

Career Path Education in Preparing Students Entering The Workforce

Pendidikan Jalur Karier dalam Mempersiapkan Mahasiswa Memasuki Dunia Kerja

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Abstract

Student career readiness is one of the factors that contribute to the high level of educated unemployment, including in psychology students who have a variety of career path options but lack of directed planning. This activity aims to increase the understanding and career readiness of psychology students through structured career path education. The method used is a quantitative approach with a pre-test and post-test one group design through career path education training for 74 S1 students of the Psychology Study Program, University of Muhammadiyah East Kalimantan. The program was conducted through lectures, audiovisual materials, interactive discussions, and reflection sessions, with evaluation based on pre- and post-training assessments of career readiness and understanding. The evaluation results indicated that students demonstrated improved career understanding and readiness following career guidance, as evidenced by a clearer sense of career direction and reduced uncertainty in making career choices. Career path education is effective as a strategy to strengthen the readiness of psychology students in facing the world of work.

Keywords: career path; job readiness; student

Abstrak

Kesiapan karier mahasiswa merupakan salah satu faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap tingginya tingkat pengangguran terdidik, termasuk pada mahasiswa psikologi yang memiliki beragam pilihan jalur karier namun masih kurang dalam perencanaan yang terarah. Kegiatan ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman dan kesiapan karier mahasiswa psikologi melalui pendidikan jalur karier yang terstruktur. Metode yang digunakan adalah ceramah melalui pelatihan pendidikan jalur karier pada 74 mahasiswa S1 Program Studi Psikologi Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. Kegiatan dilaksanakan melalui ceramah, media audio-visual, diskusi interaktif, dan refleksi, dengan evaluasi menggunakan pengukuran kesiapan dan pemahaman karier sebelum dan sesudah pelatihan. Hasil evaluasi menunjukkan adanya pemahaman dan kesiapan karier mahasiswa setelah dilakukan pencerahan akan karier kerja yang ditandai dengan kejelasan arah karier dan berkurangnya kebingungan dalam menentukan pilihan karier. Pendidikan jalur karier terbukti efektif sebagai strategi untuk memperkuat kesiapan mahasiswa psikologi dalam menghadapi dunia kerja.

Kata Kunci: jalur karier; kesiapan kerja; mahasiswa

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INTRODUCTION

Changes in the world of work in the era of globalization and digitalization are taking place faster and more complex (Ardiansyah & Hidayah, 2019). Technological disruption, automation, and flexibility in work patterns require university graduates to have career readiness that is not only based on academic mastery, but also adaptability, clarity of professional direction, and maturity in career decision-making (Zhou et al., 2023). The transition from education to the world of work is a critical phase that is often marked by career uncertainty, especially in the young age group, thereby increasing the risk of job unreadiness after graduation (Zhang et al., 2023).

This condition is also reflected in students as partners in service activities. The results of initial observations show that students still experience limitations in understanding career opportunities according to the scientific field, have not conducted systematic career exploration, and have weak and unrealistic career planning (Xin et al., 2020). In addition, career decision-making skills are still low, so students tend to be hesitant in determining their professional direction after completing their studies (Salazar-Concha et al., 2022). This problem shows the need for structured community service interventions to help students build career readiness in a sustainable and contextual manner with the needs of the job market (Thasfa & Daulay, 2024).

The urgency of this problem is strengthened by national employment data. The Central Statistics Agency reported that in February 2025 the number of unemployed in Indonesia reached 7.28 million people with an Open Unemployment Rate of 4.76%, an increase compared to the same period the previous year (Thasfa & Daulay, 2024)). The highest unemployment rate is still dominated by graduates of secondary education and tertiary education, which indicates a gap between the competence of graduates and the demands of the world of work (Salsabila & Zahra, 2023). In line with that, the Independent Learning – Independent Campus policy emphasizes the importance of strengthening work readiness, career planning, and connectivity between universities and the industrial world as part of the human resource development strategy (Ramdani et al., 2025).

Various research results support the importance of career readiness development interventions from the college period (Turmudi, 2020). Observational studies show that around 50% of students do not have adequate career readiness, characterized by low career exploration, weak career planning, and lack of professional decision-making skills (Qatrunnada et al., 2025). Other research confirms that career mentoring programs that integrate self-reflection, world of work information, and decision-making training have been proven effective in increasing the clarity of career goals and students' job readiness (Puteri & Rozana, 2022). Therefore, this service activity offers a solution in the form of systematic and applicative career readiness assistance according to the student context (Lopes & Chambel, 2020). Career is a dynamic process that does not happen by chance, but needs to be planned and designed systematically by students (Kirani & Chusairi, 2022).

Careful career planning helps to understand his or her strengths and interests, evaluate available opportunities, and develop adaptive strategies to achieve long-term job goals (Ngai et al., 2023). Higher education in a university, especially for psychology students, this planning has an important role in transforming academic competence into applicable work readiness (Meerman et al., 2021). Lack of career maturity has negative implications for students' academic processes and motivation (Kurniawati et al., 2023). Students who do not have a clear

career direction tend to experience obstacles in motivation to attend lectures and achieve academic achievements that are not fully optimal (Verbrugghe et al., 2016).

On the student side in work readiness (*Work readiness*) is understood as a psychological and competency condition that reflects the student's readiness to enter and adapt to the work environment, which includes self-understanding, clarity of career goals, and confidence in their abilities (Khoiroh & Prajanti, 2018). Various studies show that low job readiness in students correlates with anxiety about facing the world of work, unclear career choices, and low confidence in competing in the job market (Kamil & Daniati, 2017).

As a discipline that has a wide scope of work, psychology offers a variety of career paths, such as educational psychology, community psychology, industrial and organizational psychology, clinical psychology, social psychology, and various other applied fields (Efrinaldi et al., 2023). The breadth of this spectrum of opportunities, on the one hand, provides flexibility of choice, but on the other hand, it has the potential to cause career confusion for students if it is not accompanied by adequate understanding (Kadiyono & Sulistiobudi, 2018). Not a few psychology students still have a limited perception of the job prospects of psychology graduates, and even tend to identify the psychology profession in certain roles, without understanding other career paths that are equally relevant in the world of work (Jingwen et al., 2023).

As psychology students approach graduation, limited understanding of career paths often leads to anxiety, doubts about career choices, and unpreparedness for the demands of the workforce (Gultom & Abidin, 2024). This condition shows that the mastery of theoretical knowledge during the lecture period does not necessarily automatically transform into better readiness (Azhari & Mirza, 2016). Without structured mentoring and debriefing, students are at risk of experiencing *mismatch* or a mismatch between academic competencies possessed and the chosen job, which can ultimately lead to low job satisfaction and future career instability (Gati & Levin, 2014).

In this career path education, it is a strategic need for psychology students, as a systematic process that helps recognize their potential, explore various career alternatives, understand the demands of competencies in each field, and design career preparation steps in a planned manner (Riskiana & Prihwanto, 2021). This education not only functions as a provider of career information, but also as a means of developing self-awareness, reflective skills, and rational and responsible career decision-making (Fadesti et al., 2025). Through a clear understanding of career paths, students can prepare more strategically, for example through the selection of relevant courses, involvement in internship programs, development of supporting skills, and planning for further education (Ismali et al., 2023). In addition, career path education also contributes to building students' psychological readiness, such as confidence, resilience to face challenges, and readiness to adapt to a work environment that takes various forms and challenges (Erwan Syah & Juliarti Bantam, 2022).

In dealing with this problem, one of the strategic and applicable preventive efforts is through career path training, which is designed to provide structured information about realistic career paths, assist students in formulating student career planning, and improve relevant competencies to face challenges in the world of work (Azhenov et al., 2023). This training not only provides insight into career path choices, but also facilitates self-reflection, strengthening competency confidence, and planning based on psychological mental readiness (Azhari & Mirza, 2016).

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the impact of career path training on the work readiness of psychology students to enter the world of work by using a quantitative data-based pre-post design with a quasi-experimental method. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of career psychology studies, as well as a practical contribution to higher education institutions in designing career development programs that are more contextual and oriented towards student job readiness.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The method of implementing this community service activity uses a participatory and educational approach that involves lecturers and students in an integrated manner. Lecturer activities include counselling, training, workshops, and assistance for student career readiness. Lecturers play the role of main facilitators in delivering material, strengthening the concept of career readiness, and assisting in the process of reflection and career planning of participants. Meanwhile, student activities are carried out in the form of active involvement as participants as well as companion partners through a scheme of programmatic service activities, which are integrated with Thematic KKN/PKL Education activities (adjusted to institutional policies), so that students are not only objects but also learning subjects.

Partners in this activity are active university students who are in the middle to final semester, who are preparing for the transition to the world of work. The activity was carried out in the partner campus environment (or online/offline as needed), with a total of $\pm 30-50$ students. Partners are selected based on the need to improve career readiness, especially in the aspects of self-understanding, career exploration, and professional decision-making.

The implementation of activities is carried out through three main stages, namely pre-activities, core activities, and monitoring and evaluation. In the pre-activity stage, the service team coordinates with partners, maps participants' needs through initial surveys (career readiness questionnaires), preparation of mentoring modules, and scheduling activities. This stage aims to ensure the suitability of the material with the real needs of students.

The core activity stage is carried out in the form of workshops and structured career readiness assistance. Activities include counselling on the dynamics of the world of work and career opportunities, training on understanding one's own potential and career interests, exploration of career paths according to the scientific field, and simulation of career decision-making. Technically, the stages of the activity can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. A Series of Service

Time	Activity Name	Material	Presenter
08.00 – 08.30	Opening Session	Introduction to the Program and Activity Overview	Service Team
08.30 – 10.00	Career Readiness Workshop	Dynamics of the World of Work & Career Awareness	Lecturer Team
10.00 – 11.30	Training & Practicum	Mapping Self-Potential and Career Interests	Lecturer Team
11.30 – 12.30	Break	—	—
12.30 – 14.00	Mentoring Session	Career Exploration & Decision Making	Student Lecturer & Assistant Team
14.00 – 15.00	Reflection & Follow-Up	Preparation of an Individual Career Plan	Service Team
15.00 – 15.30	Closing Session	Discussion and Activity Conclusion	Service Team

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This community service activity was carried out in the form of career path education training for S1 students of the Psychology Study Program, University of Muhammadiyah East Kalimantan. The participants of the activity amounted to 74 students who were selected using the purposive sampling technique with criteria to follow the entire series of activities and complete the pre-test and post-test. The implementation of activities includes the delivery of material on the prospects and career paths of psychology graduates, the development of growth mindsets, and the strengthening of hard skills and soft skills that are relevant to the demands of the world of work. The methods used include lectures, the use of audio-visual media, interactive discussions, question and answer sessions, and guided reflection to help participants relate the material to their respective conditions and career plans.

The implementation of the activity took place in a participatory manner, characterized by the active involvement of students during the material delivery and discussion sessions. The documentation of the activity is shown through photos of material delivery activities and question and answer sessions, which represent the educational process and interaction between the presenter and the participants (Picture 2. Material Delivery Session; Picture 3. Q&A Session). This documentation illustrates that the activity is not only one-way, but also provides a space for dialogue and clarification on various career problems faced by students.

Activity data was collected using the readiness scale and understanding of career paths provided before and after the implementation of the training. The data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially to see changes in the level of career readiness of students as an indicator of the success of career path education programs.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring activities were carried out during the implementation of the training through observation of the level of participant participation, activeness in discussions, and responses to the material presented. Evaluation during the activity showed that most of the participants were actively involved in discussion and reflection sessions, and were able to ask questions related to career choices and challenges in the field of psychology.

Post-activity evaluation is carried out through a comparison of pre-test and post-test scores, readiness and understanding of career paths. This evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness of career path education programs in increasing students' readiness to face the world of work. The results of the quantitative evaluation showed a significant improvement in career readiness and understanding scores after participating in the activity, which indicated that the interventions provided were effective.

Obstacles and Problems Faced

During the implementation of the activity, some of the obstacles recorded include limited training time which causes the deepening of material to not be carried out optimally in each career path. In addition, the difference in the initial level of understanding of participants leads to variations in the needs of mentoring, so not all participants can obtain the same deepening of the material individually. However, these obstacles did not hinder the achievement of the main goals of the activity, because in general participants showed increased readiness and understanding of careers.

Analysis Results

The results of the implementation of the career path education program show a significant change in the readiness and understanding of the career of psychology students. The program is designed to equip students with a thorough understanding of the various career paths that can be taken, while providing practical skills and strategies to face the challenges of the world of work. The service process takes place gradually and in a structured manner, starting with the introduction of basic career concepts, understanding professional prospects, to reflection and long-term career planning, so that students can gain a comprehensive and relevant understanding of their field of study.

Before the program is implemented, most students have an initial understanding of their career plans. However, this understanding is general and has not been systematically structured. Many students only know the name of the profession or job opportunities available without understanding in detail the competencies, experience, and preparation strategies needed to succeed in the career path. This condition emphasizes the need for targeted educational interventions to build more mature career readiness. Students also experience difficulties in relating the academic competencies obtained in college with the demands of the real world of work. Many of them have not been able to see how courses, laboratory practices, organizational activities, and research experience can be integrated as capital to enter the professional world. This gap suggests that higher education needs to provide career mentoring spaces that help students understand the relationship between education and real work practice.



Figure 1. Opening Session

The process of developing career readiness is not only related to the length of study or mastery of academic materials. Career readiness is the result of educational efforts that are deliberately designed to guide students through the stages of introduction, exploration, and career planning in a systematic manner. Therefore, this devotion emphasizes the importance of active mentoring, interaction, and reflection as an integral part of career learning. The career path education program emphasizes students' understanding of various professional paths in the field of psychology. Participants are guided to understand the

characteristics of each profession, the available prospects, and the supporting skills and competencies needed. This approach helps students build a realistic career picture and tailor their plans to personal potential and interests.

The learning process in this activity is interactive. Students are not only passively receiving information, but are encouraged to ask questions, discuss, and analyze the information provided. These interactions encourage students to be more critical in evaluating their career choices, considering the consequences, and formulating appropriate preparation strategies. One of the core elements of the program is self-reflection. Students are given time to explore their interests, values, and potential, and relate them to the most suitable career path. This reflective activity helps students understand their strengths and weaknesses, so that career decisions can be made more maturely and realistically.



Figure 2. Training Presentation

Exposure to real examples from the world of work is an important part of the educational process. Students are given a concrete picture of the types of jobs that psychology graduates can pursue, the responsibilities they carry, and the additional skills that may be needed. Thus, students not only gain theoretical information, but also understand professional dynamics in a practical way. In addition to the cognitive aspect, this activity strengthens the psychological readiness of students. The program provides strategies to increase confidence in career decision-making, deal with uncertainty, and build mental resilience in the face of professional challenges. This approach helps students face the world of work with better confidence and mental readiness.

Group discussions and decision-making simulations are the main methods in this activity. Students are invited to plan their personal career paths, evaluate existing alternatives, and weigh the risks and benefits of each option. This process fosters critical thinking skills, analytical skills, and an awareness of personal responsibility in making career decisions. After participating in the program thoroughly, students show a clearer understanding of the career path they want to take. They are able to prepare the necessary preparation steps, ranging from skill development, practicum experience, to strategies to build additional competencies. Students also become more aware of the importance of

starting preparations from the beginning, not waiting until graduation.

This increase in understanding not only occurs in students who initially have high readiness, but also reaches them with lower readiness. This shows that the career path education program is able to bridge the differences in understanding between participants, so that understanding and career readiness become more evenly distributed among students with different backgrounds and experiences. The impact of this activity can also be seen in the change in students' perspective on the world of work. Previously, some students viewed the world of work as a scary or confusing space. After joining the program, they begin to see the professional world as an arena to develop themselves, utilize skills, and pursue career goals with a clear strategy.

Students' awareness of practical skills has also increased. Students begin to understand the importance of mastering hard skills and soft skills, in addition to mastering theory, to compete in the world of work. The service program helps students realize that practical skills are key to maximizing career opportunities and reducing uncertainty. The program encourages students to connect their academic experience with career preparation. Courses, research projects, and organizational experience are no longer seen as mere obligations, but as part of a self-development strategy that supports long-term career goals. This approach fosters reflective awareness and more mature planning strategies.

Career path education also builds a growth mindset in students. They learn to view challenges as opportunities to grow, not daunting obstacles. This view increases students' psychological readiness to deal with the dynamics of the world of work, including the possibility of early failure and the need for constant adaptation. Students learn to evaluate career options in a more rational and responsible way. They are able to weigh the opportunities and risks, identify the most relevant preparatory steps, and devise a realistic long-term strategy. This process fosters maturity in career decision-making, which is an important competency for graduates who are ready to face the professional world.

This service activity also encourages students to take the initiative in planning their own development. Students begin to design skills improvement strategies, seek relevant work experience opportunities, and actively participate in academic and organizational activities that support their career paths. This initiative shows a noticeable change in behavior as a result of educational interventions. Career path education programs have proven to be effective in increasing the readiness, understanding, and self-confidence of psychology students. This activity emphasizes the role of universities as facilitators that provide educational spaces, mentoring, and real experiences to prepare students to face the transition to the world of work optimally.



Figure 3. Audience Session

Substantively, the increase in scores shows that career path education is able to help students clarify their understanding of various alternative professions in the field of psychology, the relationship between academic competence and the needs of the world of work, as well as concrete steps that need to be prepared before entering the professional world. Students not only gain new information, but also experience a process of clarification and reflection on their respective career plans. This confirms that career path education plays a transformative learning tool that strengthens career readiness cognitively and psychologically, not just increasing measurement scores.

In addition to the increase in average scores, the results of the analysis also showed changes in the distribution pattern of career readiness scores. In the post-test stage, the score distribution becomes more homogeneous compared to the pre-test. This decrease in score variation indicates that after participating in the career path education program, the difference in career readiness level between students becomes smaller. In other words, this service activity not only has an impact on students with low initial readiness, but also helps to equalize understanding and career readiness among all participants. This equitable distribution of readiness is important in the context of community service, as it shows that the program is able to reach participants with relatively diverse backgrounds and levels of understanding.

To ensure that the score increase was not just a random fluctuation, the difference in career readiness scores before and after the intervention was tested using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. This test was chosen because the data were paired and did not fully meet the normal distribution assumptions. The results of the analysis showed a statistical value of $W = 0.00$ with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, which indicates a very significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. These findings provide strong statistical evidence that changes in students' career readiness and understanding occur systematically after participating in career path education programs.

The results of this analysis show that career path education programs implemented in community service activities have proven to be effective in increasing the readiness and career understanding of psychology students. The resulting impact is not only reflected in the

increase in average scores, but also in the equal distribution of career readiness among participants. This emphasizes that career path education is a relevant and applicable form of intervention to help students prepare for the world of work, as well as strengthen the role of universities in assisting students in the transition phase to professional life.

DISCUSSION

The results of this community service provide strong support for the assumption that career path education is an effective intervention in improving the career readiness and understanding of psychology students (Wang, 2023). The significant increase in post-test scores compared to pre-tests shows that the educational activities carried out not only function as a means of conveying information about career choices, but also as a meaningful and reflective career learning process (Zhang et al., 2023). Through exposure to materials, interactive discussions, and reflection sessions, students have the opportunity to integrate academic knowledge with the realities of the world of work, so as to be able to build a more comprehensive understanding of the direction and demands of the career that will be faced after graduation (Zhou et al., 2023).

These findings support the view that career readiness is not a condition that is formed automatically as the study period increases, but is the result of a planned, systematic, and developmentally oriented educational process (Zhang et al., 2023). Without structured intervention, students have the potential to complete higher education with good academic mastery, but still experience confusion in determining career paths and preparing themselves for the world of work (Xin et al., 2020). Therefore, the results of this service strengthen the argument that universities have a strategic role and institutional responsibility in facilitating students' transition to the world of work, not only through the transfer of academic knowledge, but also through strengthening psychological readiness, clarity of professional goals, and adaptive career decision-making skills (Zhang et al., 2023).

Empirically, the results of this service are in line with various findings of previous research that confirm the effectiveness of education-based career interventions and mentoring. Studies conducted by Xin et al. (2020) show that career planning education and career course intervention programs have a significant effect on increasing career readiness and career decision-making readiness of students through strengthening self-understanding, exploring career alternatives, and clarifying professional goals. Similar conceptual support is also shown by research by Wang (2023) who found that goal setting training based on SMART principles is effective in increasing the accuracy of career selection through clarity of goals and systematic planning. In addition, Salsabila and Zahra (2023) reported that career planning training contributes positively to the work readiness of final year students, especially in facing the transition period from the academic world to the professional world.

The consistency between the results of this service and previous findings strengthens the position of career path education as a relevant and contextual form of intervention for psychology students (Ramdani et al., 2025). No indication of non-support for the effectiveness of career path education was found in the context of this service, which suggests that the educational approach used is in line with the needs and characteristics of the participants (Handayani et al., 2024). Nevertheless, these findings still need to be critically understood (Puteri & Rozana, 2022). Measurable career readiness improvements cannot be fully claimed as a single result of the intervention, given that the activity design uses a one-group pre-test

post-test approach without a comparison group (Ngai et al., 2023). Other factors, such as ongoing academic experience or exposure to career information outside of activities, also have the potential to influence changes in a student's career readiness. Therefore, although the results of this service provide strong support for the effectiveness of career path education, caution is needed in drawing causal conclusions that are absolute (Zhou et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The interventions carried out are effective in increasing the readiness, understanding, and self-confidence of psychology students to face the world of work. Career path education not only serves as a delivery of information about professional prospects but also as a means of developing self-reflection, planning skills, and adaptive career decision-making, so that students are able to relate academic competence to the demands of the professional world more realistically. Thus, this program emphasizes the strategic role of universities in facilitating students' transition to the world of work, not only through mastery of academic materials, but also through strengthening psychological readiness and professional maturity. As a suggestion for future research, it is recommended to use a more robust research design, such as quasi-experimental with control groups or longitudinal measurements, to assess the sustainability and long-term effects of career path education, as well as to consider external factors that may affect student readiness. Practically, the implications of this service emphasize the importance of integrating career path education programs into the curriculum and student services, so that every student has the opportunity to obtain comprehensive debriefing, reduce career confusion, and increase readiness to face the dynamics of the world of work that is increasingly complex, flexible, and demanding high adaptability.

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