an advanced school based on following their older brothers and being told by their parents, while some students do not know where they will go later. Meanwhile, only a few students have decided on advanced schools. This discussion is very important, especially at SMP Negeri 2 Bululawang, so that students can determine further studies. The purpose of this article is to explore students' experiences using career trees to choose schools. Students can make their choice of further study without coercion from anyone and choose according to their best potential.

## **2. Method**

In this study, the approach used is a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is designed to understand phenomena such as individual behavior, perception, motivation, and actions that are described in narrative form and discussed in a natural and specific context. This research utilizes various methods to gain a deep understanding (Barlian, 2018). This study applies a qualitative descriptive research design to collect, process, and present data objectively. This study uses a type of case study research to explore in depth how SMP Negeri 2 Bululawang students understand and choose their advanced school through career trees. This research focuses on exploring students' experiences in using career trees in the decision-making process regarding advanced school choices.

The data sources in this study include primary data obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation, as well as secondary data taken from relevant documents or literature. This research was carried out at SMP Negeri 2 Bululawang which is located on Jl. Raya Kribet, Lumbangsari Village, Bululawang District, Malang Regency. This research was carried out in a span of about one month, starting from April 22 to May 31, 2024, or during the career tree work process. The subjects of this study are 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students and BK teachers who teach in 8th grade. The population in this study is all

8<sup>th</sup>-grade students totaling around 225 people. The sampling technique used is the purposive sampling technique. This technique is used to select samples that are considered to have knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic. The sample consisted of three grade 8 students who actively participated in making career trees and one BK teacher who taught in grade 8.

The data collection methods applied in this study include interview, observation, and documentation techniques. In-depth interviews were conducted with three students and one BK teacher to get in-depth information about their experiences and views regarding the concept of career trees and advanced school choices. The data obtained from interviews and observations are organized into the main themes that emerge using thematic analysis. In addition, data triangulation is also used to increase the validity and reliability of data. The type of triangulation used is a triangulation method to compare data obtained from the results of interviews, observations, and document analysis.

The stages of research carried out consist of: (1) Identifying problems to determine the focus and objectives of the research, (2) Reviewing the literature to understand relevant theories and previous research, (3) Selecting cases or research subjects to be researched, (4) Compiling data collection instruments such as interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation tools, (5) Collecting data through various methods such as interviews, observation, and documentation, (6) Thematic analysis to identify the main themes regarding student experiences and career trees, (7) Triangulation of data to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. (8) Reflection and evaluation to assess the research process and provide recommendations for further research.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Result

Through this study, we obtained the results that students, get valuable experience from classical guidance with *the project-based learning* model that from the beginning students are confused or do not feel cared about their advanced school, and just follow along and choose a higher school. After students follow and work on classical guidance and create a career tree, students become able to plan their career choices well and according to their potential. This can be used as evidence that career tree media can help students understand advanced school and their careers. Through the medium of career trees, students can also explore their curiosity related to advanced school and can force students to search about advanced school.

"Because I am working on this career tree, I have to look for many things related to majors in high school and vocational school. This is what made me understand the majors in high school and vocational school. I also just found out that there are several majors in high school and vocational school. The career tree will help me in determining my choice of further study later." (Informant C)

In terms of work experience, students are required to be creative and explore related materials that will be poured into the career tree media. In addition, students are also required to work in a team because this career tree media is a group task. Students' responsibilities also develop after working on this group career tree media.

### **3.1.1. Students' Understanding of Career Options**

From the results of the research, the use of career trees has opened students' insights into various opportunities in education and careers that they may not have previously considered. Not only does this medium help broaden students' understanding of the relationship between personal interests and available educational paths, but it also provides them with the opportunity to evaluate various career options in depth. This allows students to make more informed and planned career decisions.

"Through the career tree, my understanding of various majors in high school and vocational school can increase, there are many majors that I may be able to choose or consider continuing the goal I will go to." (Informant D)

Visually, career trees are an effective tool in helping students map out their various education and career options in a way that is easier to understand. Through this medium, students can plan their future with a clear and structured picture. The results of the interviews showed that students recognized the benefits of career trees in increasing their knowledge of various majors in high school, both vocational and high school, as well as making it easier for them to recognize majors that fit their interests and expectations.

"With a career tree, I can get to know all majors that I didn't know or know before, and I can even more easily determine the major I take according to my abilities and dreams." (Informant Q)

In addition, students also increasingly understand the importance of the relationship between their current education and future career choices. They realize that every career has specific requirements in terms of education and skills that need to be prepared early on. Thus, the use of a career tree not only helps in the exploration of career options, but also in planning concrete steps towards short-term as well as long-term career goals.

"With this activity, I am not confused or have difficulty making my choice for my future school. I understand more that success can be achieved in many ways, the many majors that I know and know through the career tree can change my view that the path to success is not only one but there are still many ways to achieve it, including for the next school." (Informant Q)

### **3.1.2. Impact of Using Career Trees**

#### **3.1.2.1. Knowledge of Career Opportunities**

From the results of the research, the career tree provides detailed information about various majors. Students become more aware of career opportunities that may not have been considered before, thus broadening their horizons of diverse majors in both high school and vocational school.

"I understand better that there are many majors that I may choose or consider continuing my education in the future." (Informant C)

#### **3.1.2.2. Student Enthusiasm and Engagement**

From the results of the study, students showed a high level of enthusiasm and involvement when participating in classical tutoring sessions that applied a project-based learning model using career tree media. They seem to be very interested and active in the group process, where they collaborate to design and develop their career trees.

### **3.1.2.3. Career Clarity Enhancement**

From the results of the study, students who were previously confused about career choices became clearer about the steps that needed to be taken after completing junior high school. The career tree helps students see their educational and career paths in a structured way, making it easier to plan their careers after graduating from junior high school. By visualizing the options available, students can be clearer about the steps they need to take to achieve their career goals.

### **3.1.2.4. Better Self-Awareness**

From the results of the research, students can better recognize their interests, talents, and abilities through the career tree. This activity helps students in choosing a career path that suits their potential, thereby reducing confusion and increasing motivation to achieve goals.

### **3.1.2.5. Increased Motivation and Self-Confidence**

From the results of the study, it can be seen that group activities in creating a career tree contribute significantly to increasing students' confidence in making decisions related to their education and career. This collaborative process allows students to exchange ideas and information with each other, so they feel more prepared and informed in planning their future. By discussing and working together in groups, students can identify their interests, talents, and career goals more clearly, as well as explore the different educational paths available. This not only strengthens their competence in decision-making but also increases their readiness to face challenges in education and careers.

## **3.1.3. Challenges faced**

### **3.1.3.1. Time and Resource Limitations**

From the results of the research, the limited time for reflection and exploration can make students feel rushed to make important career decisions. Even during the collection of career trees, many groups have not finished due to limited time. Limited resources can also affect the quality of the career plan they make.

### **3.1.3.2. So many options**

From the results of the research, the various career options available can make students feel confused or stressed about choosing the right path for them. This can slow down their decision-making process.

### **3.1.3.3. Difficulty in Receiving Information**

From the results of the research, information about various majors, professions to be chosen according to the major, and school entrance requirements according to the chosen

major is very much and sometimes there is something complicated. Students sometimes have difficulty in converting this information into a desired career plan.

#### **3.1.3.4. Difficulties in Recognizing Interests and Talents**

From the results of the research, there are still many students who have difficulty recognizing their interests and talents even though they have taken IQ tests at school. Although IQ tests can give students an idea of their potential, there are still many students who are still confused by the results.

#### **3.1.3.5. Lack of Individual Engagement or Motivation**

From the results of the research, some students lack enough internal motivation to use time to work on career trees. Students feel less interested don't see the important value of a career plan or feel that they don't need it right now.

### **3.2 Discussion**

The implementation of research that has been obtained at SMP Negeri 2 Bululawang shows that there is a significant change in the exploration of students' experience using career trees to choose a school after graduating from junior high school. Following the results of Agustin and Apriatama's (2023) research, classical guidance services with the PJBL (*Project-Based Learning*) model based on career trees have proven to be effective in improving the career understanding of class X social studies students at SMAN 4 Palangka Raya. Based on the average results of the scores obtained, the pretest score is in the "low" category and increases to the "high" category after being given the posttest. With a *posttest* score greater than the *pretest score*, the researcher can conclude that there is a significant improvement in students' career understanding after being given classical guidance services using the career tree-based PJBL model.

*Project-based learning* allows students to become more active and directly involved in learning activities, increasing their motivation and interest in career planning. Following the opinion of Sudrajat & Hernawati (2020), *Project Based Learning* is a learning approach developed by utilizing real projects that involve students in investigating real-world problems through group work. This is in line with research conducted by Anisa (2022), classical guidance services with PJBL techniques produce classes to be livelier and more colorful because they are student-centered and use reflection materials to strengthen and direct follow-up plans in the learning process.

According to Sabella and Winingsih (2020), Guidance and Counseling teachers use various media to help students in the process of choosing, preparing, searching, and adjusting themselves to careers that suit students' interests and abilities. The purpose of using media is to ensure that students can develop optimally, plan their future careers well, and increase learning motivation. Syaiful Bahari (Ndara and Harefa, 2023), learning media is a very effective means of conveying the message of learning objectives so that they can be achieved. The use of creative learning media can increase students' interest and motivation, as well as make teaching and learning activities more effective and efficient. Thus, students not only receive information passively, but also develop the discussion, critical thinking, and analytical skills that are essential for their education and career.

According to the opinion of Hapni and Silvia (2023), the use of the ideal tree media in students' career planning has a great influence on them. Gradually, students who initially look confused in planning their careers will become understanding and able to determine career planning for the future (Thasfa, et al, 2023). The existence of career guidance services that use auxiliary media such as career trees that can be created by anyone by utilizing the available materials, has had a positive impact on students in increasing their knowledge about career choices. Through the guidance of BK teachers, they become more understanding and steadier in choosing a career path that suits their dreams for the future world of work.

According to Sholihah, et al. (2022), the tree of ideals also has a direct positive impact on children's career development, because through this tree, they can get to know the work environment better. The orphanage children can also easily and quickly understand the material. The purpose of this activity is to increase the children's self-understanding of the world of work, foster an appropriate attitude to participate, improve critical thinking skills, and develop values related to the lifestyle they aspire to.

According to the findings of Hapni and Silvia (2023), the obstacle in the application of the ideal tree media for the development and career planning of grade IX students at SMPN 6 Panyabungan is the limited time available for classroom guidance, which is only one hour of lessons (forty minutes). This time can only be used if there are no subject teachers in the classroom. As a result, students feel that the time given is too short and the activity material does not achieve the goals that have been planned in the implementation of the service.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion of the results of the study, it can be concluded that the implementation of research at SMP Negeri 2 Bululawang shows a significant change in the exploration of students' experiences using career trees to choose a school after graduating from junior high school. Students show high enthusiasm in discussing the choice of major and school to go to. The process of creating a career tree gradually with group members has a positive impact on students, although there are several challenges in its implementation. The *Project-Based Learning* model allows students to be more active and involved in learning activities, as well as increase their motivation and interest in career planning. Overall, this study shows that classical guidance services with a career tree-based PJB model are an effective method to improve students' understanding and career planning. Future research may focus on developing a more specific PJB model to maximize outcomes in improving students' career understanding, perhaps by adapting this model to local contexts and needs.

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