

Education Quarterly Reviews

Maknun, Johar, Solehudin, Agus, Marina, Rina, Akbardin, Juang, and Lestari, Dwi. (2020), High School and Vocational Students' Interest to Pursue Higher Education in West Java, Indonesia. In: *Education Quarterly Reviews*, Vol.3, No.2, 156-161.

ISSN 2621-5799

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1993.03.02.128

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

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High School and Vocational Students' Interest to Pursue Higher Education in West Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the preferences of High School and Vocational students to join college. The research method used was a quantitative descriptive while data analysis was based on Relative Percentage Frequency. The results showed that the interest of the high school and vocational students to proceed to college was in the high category. The number of vocational students interested in advancing their education are higher than high school students. In engineering, high school students have a higher interest than vocational. The study shows that student preferences in choosing the field of expertise and study programs in college differ.

Keywords: Interest Preferences, High School, Vocational Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on Government Regulation (PP) Number 19 of 2005 on National Education Standards, Vocational High Schools (SMK) is expected to prioritize the development of student skills to carry out certain types of work. Senior High School (SMA) is a level of secondary education which prioritizes the mastery of theoretical knowledge as a prerequisite for higher education. In educational programs, practical lessons are highly prioritized compared to theories in Vocational High Schools. In contrast, theoretical lessons are given more weight in high school. In general, Vocational High School graduates have the same opportunity for higher education.

Higher education decisions in a study program are not only based on general information. The decision should be based on the goals to be realized, interests and talents, intellectual and financial abilities, and the reputation of the college. Choosing the right study program is a challenge since the decision is based on several things, including interests and the impact of the study program on an individual in the labor market.

A survey by Fresh Student Living showed that the most needed study programs in 2018 include (1) Medicine and Dentistry, (2) Veterinary Medicine; (3) Other Fields of Medical Study; (4) Architecture, Building and Planning,

(5) Education, (6) Engineering, (7) Computer Science, (8) Mathematics, (9) Business and Administration, and (10) Law (Anonymous, 2019). In 2012, *Infoakademika* released the survey results of the Higher Education Careers Service (HECSU), which determined the 10 most useful study programs in the labor market. They include the following (1) Medicine and Dentistry, (2) Pharmacy and Nursing, (3) Education, (4) Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), (5) Law, (6) Language, (7) Biology, Agriculture, and Animal Science, (8) Creative Arts and Design, (9) Mass Communication and Documentation, and (10) Philosophy and History.

Factors influencing the choice of study programs in College are divided into two. The first group constitutes factors from inside students, including interests, personality, and self-concept. The second category includes factors from outside students, including parents, peers, socioeconomic environment, culture, and aptitude and interest test suggestions (Seligman, 2006). Employment opportunity is another significant factor influencing students' decision making in a study program (Margareth, 2006).

The choice of study programs in tertiary institutions is influenced by career orientation. This is the individual's attitude toward the choice of further education and clear work, self-understanding, consideration of opportunities, exploration of relevant sources of information, and future planning. It is the readiness of individuals to make choices or career decisions (Sharf, 1992). This is based on the assumption that career decisions occur in all ranges of life.

The career orientation process starts at a young age and ends with resignation from working. High school/vocational students are included in the process of career orientation development (Crites, 1980). Psychologically, they are teens aged between 15-18 years. They have an interest in work marked by starting to think seriously about the future. During childhood and early adolescence, many boys and girls assess various types of work, such as law and medicine. However, their assessment is often based on the stereotypes conveyed by the media. As they approach adulthood, they begin to assess the work according to ability, time, and costs required.

Based on the theory of career development, high school/vocational students are in the exploration stage. In career exploration, individuals think of various alternatives, though they have not made binding decisions (Winkel, 1997). In the exploration stage, students can more accurately describe the chances of success at a job in the future (Sharf, 1992). The objective of career development at this stage is to achieve the crystallization of a preferred career. This is the period in which students formulate job opportunities and understand the relationship between career development and self-concept in determining relevant education (Osipow, 1983).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study uses a survey design, which takes a sample from a population and uses a questionnaire for data collection. It is a descriptive study, which describes the phenomena and symptoms or problems (Singarimbun, 1989).

The population for the study includes high school and vocational students of class XII in West Java. The sampling technique used is purposive, which determines samples with certain considerations. The schools used as samples are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 Research Samples

No	School Name	Number of High School Respondents	Number of Vocational Respondents
1	Vocational High School X1		47
2	High School Y1	55	
3	High School Y2	79	
4	Vocational High School X2		63
	Number	134	110

Total	244
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This study uses descriptive data analysis techniques. The calculation in the questionnaire uses Descriptive Percentage. The data analysis involves finding the Relative Percentage Frequency with the following formula:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = percentage, f = frequency of respondents, and N = total respondents.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A college is an educational institution that prepares future qualified, efficient, and ready to compete Human Resources (HR). In case the output of colleges meets these qualifications, the dignity of the Indonesian people can be better worldwide. Every student through with education at a High School (SMA) and Vocational High School (SMK) faces various choices, including the decision to continue to college, take a course, find a job or remain unemployed. Table 2 shows the interests of high school and vocational students to join college, especially Indonesia University of Education.

Table 2. The Interests of High School and Vocational Students to join College (Indonesia University of Education)

No	Type of Education	Interested		Not Interested	
		Total	%	Total	%
1	High School (SMA)	100	74.6	34	25.4
2	Vocational High School (SMK)	101	91.8	9	8.2

Based on Table 2, graduates of Vocational High School (SMK) and High School (SMA) interested in joining Indonesia University of Education for the Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education are 91.8% and 74.6%, respectively. The students' interest is in the high category. This is because every student has a tendency and desire to advance their education to a higher level. According to Rini (2012), advancing to college begins with a sense of interest and the need to develop knowledge. The existence of an interest in a person encourages actions and participation.

The high number of students interested in joining college is motivated by different reasons, including the ease of accessing information about colleges, various scholarships offered, and opportunities for better jobs after graduation. Also, joining college adds insight, knowledge, and experience that can be useful for their future. This is because, in this increasingly advanced and modern era, many people are competing to advance education and improve the quality of life. The high interest to join college is also encouraged by special scholarships by the government for high achieving students from underprivileged families through Bidikmisi scholarships.

Apart from interests, the views or perceptions about future employment opportunities obtained after college education also impact students' decisions. According to Brennan (1991), perception is the oldest and most traditional field of psychology that relates to views. The perception of employment opportunities interest to advance to higher education. Additionally, parents' economic background also influences their interests to advance education. Perception students influence the choice to join the Indonesia University of Education, Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education.

Higher education prepares students with academic and professional abilities that can implement, develop, and create science and technology. Therefore, higher education creates experts who in the form of actors, implementers, and discoverers of things that benefit people. The Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education in Indonesia University of Education for undergraduate level consists of educational and engineering study programs. The description of the choice of expertise types of high school (HS) and vocational (VHS) students are shown in Figure 1 below.

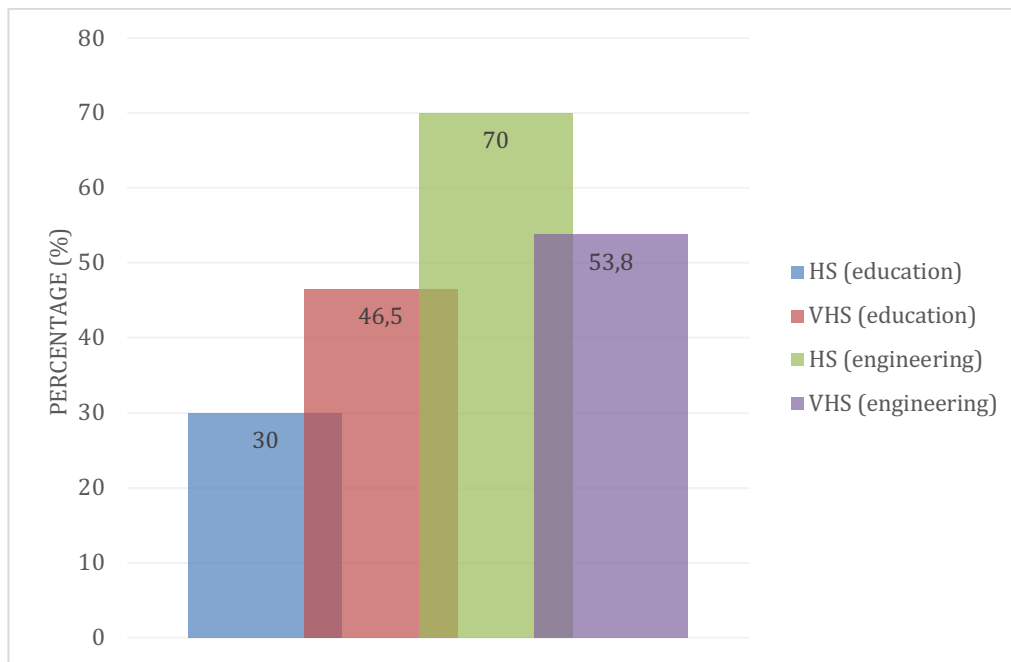


Figure 1. The choice of expertise types of high school and vocational students

Interest for joining tertiary institutions is influenced by several factors, both internal and external. The internal factors include the willingness and academic success. Willingness refers to desires to deepen certain knowledge and skills, achieve certain goals, and have a bachelor degree. External factors include the socioeconomic status of parents and environmental influences. The data shown in Figure 1 represent these choices. Vocational students choosing education are higher than those in high school. This is because vocational students receive more information about the Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education (FPTK) at the Indonesia University of Education from their teachers. The information obtained is often about study programs in the field of education.

High school students choosing engineering are higher than vocational. This is because they do not get specific information about the Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education (FPTK) at the Indonesian University of Education. They made choices based on information obtained from various sources. The choice of high school students in engineering is in line with Soutar and Turner (2002) which stated that the four determinant variables of preference for a college include course suitability, academic reputation, job prospects, and teaching quality. This is also in line with Rosen, et.al (2006) which stated that in case individuals have an interest in objects, they might automatically be attracted to them. Interest encourages a person to be attracted to an object, increasing the desire and willingness to own it.

The choice of study programs by students is then deepened. The choice of study programs for education and engineering is shown in Figures 2 and 3, respectively.

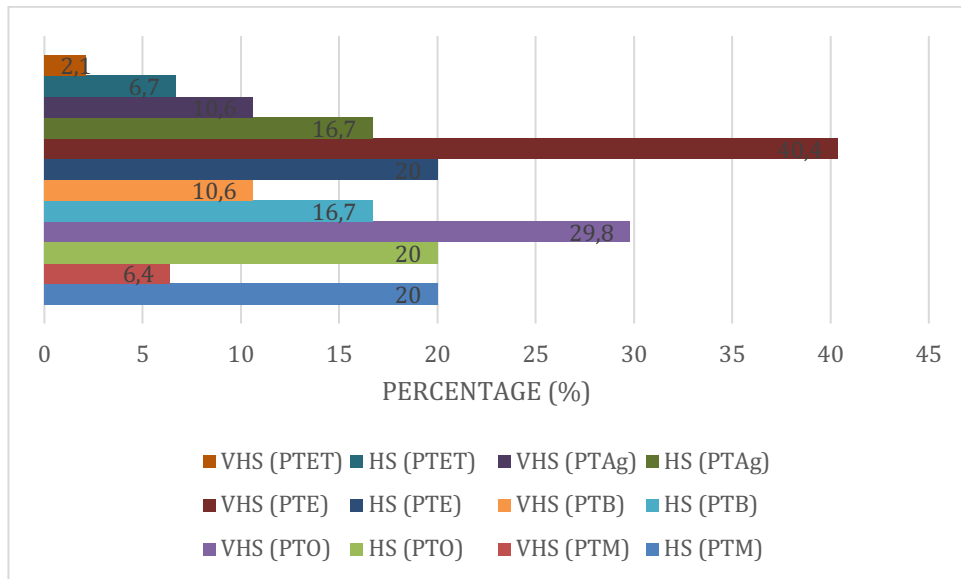


Figure 2. Preference of choice of study programs in education

The choice in favor of education is almost the same for Electrical Engineering Education (PTE), Mechanical Engineering Education (PTM), and Automotive Engineering Education (PTO) study programs. The program with the lowest choice is the Renewable Energy Engineering Education (PTET). The highest choice for vocational students in the Electrical Engineering Education (PTE) and Automotive Engineering Education (PTO) study programs.

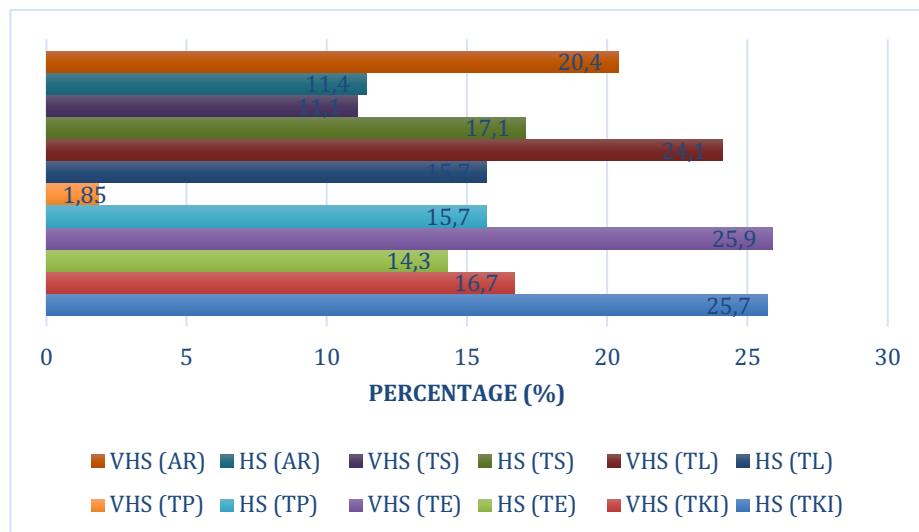


Figure 3. Preference of choice of study programs in engineering

For engineering, the highest choices include Industrial Chemical Engineering (TKI), Civil Engineering (TS), Logistics Engineering (TL), and Food Engineering (TP) study programs. The highest choice of vocational students in the Electrical Engineering (TE), Logistics Engineering (TL), and Architecture (AR) study programs. The lowest choice of vocational students is the Food Engineering (TP) study program.

The choice of study programs for education and engineering is in line with Hurlock (1979) which stated that interest plays a significant role in life and has a large impact on behavior and attitudes. Therefore, an interest in an object influences attitude and behavior. Students with an interest in something strive to achieve despite the obstacles. In contrast, less interested students tend to avoid something even when supported by a variety of facilities.

4. CONCLUSION

Students' desire to advance to college is a tendency that contains feelings of pleasure, attention, interests, needs, hopes, encouragement, and willingness to continue learning to a higher level after graduating from high school. The interest of the high school and vocational students to advance their education to college is in the high category. Vocational students interested in the education field are higher than those in high school. In engineering, high school students have a higher interest than vocational. The data show that the preferences of high school and vocational students are different in choosing study programs in colleges.

Students interest to join college is influenced by family and environment. Therefore, parents and the government need to participate in encouraging high school and vocational students to advance their studies. Parent and family participation is essential and should provide facilities and infrastructure to support educational activities. Also, the government should provide scholarships to high achieving students from underprivileged families.

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