

# Identification of Career Behaviors and Labor Market Perceptions among Postgraduate Students

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**Abstract** - Postgraduate students today are faced with the reality of the contemporary labor market. Career development service programs for postgraduate students need to be arranged based on alignment between graduates and university programs. Due to the importance of student awareness in career planning, more planning activities for career development are needed to encourage the Postgraduate students of Universitas Negeri Semarang. The purpose of this study was to identify career behaviors and labor market perceptions related to career services of Universitas Negeri Semarang Postgraduate students. Survey method was used and involved 745 Postgraduate students at Universitas Negeri Semarang as samples. In addition, quantitative descriptive approach was employed to analyze the data. The results showed that the Universitas Negeri Semarang Postgraduate students showed positive perceptions of the job market and had good career behavior. The identification results from this study can be used as a basis for preparing career planning programs for Postgraduate students at Universitas Negeri Semarang.

**Keyword:** career behavior, perception of the labor market, postgraduate students

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The competence of new graduates in the job market is still considered less convincing. Even though there have been technological developments, a sense of insecurity and career uncertainty remain exist within the graduates themselves [20]. Apart from those disadvantageous, the developments provide opportunities for individuals to develop unlimited careers, ability to manage and plan their own career success [7]. [4] emphasize that the ability to manage one's own career success, flexibility and proactive behavior in the work environment are important to have. A paradigm shift from organizational career success to self-managed career success needs to be identified and is supposed to facilitate a development direction in accordance with the circumstances, goals and competencies possessed [7].

Universities have a major contribution to help their graduates compete in the labor market. They have an obligation to prepare graduates to have work competencies according to the needs of the labor market [11]. The competencies needed by the current labor market include communication skills, critical thinking skills, leadership skills, ability to work as a team, and work ethic. Not only develop the skills of students to be ready for work, but University reputation also becomes consideration to set wages for workers [14]. It can further be understood that the role of the University influences graduates to compete in the labor market.

To support Universitas Negeri Semarang programs in student career development, especially at the Postgraduate level, it is necessary to develop an evidence-based program. This research identified "Labor Market Perception and Career Behavior" of postgraduate students of Universitas Negeri Semarang. The identification was based on, (1) individual perspectives on work ability; (2) career control; (3) proactivity; (4) position advantages; and (5) career plans. Individual perspectives on work ability are defined as views, aspirations and interpretations of individuals relating to preparing themselves to be able to compete in the labor market and get a job [1]. Individuals with high perspectives believe that competencies, attitudes and skills are sought after in the job market. For more, career control is defined as an individual's belief in personal responsibility for his own career [3]. This includes the individual's ability to adapt to a career that allows individuals to respond to labor market challenges ([15]. To sum up, these theories mean that the chosen career is a personal responsibility that is apart from its success or failure.

Proactivity is defined as individual behavior to improve abilities, realize career opportunities, and manage work abilities that are tailored to the demands of the labor market [17]; Zhang et al., 2018). In other words, individuals who are more proactive in career development will further develop themselves and

increase market attractiveness to face challenges from the labor market. Another aspect is position advantage that is defined as activities carried out by individuals in order to develop themselves, improve work ability and participate in extra-curricular activities to gain a position advantage in the labor market [2]; [16]. It is realized in the activities carried out by individuals in order to show themselves worthy of being considered in the labor market, such as by carrying out self-development, participating in non-formal learning, and other useful activities. Career plans are defined as activities carried out to plan, define and formulate strategies to achieve the desired career [5]; [19]. For now, career planning effects from the industrial revolution 4.0 have not received much attention. However, it is predicted that individual concerns will arise in preparing career planning [7].

University career service agency is required to identify how students determine their career planning. The results of identification can be used as a basis for preparing career programs [7]. [7] emphasize that the success of the university learning process is judged by the success of their graduate work without neglecting the importance of self-determined career success. There is a need for alignment between graduates, the labor market and university programs to compile career development service programs. Therefore, this study aimed to determine how students' perceptions of the labor market and career habits can later be used as the basis for planning postgraduate student career development service programs.

2. METHODS

This study used a survey method with cross-sectional technique. Its respondents amounted to 745 people, consisting of master and doctorate students aged 21-35 or above. Data collection was carried out online through a google form questionnaire. This survey consisted of demographic questions and "Labor Market Perception and Career Behavior" [10]. The instrument consists of 27 items divided into five items that measured developing positional advantage ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ), six items measured the perceived state of the labor market ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ), three items measured perceived employability ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ), five items assessed career control ( $\alpha = 0.70$ ), five items that were developed and adapted from the 20 items used to measure career planning in CDI-A to measure career planning ( $\alpha = 0.73$ ), three items adapted from 16 items of CDI-A to measure exploration in CDI-A, and three items were used to measure proactivity ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ). The respondents were asked to rate how closely each item on the subscale applied to them, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with the example item "I believe there are a variety of good employment opportunities for new graduates." The researchers used descriptive

statistical data analysis to determine the level and distribution of students and t-test to see differences levels of labor market perception and career behavior in the category of gender, education level, and age, using SPSS application version

3. RESULTS

Based on the data of the perception of the job market and career behavior obtained through the instrument "Labor Market Perception and Career Behavior" [7] in table 1, it can be seen that the labor market perception and career behavior of Universitas Negeri Semarang graduate students were at a high level (M = 104.80, SD = 10.92). In addition, table 2 shows the level of each indicator from the labor market perceptions and career behavior. The first indicator was the student's perceived state of labor market was found at a high level (M = 20.97, SD = 4.45). The indicator of students' perceived employability showed a high level (M = 12.15, SD = 2.22). Furthermore, the career control indicator showed a very high level (M = 21.75, SD = 2.75). Likewise, the student career planning indicator showed a very high level (M = 22.40, SD = 2.69). The student proactivity indicator showed a very high level (M = 13.78, SD = 1.76). Finally, the indicator of developing positional advantage showed a high level (M = 18.06, SD = 4.37).

Table 1. Labor Market Perception and Career Behavior of Postgraduate Students of Universitas Negeri Semarang.

Variable	M	SD	MAX	MIN
<i>Labour market perception and career behaviour</i>	104.80	10.92	128	60

Table 2. Labor Market Perception and Career Behavior of Each Indicator

Variable	M	SD	MAX	MIN
<i>Perceived state of labour market</i>	20.97	4.45	30	8
<i>Perceived employability</i>	12.15	2.22	15	3
<i>Career control</i>	21.75	2.75	25	8
<i>Career planning</i>	22.40	2.69	25	8
<i>Proactivity</i>	13.78	1.76	15	6
<i>Developing positional advantage</i>	18.06	4.37	25	5

**Table 3.** Differences in Labor Market Perception and Career Behavior of Postgraduate Students of Semarang State University.

Group	N	M	SD	Difference Test Result
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	299	104.80	10.41	t(745) = -2.82, p<0.05
Female	446	103.88	11.17	
<b>Level Education</b>				
S2	682	104.69	10.98	t(745) = -0.92, p>0.05
S3	63	106.03	10.27	
<b>Age</b>				
21-25	412	104.58	10.52	f(3, 741) = 0.65, p>0.05
26-30	170	105.82	11.25	
31-35	63	104.31	13.32	
35+	100	104.80	10.38	

The next results in Table 3 show how labor market perception and career behavior were seen from differences in gender, academic level, and age. The results of the study showed a significant difference between male students' labor market perception and career behavior (M= 104.80, SD = 10.41) than female students (M = 103.88, SD = 11.17; t (745) = -2.82, p <0.05). Then, the academic level category showed no significant difference in the level of labor market perception and career behavior. Doctorate students gained a higher level of labor market perception and career behavior (M = 106.3, SD = 10.27) than master students (M = 104.69, SD = 10.98; t (745) = -0.92, p> 0.05). The next results showed the difference in labor market perception and career behavior based on students age. Students aged 26-30 showed the highest levels of labor market perception and career behavior (M = 105.82, SD = 11.25). Then, students aged 21-25 showed a higher level of labor market perception and career behavior (M = 104.58, SD = 10.52) than students in the age range 31-35 (M = 104.31, SD = 13.32). Students aged 35 above had the lowest levels of labor market perception and career behavior (M = 104.30, SD =10.38, f (3, 741) = 0.65, p> 0.05). These data proved that there was no difference in the level of labor market perception and career behavior in the age range of graduate students.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Positive perceptions of the labor market produce a positive outlook on the workplace, but make individual behavior inflexible in the labor market and perceive changes that occur in labor market conditions as not a threat [10]. This study analyzed the perceptions of postgraduate students of Universitas Negeri Semarang of the labor market and career behavior and analyzed the perceptions of the labor market and career behavior in terms of differences in gender, academic level, and age. The results of this study will be used as the basis for the preparation of career development services for Postgraduate students at Universitas Negeri Semarang.

The current study showed that postgraduate students at Universitas Negeri Semarang had a positive perception of the job market. This is normal for universities with a focus on education and health. These findings are in line with the results of job qualifications from [13] that workers who have a diploma in the education or health sector have a high prospect of being employed. In addition, [8] explain that positive perceptions of work ability due to relevant educational programs lead to a more positive perception of the various job opportunities available. Moreover, the qualifications in accordance with the majors lead to a more positive perception.

More specifically, all variables from labor market perception and career behavior of Universitas Negeri Semarang Postgraduate students showed high to very high categories. [9] state that high perceptions of graduate students on employability encourage them to be more proactive in forming broader goals and aspirations in terms of employability and the state of the labor market. The high level of proactivity in postgraduate students illustrated that they have developed strategies to manage future employability. Self- development activities can be carried out by participating in extra-curricular activities outside of formal learning, to gain an advantageous position in the labor market [12]. On the contrary, the findings of this study are in contrast with [6] which shows that postgraduate students actively participate in various extracurricular activities and develop themselves.

The identification results based on age and education level categories found no significant differences. However, in the category of gender, the findings showed a significant difference between male and female students. Male students gained higher labor market perception and career behavior than female students. [18] explain that there are three forms of negative influence on the grouping of the labor market based on gender, especially related to women's careers. The negative impact that arises is that women's jobs are relatively likely to be underestimated, have fewer opportunities to develop career advancement and earn lower wages than men. These findings have important implications for the postgraduate students career development agency of Universitas Negeri Semarang to compile career

service programs that can accommodate equal rights between men and women.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the postgraduate students of Universitas Negeri Semarang have a positive perception of the labor market. They also have good career behavior. The analysis on academic level and age found that there is no significant difference in perceptions of the labor market and career behavior. Another finding in this study is that there are significant differences in perceptions of the labor market and career behavior on gender differences between men and women. The results of this study can be used as the basis for developing career service programs to facilitate student career development tasks.

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