

Career Preparation and Intra- and Interpersonal Training Program for Visually Impaired Adolescents Affiliated With Yayasan Mitra Netra and PERTUNI

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ABSTRACT

Preparation for an adult career plays a significant role in the future of adolescents, especially those with visual impairment. Despite their limitations, they must prepare for their future career. Immaturity in their career planning may manifest as dropping out from college or graduating from college to work in an unrelated field. Therefore, career preparation training is essential for this adolescent population. To meet these challenges for 20 visually impaired students, a 2-day training program was conducted in affiliation with the Yayasan Mitra Netra Foundation and Persatuan Tunanetra Indonesia in Central Jakarta, Indonesia. This training used several materials to focus on key topics: self-concept, development of intra-, and interpersonal skills, college life, and current development of work. This training also presented a conceptual understanding of success, career preparation, and future goal setting. The program also sought to enhance their knowledge to be more rational in choosing their future career, whether an educational, or entrepreneurial path, based on their interests and skills. Based on a comparison of pretest and posttest scores, results showed a significant increase in their knowledge about career and intra-interpersonal skills; therefore, the purpose of this training was well achieved. This intervention can be applied by another organization with the concern to help visually impaired students undertake career preparation.

Keywords: *adolescent, career, interpersonal skills, visually impaired.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of developmental transition from childhood to adulthood, which is characterized by physiological, cognitive, and social and emotional changes (Papalia, Olds, and Feldman, 2004). The development period generally begins at age 11 and ends around age 20. The conception of adolescence as a new stage of development has emerged in the modern era. This understanding is in line with the increasing complexity of the demands for

work in the era of industrialization, in which further education began to be needed to obtain certain specific competencies. This pursuit requires school attendance for a longer time before assuming the full responsibilities of adulthood; thus, adolescence arose as a classification of the final stage of child development.

The period of adolescent development has its own unique challenges. One such challenge derives from the emergence of various secondary education choices

continuing through different study programs in college. To gain the competencies that serve to harmonize the individual adolescent's talents, interests, and abilities with the needs of the work world, an adolescent must have a careful consideration when choosing an educational program. This important choice has raised the issue of career maturity as one of the youth developmental challenges that must be completed (Chen & Chen, 2009; Xiao, Newman, Chu, 2016).

Career maturity itself can determine the cognitive and affective readiness of individuals to make career decisions in accordance with their career development (Brebahama & Akmal, 2016). Four aspects affect career maturity: *career planning*, *career exploration*, *career decision-making*, and *work world information*. To successfully attain career maturity, adolescents must have an accurate self-perception and be able to recognize their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, adolescents need to imagine the future for what type of work or the career field they want pursue, both to gain information about the work world and to become more interested in choosing an education that best suits their unique characteristics. Based on this approach, the work of developing career maturity can be completed.

In daily life, however, various obstacles may arise to prevent an adolescent from meeting this challenge. Based on the results of an interview with one of the Guidance and Counseling teachers at a national high school in Indonesia, adolescents often have an incorrect view of the school. As two examples, these adolescents may

mistakenly believe that students in the life sciences are far more intelligent than those in the social sciences, or they may believe that studying at a public university is a sign that a student is highly intelligent. These assumptions can in turn guide their education and career choices. In addition, it is highly likely that some students may choose schools or college majors based on the perceived prestige, on the principle of following their parents' choice for their educational path, or on the desire to align with the choices of their peers at that time.

The same experience occurs for adolescents with disabilities, a population for whom the selection of study programs becomes more complicated compared with that for adolescents in the general population. To address this issue, interviews were conducted with the Chairman of Persatuan Tunanetra Indonesia (PERTUNI), which is the Indonesian union of visually impaired people. Based on data gathered in these interviews, visually impaired youth are often faced with various problems in choosing an educational path, starting from the problem of vision itself, and including issues such as a lack of career information, a limited number of career counselors for the visually impaired, and a limited number of inclusive educational institutions that can facilitate the attendance of students who are visually impaired. A relevant example is the case of a male Indonesian student who successfully completed his studies in the Department of German Literature at Universitas Indonesia. After he successfully graduated from the department, he realized that he was apparently more interested in pursuing the world of music. His original reason for

choosing the German major was simply because he wanted to study at a prestigious public university, and that specific department was willing to accept visually impaired students.

These issues and examples demonstrate that the core challenge lies within a lack of self-understanding during adolescence, especially for visually impaired adolescents who also have other challenges. They do not yet know the range of interests and goals they want to achieve. Most visually impaired adolescents view success in terms of wealth, power, or social position, so they do not consider the process of creating success based on their current interests. In this context, the research team for this study took the initiative to conduct a career guidance training program for visually impaired adolescents so that they have the opportunity to be more rational in choosing educational programs. Guidance was provided when they started to enter the senior year of secondary education (high school or vocational school, and science or social studies), were at the tertiary level with a study program in university, or were preparing themselves for entrepreneurship in accordance with their respective interests and expertise.

This training intended to provide opportunities for visually impaired youths to prepare for their future by career planning. In addition, this training sought to empower the visually impaired youth to better recognize their strengths and weaknesses, to determine their interests, and to help them plan a career in a traditional field, such as lecturing and continuing higher education, or to explore the informal sector, such as

entrepreneurship, according to their interests and expertise.

2. METHODS

2.1. Training Design

This program used community education methods as described in following text. Before the training began, participants were given a pretest containing questions related to the training material. At the end of the training, posttests were administered to determine any differences in understanding from before training versus after training.

The training was provided in five sessions over 2 days: three sessions on the first day, and two sessions on the second day. This five-session design was based on the experience of the PERTUNI Chairman, who emphasized three key concepts in career preparation for visually impaired adolescents that must be improved: (1) their self-understanding (self-concept); (2) their definition of success; and (3) their knowledge on how to set goals.

On the first day, three sessions were presented. Session 1 introduced the self-concept theory to the participants. Five types of self-concept were explained: *physical, personal, moral, family, and social*. Then, an activity called “Geometric Friends” was conducted, in which the participants were split into a few groups. The goal was for each participant to find another member of their group holding the same geometric pattern as they did.

Session 2 focused on the concept of success. Materials related to the concept of “real success” were distributed. The presentation explained that success is a process and how the achievement of

subgoals is an important part of the process until reaching the final goal.

Session 3 presented content about goal setting. The approach of setting SMART goals was discussed as the concept of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely goals. A game called “Blind Target” was conducted to increase the participants’ understanding of how to establish their goals. At the end of the day, homework was assigned, in which they must make an action plan for their future career to present to the group the next day.

On the second day, the homework was collected. In the first session of the day (Session 4), participants were separated into two big groups. In Group 1 were the participants who chose to continue their career in an informal sector, with work as an entrepreneur, a farmer, or a singer, for example. In Group 2 were the participants who chose to continue their education and pursue higher education. Each participant presented their career action plan to their group, and the research team gave feedback to the participants to help complete their action plan.

The second session of the day (Session 5) was the “Wisdom Moving” activity. This game aimed to enhance their goal setting, self-concept, and how to achieve their target with team cooperation. At the end of the program, all the materials were reviewed.

2.2. Participants

The training was provided to 20 participants who were students. The training was made possible under the auspices of PERTUNI and the Yayasan Mitra Netra Foundation. Both of these institutions focus on developing the quality

of human resources, especially for students with visual impairment in Indonesia.

2.3. Procedure

To discover to what extent the objectives have been achieved, a pretest and posttest were administered before starting and after completing the training to measure the participants’ understanding of self-concept, the definition of success, and knowledge of goal setting. Both tests were designed by the trainer team. Objectives were considered to be successfully achieved if a statistically significant increase in the pretest scores versus the posttest scores was observed.

2.4. Data analysis

Data were analyzed quantitatively by comparing the pretest and posttest results. Both of these tests are the same tests and contain training material. The comparison was made using the Wilcoxon test different statistical test methods. Training was considered effective if significant differences were evident between the pretest and posttest results.

3. RESULTS

Results of the statistical analysis showed a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the participants ($p < 0.01$, $z = 30$). This difference was also evident in the difference in the average values of the two tests. The average score of participants in the pretest was lower than in the posttest (mean: 4.15 vs. 6.15, respectively). Thus, it can be concluded that this training was effective in enhancing career development and intra- and interpersonal skills for the visually impaired youth.

4. DISCUSSION

This training sought to provide support for visually impaired youth to prepare their career planning in the future. With this training, visually impaired youth were expected to be able to recognize better their strengths and weaknesses, to determine their own interests, and to have support in planning a career in a traditional field, such as lecturing or continuing education or exploring a more informal sector, such as entrepreneurship, based on their interests and expertise.

The results showed a significant increase in the posttest versus the pretest scores. The difference in the average scores of the two tests mirrored this difference. These results indicate that this training was effective in enhancing the career development and intra- and interpersonal skills of the visually impaired youth.

According to Hau and Marsh (2015), positive self-concept is the most important indicator in achieving academic success. Therefore, in preparing the right career planning, it is necessary to understand the concept of self-first by recognizing individual strengths and weaknesses. When individuals understand their self-concept better, it is easier for them to develop career plans that match their interests. Therefore, when an individual makes a career choice that suits personal interests, success is more likely to be achieved, according to Heriyati (2017). In summary, interest has a significant positive effect on one's degree of achievement.

Furthermore, in creating individual career plans, it is necessary to set goals. According to Lawlor and Hornyak (2012),

goal setting is one of the most important activities to accomplish in career planning. Research conducted by Idowu et al. (2014) demonstrated that the group given a training intervention for goal setting obtained higher academic achievement compared with the group that did not receive this intervention. This finding shows that the establishment of goal setting as a challenge to be met has a role in achieving academic success. Therefore, goal setting also needs to be undertaken in the career planning process.

Through this training program, participants have been provided with resources related to an understanding of self-concept, defining success, and the ability to set goals to help them prepare career plans that are in accordance with their respective interests and expertise, both in a formal field, such as lecturing and continuing education, as well as in the informal sector, such as entrepreneurship.

5. CONCLUSION

Key conclusions related to career guidance training and the development of intra- and interpersonal skills for the visually impaired youth are as follows:

- 1) This training is accomplished by providing career guidance to trainees for developing intra- and interpersonal skills.
- 2) This training was proven effective in increasing the participants' understanding of self-concept, success, and goal setting in planning their future careers.
- 3) This training activity received positive responses from participants and partners. In fact, training partners have suggested that this activity be

performed in the future with a different group of participants because it was

perceived to be necessary for the visually impaired youth.

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