

Format, Design and Content of Curriculum Vitae in a Developing Country

Sri Hapsari Wijayanti, Endang Sulistyarningsih

Economic and Business Faculty
Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia
Jakarta, Indonesia
sri.hapsari@atmajaya.ac.id

Abstract—One important factor needed to be considered by the applicant is how to package CV as a self-presentation. CV was used the recruiter as an initial selection in hiring employees. This study aims to describe how the format, design, and content of CVs in the Indonesian context as one of developing countries. Respondents were selected from database visitors 2018 Job Fair at a private university in Jakarta. Data collection was done by sending questionnaires to 300 respondents through google forms and requesting them to attach their CVs and cover letters. Total respondents who filled out questionnaires and sent CVs were 46 people. Data were analyzed by descriptive qualitative and quantitative. The results are respondents (67%) copied the template of CV from the website, wrote CV in English (63%) not more than one pages (87%). The CVs mostly are written in chronologically format (96%), two columns (61%), with creative design (78%). Obligatory contents consist of a photo, personal data, formal education, GPA, organizational experience, work experience, and hard skill. Optional contents consist of career goal, summary, research title, achievement, training, hobby, interest, soft skills, certificate, reference, social media link, and signature. This study concludes that the CVs still lacks of persuasive selling.

Keywords—*curriculum vitae; resume; applicant; cultural context; cover letter*

I. INTRODUCTION

College graduates increase every year, but the labor market is limited. Only those who can compete competitively will exist in the labor market [1]. One crucial factor that needs to be considered by applicants before seeking job vacancy is curriculum vitae (CV) or resume (here we used mostly familiar's term: CV). The CV is one particular genre in professional settings [2], which plays an essential role in the recruitment process [3-5]. CV writing requires special skill because it is the initial selection in recruiting employees, and also an initial process for eliminating applicants [6], and promoting themselves [7]. As a personal brand, the CV contains all the strength, the uniqueness that can be "sold" to recruiters. Applicants' past performance will be an indicator of success in future performance [5].

The CV is a document contain relevant information needed by recruiters [8], "a brief note of a person's personal history and qualifications that are usually prepared by applicants for work"

[9]. The CV was written by self-expression regarding the competency and professional ability of applicants to support the job of interest. As an image of themselves, applicants indicate that they are the right candidate to fill the position. It is shown by the good first impression that the CV "is not only linguistic-competent and visually appealing but also textually responsive to diverse contextual influences" [4]. CV balances aspects of content (linguistic aspects) and appearance or format (nonlinguistic) [4], but also the context, namely the environment in which communication occurs.

Some researchers have found many different factors regarding CV that had a positive impact [3,10,11]. Other studies focus on language use [9,12,13], format, appearance/layout, and content [4,13-17], various types of CVs [4], cross-cultural studies [4,8,18].

Indonesia is one of the developing countries which consists of different races, religion, and culture. In Indonesia, empirical study about CVs which sent by the applicant to the company is still very lacking, let alone those that are purely using CVs sent to the company. This study different with Bastomi which examined 40 CVs in the postgraduate thesis of the State University of Malang, Indonesia. He only informed the reader about the qualifications of the theses' writers [17], but this study attracts the attention of recruiter to call applicants for a job interview. Because Indonesia is a diverse culture, it is interesting to know how Indonesia fresh graduates write a CV. This study aims to describe what are the characteristics of the format, design, and content of CV in Indonesia.

II. METHODS

Data was collected randomly through a questionnaire using Google forms towards 300 visitors of the two days Job Fair in March 2018 at a private university in Jakarta, Indonesia, which were recorded by the Career Development Center. Respondents have been selected based on criteria: graduated from any fields of study, available to fill out the online questionnaire, but also did not mind to attach a cover letter and CV ever been sent to a company. There are 117 targets responded the questionnaires, but only 46 attached the CV and cover letter. This study was designed qualitatively and quantitatively methods. By using content analysis, the pattern of 46 CVs was identified, categorized, and observed, then explained and interpreted [19]. Besides that, quantitative descriptive analysis of all items in the

data and the questionnaires were carried out and percentage of tabulation by SPSS statistics.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Profile of Respondents

Respondents consisted of 57% of men and 43% of women. The age range is 20-26 years, mostly 23 years (35%). As many as 50% of respondents graduated from the university in 2017. When data collected on March 2018, this study found that the status of respondents who had worked (61%) more than those who did not work (39%). However, the length of their work is still short because of the possibility of not getting a job immediately after graduation in 2017. They work as entry-level for one month (57%). It is possible because visitors come to the Job Fair are those who have just graduated or have not worked long.

In writing a CV, the scope of the company, such as manufacturing, retail, medical, or public service companies needs considering. By knowing the type of company, the CV is made according to the nature of the work and company [4] so that the CV needs to be adjusted again not only by the type of work but also by the nature of the company. This study found that 91% of respondents admitted that one CV was used to send to many different companies.

B. Format

Currently, the internet has made everything more accessible, including providing CV templates. A total of 67% of respondents copied the format from the template and wrote CV in English (63%), using a computer with no more than one page (87%). This amount is preferred by human resource managers and lecturers for entry-level positions [11], such as fresh graduates (college graduates), while for higher level positions, they prefer two pages [9]. Limited page numbers are better because recruiters or human resource professionals only have an average time of six seconds [5], or no more than two minutes to read CV [11].

The format of the CV wrote in one column (30%), two columns (61%), or combining (9%) figure 1. The minimum number of pages and columns cause the CV must be packaged concisely and clearly. Applicants must be able to sort out what important information should be included or excluded in CV [10].

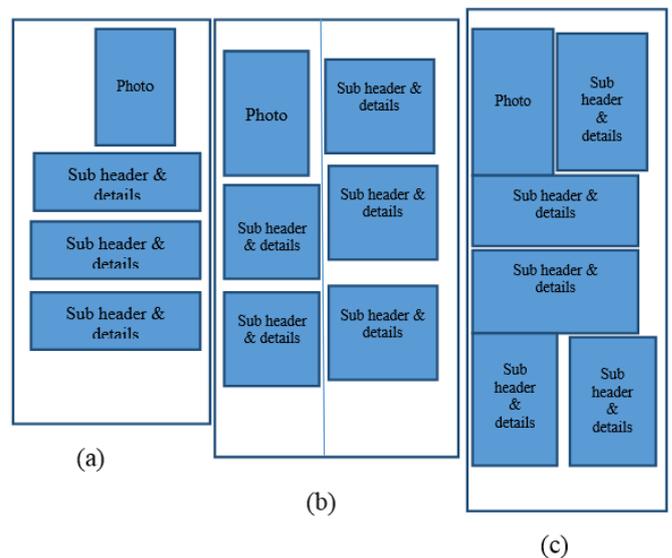


Fig. 1. Format of CV in (a) one column; (b) two column; (c) combine.

There is no standard how many columns in the CV, but the main point is the CV must be interesting, easy to read, contain important information, and use in solid language [9]. This study did not find typographic. It had proved 93% of respondents admitted checking the CV before sending.

Regarding CV type, 96% CV is a chronological or traditional format. Applicants state that the standard CV format is education history, employment history, extra-curricular activities or experiences which arrange orderly, from the latest or vice versa. They aim to describe work history and show the benefits that will be gained by the company [9], in addition to showing the ambitions and motivations of the applicants [10]. Because it is simple and directly emphasizes work history [7], this type of CV is most widely used [6], and liked by professional human resources [14]. Conversely, the functional/skill format (4%) emphasize relevant and experienced function in the past along together with job descriptions, for example, by highlighting candidate skills as human relations, supervision, rather than work history [4,9].

The mostly CV in this study uses the header of the applicant's full name (sometimes followed by the title) (46%) and the title of "Curriculum Vitae," "Biodata," or "Resume" (37%). Its position in the middle, left, or right of the page. There are also headers which used his/her name as well as the title of "CV" (4%), but several CV no headers or titles (13%). Headers used larger and more prominent size letter than the sub header and details. But this study found the repetition format, e.g, name as headers appear in the personal data too.

CV uses various types of letters, such as Times New Romans, Verdana, Calibri, Arial, Arial Black, Impact, Droid Serif, Trebuchet, Georgia, Tahoma, and Cambria. Mostly use Times New Romans and Calibri. Font size is between 12 points and 68 points for "CV," name, or both headers; between 10 pt and 18.5 pt for the sub header; between 10 points and 14 points for sub header details. Using 10 pt. causes the CV to be less attractive and less readability. This study found CVs with one to three types of fonts; with one type of font, but various sizes;

two to three fonts of different sizes. The use of many fonts and many sizes in the CV makes the CV look inconsistent, too "crowded," less beautiful on the aesthetic side, especially if it was integrated by graphic elements, such as the use of bullets, images or symbols. Normal size is 12 points [9,11], with one or two fonts [9].

C. Design

Overall, the results of the questionnaire revealed that 78% of respondents claimed to write a CV with creative design which shown by CV designs used many symbols and images for certain concepts, variations in type and size of letters, variations in the position of the sub headers. Presentation of information using serial numbers (1,2,3, and so on), graph elements, such as bullet points, white spaces, thick types, sloping types, capital letters, dush, circles, diamonds, and numbers, also subheading placed in a grey box, varies with horizontal or vertical lines as the boundary between sub-headers.

To show the level of proficiency, applicants used vertical or horizontal lines of the 1-10 scale. The supposition of identity, contact, educational background expressed by symbols to represent the concepts. For example, the telephone drawing indicates a contact person and the letter envelope or home drawing indicates the address. All are used to demonstrate the creativity of applicants as well as speed up recruiters to get the information needed. The symbols in the CV are easy to understand, being a creative and effective way to reduce the use of words because of limited space in the CV. However, if it is not neatly arranged, a visual impact appears: CV looks messy. Because a lot of information given, the font minimized until 10 pt., so that make trouble to read.

D. Content

CV content consists of obligatory elements and optional elements. The element had been said obligatory if emerge more than 50% in data, while optional information if less than 50% (see Table 1). Obligatory informations consist of (a) photo, (b) personal data, (c) formal education, (d) GPA, (e) work experience, (f) organizational experience, and (g) hard skill. Optional informations consist of (a) career objective, (b) summary, (c) research title, (d) achievement, (e) training/seminar/workshop, (f) hobby, (g) interest, (h) soft skill, (i) certificate, (j) referee, (k) social media link, and (l) signature.

TABLE I. INFORMATION IN CV CONTENT

| No | Information | Total N=46 | % |
|----|-----------------------|------------|------|
| 1 | Career objective | 2 | 4% |
| 2 | Profile/summary | 9 | 20% |
| 3 | Photo | 46 | 100% |
| 4 | Personal Data | | |
| | Address | 44 | 96% |
| | Place & Date of Birth | 38 | 83% |
| | Blood Type | 1 | 2% |
| | Height and weight | 6 | 13% |
| | Sex | 24 | 52% |
| | Marital Status | 26 | 57% |
| | Nationality | 13 | 28% |

Table 1. Cont.

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----|------|
| | Region | 22 | 48% |
| | Handphone & Email | 46 | 100% |
| 5 | Education | | |
| | GPA | 33 | 72% |
| | Research Title | 3 | 7% |
| | Formal Education | | |
| | Kindergarten -University | 2 | 4% |
| | Elementary-University | 24 | 52% |
| | Yunior High School-University | 4 | 9% |
| | Senior High School-University | 5 | 11% |
| | University | 11 | 24% |
| | Nonformal Education | 13 | 28% |
| 6 | Experience | | |
| | Organization | 34 | 74% |
| | Work | 35 | 76% |
| 7 | Achievement | 8 | 17% |
| 8 | Hard skill | 42 | 91% |
| 9 | Hobbies | 7 | 15% |
| 10 | Interest | 7 | 15% |
| 11 | Soft skill | 19 | 41% |
| 12 | Certificate | 4 | 9% |
| 13 | Training/seminar/workshop | 12 | 26% |
| 14 | Social media link | 5 | 11% |
| 15 | Referee | 2 | 4% |
| 16 | Signature | 5 | 11% |

Obligatory information in this study contains basic information as expected by professional human resources. This information includes work experience, educational qualification, skill, and personal information [4]. This study is different from Aileen Ng et al., who explained personal data, such as age, gender, marital status, and the race could not explain whether the candidate has the right expertise by the work applied so that it is considered optional [20]. The following is an explanation of the obligatory contents and optional content in data.

E. Obligatory Content

As many as 100% of applicants attach color photos wear formal clothes. Photo with no background, only one CV uses a curtain background like in a party. The presence of photo in all CVs confirms that a photo was necessary to be included and provide a complete physical picture of applicants. This finding differs from previous studies which explain that photos are not important [14]. Photos can open recruiters to consider the physical appearance of applicants [6]. Besides, photos are needed if the work is related to physical appearances, such as model, marketing, sale, or frontline banking and financial position [4]. What is permitted or not in personal data is influenced by the intercultural recruitment process; context, such as the nature of work and organization, plays an important role in writing a CV [4].

Personal data comprise the candidate name as a header, address (96%), place and date of birth (83%), sex (52%), status (57%), and telephone number and e-mail (100%). Address, telephone number, and e-mail are an important element for recruiters to keep in touch with applicants. Place and date of birth indicate whether the applicant is younger or older for the desired position. Marital status implicates independence and time allocated between work, family, and personal. The surprising finding, gender (52%) revealed in data which

assume to avoid misinterpreted names. In Indonesia, several names refer to both man and woman, e.g. *Sri, Tri, Firli, Endang, and Eko*. However, on the other hand, actually, it is a waste of information because implied that sex can be shown from the photo as an obligatory element (100% in data). Previous studies show that age, sex, status are optional elements to see "holistic images" of candidates that are appropriate to the work team [4].

Formal education is the key point in CV, especially for those who are less experienced [22]. Formal education contains elementary school information (even from kindergarten) until university (52%), completed by institution name and graduation date. The previous educations before undergraduate no effectively written because logically to raise undergraduate, previous educations had been elapsed [6]. Only 24% of CVs include the latest education (undergraduate). The average score (GPA) found between 2.60 and 3.89 points (72%). High GPA (more than 3) essentially stated for entry-level [6]. It implicated that applicants have high intelligence and motivation [10].

Another important of the obligatory element is work experience. Because the data are written by young applicants, 76% of CVs contain internships, voluntary job, and part-time jobs. The relevant experience becomes an evaluation of the closeness of the relationship between past work experiences and work needs [3]. Information on work experience consists of the date, position, the name of the company, and a brief description of work.

Young applicants with less experience usually did not have relevant work experience. Because of this, they can highlight past work experiences when study. They also highlight organizational experiences. As many as 74% of CVs contain organizational experience which is a strength in employee selection if education and experience are similar to other candidates. Organizational experience contains the date, position, name of the event, and name of the place. As many as 91% of CVs write hard skills. Technical skills (such as Ms, Office, Photoshop, Visual Basic, Design Specialists, accounting software, AMOS) and language skills (Bahasa, English, French, or Mandarin) are mentioned, with a percentage of proficiency from moderate to high.

F. Optional Content

The objective is a summary of the desired goal and position refer to the applicant's ambitions and motivations [10]. Objective focuses on "what you want" [6], expressed specifically and not blurred [6,7]. But this study found 20% of objectively written in CVs. But, the objective still expresses too general: "*grow with the organization and become professional by contributing to organizational goals.*" Generally, new graduates or those who do not have any work experience have not been able to reveal career goals because what they need at this time is how to get a job quickly.

Profiles (sometimes used term biography, summary, professional/ personal statement, about) stated in 20% of the CV. The profile is the opening of CV because it contains a snapshot of the professionalism of applicants as a critical component of independent marketing that shows strength and professionalism [21] attract of recruiters to continue reading [7]

profiles written in one to four sentences in a narrative style on the top of the page.

In self-identity, applicants enter very personal contents, such as religion, nationality, height and weight, and blood type. All show that in a multicultural context like Indonesia, citizenship status (Indonesian or foreign citizens) and adhering to one of the six official religions provides complete information about the applicants so that recruiters can find out whether it is compatible with the job and corporate culture. This study same with finding in Singapore includes personal data in CVs [4]. In America, there is no personal data found because it opens opportunities for discrimination [4].

The final research's title written by the applicants were found in the data (7%). It assumed that applicants master the research field and are open to discussing. However, it is not necessarily relevant to the job, only an additional point for the applicant's competence. Twenty-eight percent of CVs contain nonformal education (English, guitar, brevet course), reveal the type, place, and date of graduation. Nonformal education supports formal education and provides recruiters value-added about applicants.

Unlike hard skills, soft skills, such as leadership, analytics, teamwork, time management, discipline, motivation, integrity, loyalty, are found in 41% of the data. Soft skills are important for new graduates, besides experience job [14]. By explaining both hard skill and soft skills, recruiters will be assisted to choose the most suitable candidates in this era of competition. Hobbies and interests placed integrated into biodata or in the bottom of CVs, 15% each. The types of hobbies found are team hobbies (futsal, badminton) and individual hobbies (singing, reading, listening to music, traveling, photography). Interests, such as journalism, marketing, finance, automotive, entrepreneurship, managing events, blogging, business processes, and development, may not be directly related to the job being proposed. All describe the personality and positive image of applicants, for example, "You are a team player" and have a leadership spirit when choosing team sports [6], creative if their hobbies related to artistic activities [22]. CV writing must be related to work [6]. Hobbies and interests open opportunities to discussed in the next recruitment process.

A total of 9% of CVs include a certificate. The certificate of training or course that has been followed by the score is authentic proof of proficiency while demonstrating the activeness of applicants in preparing themselves to enter the workplace. Certificates in CV include TOEFL, TOEIC, AutoCAD, and quality management system.

Training, seminar, or workshop, relevant or irrelevant to the job applied, found in 26% CV. All contain information about the position of involvement, a kind of activity, and date of implementation. Participating in this activity infer applicants are highly motivated, want to progress and develop [7]. Furthermore, participation in cyberspace, which has an account on social media (11% CV), adds the profile of applicants as a person who can stand out and build personal branding [5].

Amount 4% of CVs contain one to two references. Reference is "someone who has agreed to provide information to prospective employers regarding the suitability of the work

of the applicant for employment" [9] the reference places at the end of the CV. Referees are a university professor, senior lecturer, chairman abroad, even applicant's brother. Unique findings, 11% of CVs were closed with a statement that all statements in the CV were correct and then completed by the applicant's signature and full name. Its function is to express the deep honesty of applicants, and they would like to explain the information in more detail. However, it does not guarantee the applicant will be called for an interview because of the real main attraction of the CV on the top side. It means information in CV should be arranged from more to less important.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that CVs in Indonesia showed various format, design, and content. Generally, applicants write CVs attractively, creatively in term of format and design, chronologically, in one columns, and in English. CV design uses more than one type of letter and many letters, with various interesting visuals, such as bullets, vertical/horizontal lines, blocks, symbols, and images. However, sometimes the letters are sacrificed up to 10 pt. for much irrelevant information included, so it makes less legible.

There are 19 information contents in CV, which categorized into seven obligatory contents and twelve optional contents. The CV, written by applicants who do not have a lot of work experiences, still lacks persuasive selling because the too much irrelevant information included, especially in personal data. All information in the CV must be written carefully because they can impress positive or negative perceptions of the applicant. For further studies, it is interesting to know the cross-culture study in the same developing countries, how should be include or exclude in CV format, design, and contents to raise positive impact.

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