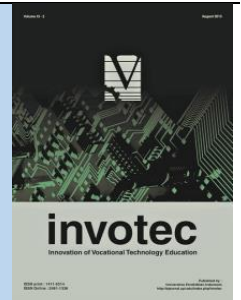




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Vocational Career Choice in Middle Childhood

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ABSTRACT

Career choice can be made from an early age through introduction, habituation, and stimulation of children's interests. Parents need to recognize their child's interests related to future career choice. The study was conducted on 106 children aged 6-12 years to determine the career choices of children. Data collection was carried out by distributing online questionnaires (Google form). Limited interviews were conducted with 5 mothers and children to explore children's career choices. The findings on gender show that boys tend to choose career specifics such as policemen, military troops and businessmen. On the other hand, girls tend to choose career specifics such as doctors and teachers. Career choice in children is influenced by 3 (three) factors, namely (1) the desire in the child, (2) interests/hobbies, (3) the profession of parents and family (role models).

1. Introduction

Career development is a longitudinal process from early childhood to adulthood which is influenced by personal and contextual factors (Araújo & Taveira, 2009). Early childhood is a basic period in exploration, vocational interests, values, attitudes, and skills.

Early childhood is also a basic period for adolescent and adult career development (Watson, Nota, & McMahon, 2015). Vocational development related to career aspirations needs to be stimulated from an early age. Career aspirations in early childhood can provide an overview for children about vocational development related to future careers.

Exploring children's career aspirations can be done by having an initial conversation about "what do you want to be when you grow up", which can explore children's career aspirations (Elizabeth, Sarah, & Price, 1973; Watson & McMahon, 2016). Career aspirations evolve as children age and grow into adolescents, aspirations change based on perspectives, abilities and interests, as well as expectations of the community and parents' environment.

Society in general views early childhood as a passive period, fantasy, and play that are cognitively cut off from knowledge and understanding of the world of work, whereas early childhood should be seen as an early period of active involvement to develop a conception of career decision making and self-confidence to make and implement career choices (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005). Lack of attention to vocational development leads to neglect when children need a foundation in choosing a career for the future (Hartung et al., 2005).

2. Methods

The subjects of this study were children aged 6-12 years consisting of 54 boys and 52 girls. The data were collected by distributing questionnaires online (Google form) to 106 parents. In the meantime, the data collected were analyzed using simple statistics by calculating the percentage of children's career choices based on gender and type of work.

3. Results and Discussion

Middle childhood is in the age range between 6 and 12 years (school age). At this age, children have curiosity, talent, the ability to explore learning, influenced by external factors and gender roles. Exploration activities are carried out so that children can identify interests, study selection, and professional potential (Gagnon et al., 2019). The awareness that arises about work is influenced by personal and culture. At this age children already have their interests, aspirations, and hopes in work/career (Porfeli, Hartung, & Vondracek, 2008).

Table 1. Children's age

No	Age	Frequency
1	6 years	13
2	7 years	40
3	8 years	7
4	9 years	19
5	10 years	5
6	11 years	4
7	12 years	18
TOTAL		106

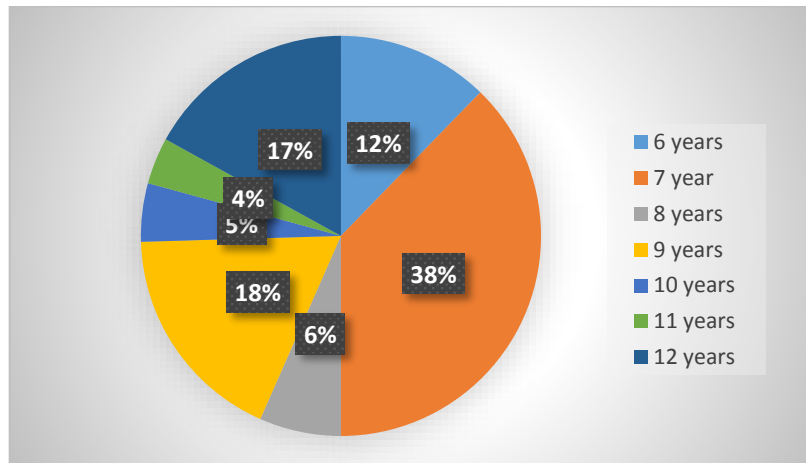


Figure 1. Children's age

Data in Table 1 and Figure 1 are the distribution of the number of children by age, namely 40 (38%) of 7 years old children, 19 (18%) of 9 years old children, 18 (17%) of 12 years old children, 13 (12 %) of 6 years old children, 7 (6%) of 8 years old children, 5 (5%) of 10 years old children, and 4 (4%) of 11 years old children.

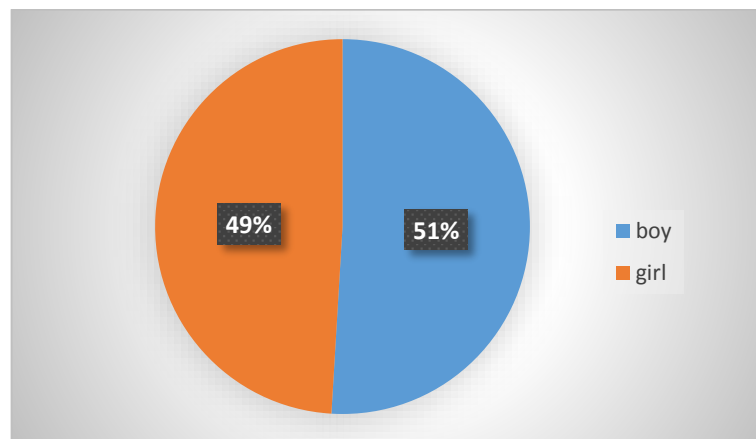


Figure 2. Children's gender

Based on Figure 2, the number of boys is 54 (51%), and that of girls is 52 (49%).

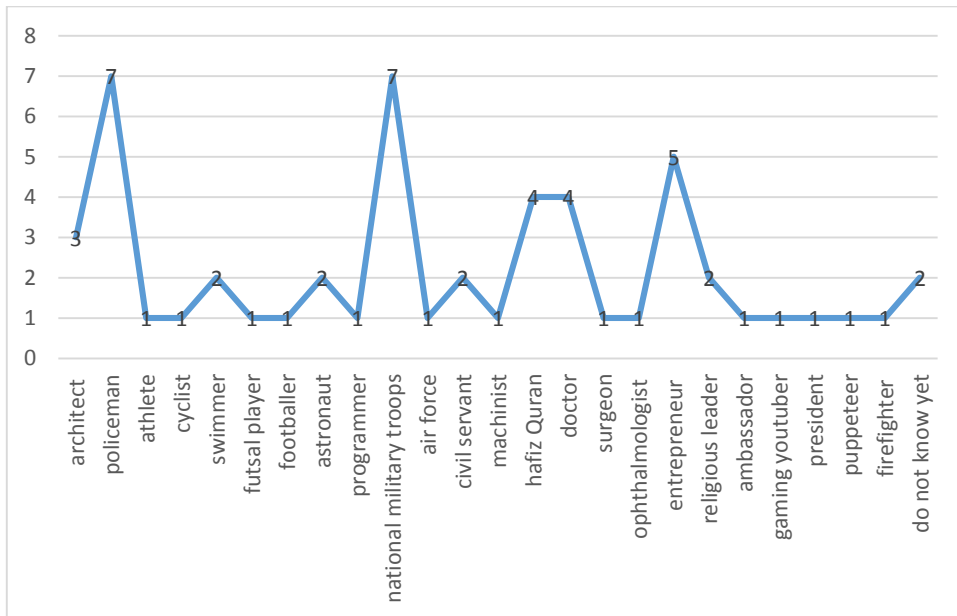


Figure 3. Career choices of boys

Based on Figure 3, most boys chose to become policemen and military troops (13.46%), businessmen (9.26%), doctors and *hafiz Qur'an* (7.40%). The career choice for boys is also influenced by role models from the parents' family and their own family. The desire of children as policemen is to be able to protect society from crime. Some children choose doctor as their career because they want to cure the sick people and to be financially settled.

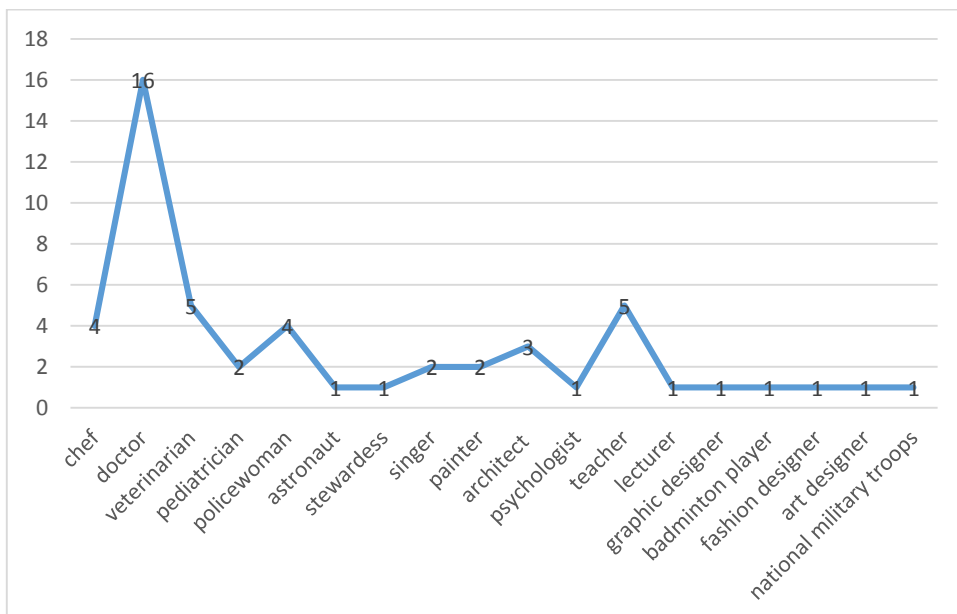


Figure 4. Career choices of girls

The in figure 4 data show that most of the career choices for girls are doctors (30.77%), veterinarians and teachers (9.61%), and policewomen (7.69%). Many girls choose careers related to social interaction on the grounds that teachers, doctors, and policewomen can help others deal

with problems. What was expressed by the children when asked why they chose to become a doctor, they argued so that they could cure their parents, siblings, and other people who were sick. Choosing a career as a teacher is stated as cultural stereotypes, because children answer that they want to become teachers just like their mothers, fathers, and uncles. The influence of parents and family is a dominant factor in choosing a child's career.

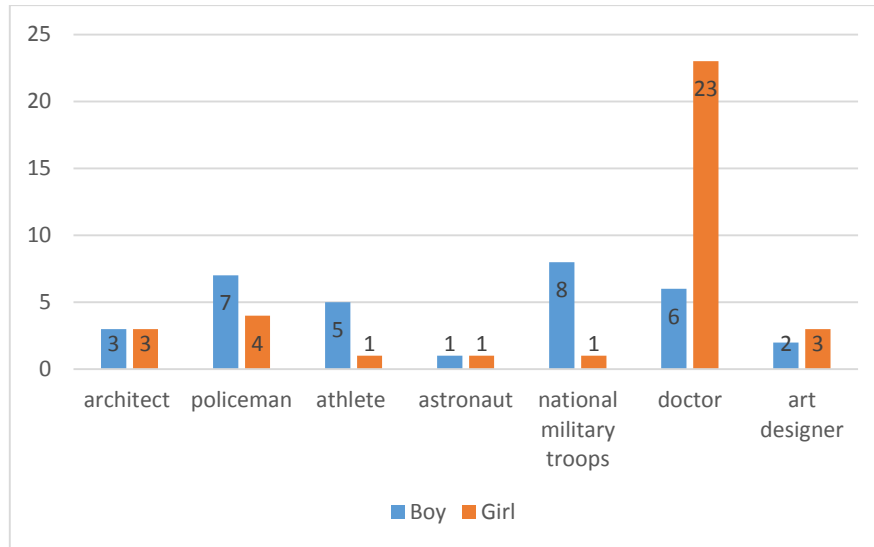


Figure 5. Professions chosen by boys and girls

Based on Figure 5, the professions chosen by boys and girls are architect, police, athlete, astronaut, national military troops (TNI), art designer, and doctor. There is no gender difference in the choice of a child's career. Gender and grades in school are weak determinants of children's career choices (Volodina & Nagy, 2016).

The career choice category for children is divided into 3 (three), namely (1) career choice based on desire, (2) career choice based on interests/hobbies, and (3) career choice based on role models.

- Career choice based on desires such as architect, engineer, pediatrician, veterinarian, firefighter. The career choice is also based on the existence of an idol.
- Career choice based on interests/hobbies such as athletes (cycling, badminton, swimming, football), singers, painters, chefs, and designers.
- Career choice based on role models such as teachers, national military troops (TNI), and Civil Servant (ASN).

Children's interests related to work are the result of experiences at home and in their environment. In the end, certain interests become personality traits in the form of self-expression related to work, academic studies, hobbies, and various recreational activities and other favorite activities.

Self-concept, self-knowledge and understanding, parents, values instilled at home have a big role in career/ job choices because they are closely related to future planning which is built early on, and also factors that include social dimensions such as socialization skills, family, emotional harmony, and motivation (Di Blasio, 2013; Volodina & Nagy, 2016).

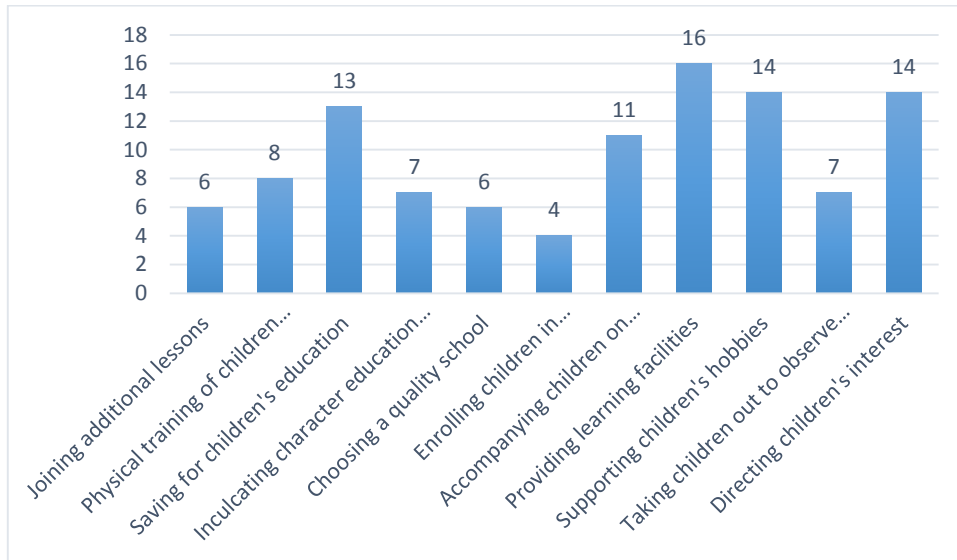


Figure 6. Parents' efforts in supporting children's careers

Based on Figure 6, parents' efforts in supporting children's career choices are (1) providing learning facilities in accordance with children's needs, such as books, learning videos, learning tools, drawing and coloring tools, and Educational Game Tools; (2) supporting and directing the children's interests/hobbies, so parents absolutely need to understand the interests and hobbies of the children. Interest is the strongest determinant in children's career choices (Volodina & Nagy, 2016); (3) preparing education funds from the start is an effort made by parents in preparing children's future; (4) accompanying children while learning and playing through observing the environment around, this is intended so that children have knowledge of the happening things (related to work/profession); (5) instilling character education at home from an early age, such as discipline, responsibility, independence, and mental strength. Parents argue that the inculcation of character values that are built since childhood will have a major impact on children's development, especially with regard to character selection (for example being the TNI must be disciplined and tough, being a teacher must be patient and loving, being a doctor must be careful); (6) stimulating physical development of children's motor skills, which include providing food with healthy and balanced nutrition and exercising regularly; (7) giving additional lessons to children in order to improve children's skills, such as swimming lessons, English lessons, music lessons, drawing lessons; and (8) enrolling the children in competitions which are in accordance with their interests/ hobbies and abilities of the children to give the additional knowledge and experience.

The form of family support in choosing a child's career is by providing real experiences that will build positive belief in the child, then being the loving, tolerant and stimulating parents (Chan,

2019; Paloş & Drobot, 2010). Apart from parents and families, the school environment as a learning environment for them is one of the factors that can develop a career according to their competence (Kuijpers, Meijers, & Gundy, 2011).

Children's understanding of the process of choosing and achieving future work and the factors that influence career preferences can be conceptualized using cognitive developmental psychology, namely by focusing on how individuals actively build an understanding of the world around them (Howard & Walsh, 2011). Children's thinking is characterized by a rapid growth in representational, or symbolic, mental activity (language). Children's thinking is still rigid or separate (dichotomous) and tied to perception, with an understanding that is influenced by the seen initial appearance. Therefore, children need to be given real experience by observing and feeling things related to career choices. Interests/hobbies are a determining factor in decisions about children's career choices. Parents must know, recognize and stimulate on an ongoing basis the desires and interests/hobbies of their children, so that they become the right career choices in the future.

To find out children's interests, the career talent instrument developed by psychologist John L. Holland (Kim & Shin, 2020) can be applied. Holland's personality theory is called RIASEC (realistic interest, investigative interest, artistic interest, social interest, entrepreneurial interest, conventional interest) which emphasizes behavioral or personality characteristics in individual career development and choice (Elena, 2014; Holland, 2012; Kim & Shin, 2020; Sodano, 2011; Novianti, Wicaksana, & Suwarsono, 2015). Following is the explanations of such characteristics.

- Realistic: likes handwork such as making, repairing, assembling, or building something, using and operating tools/machines.
- Investigative: observes, investigates, experiments, asks questions, and solves questions.
- Artistic: likes activities that use words, art, music or drama to express oneself, communicate, and design.
- Social: likes to teach, train, provide information, help, cure, heal, serve, greet, and care about the welfare of others.
- Entrepreneurial: loves meeting people, leading, talking and influencing others, motivating others, and doing business.
- Conventional: likes working indoors and doing tasks that involve organizing, following procedures, working with data or numbers, planning jobs and events.

4. Conclusion

Children aged 6-12 years are able to plan and choose careers according to their interests and desires, although over time there will be vocational dynamics (changes in job/ career choices). Parents and family (cultural stereotypes) have a central and important role in choosing a child's career in terms of future career achievement. The environment is also an important factor in introducing and influencing children's career choices (social stereotypes). Parents must support

them by providing assistance and facilities so that they can develop their interests and talents. The limitation in this study is that in-depth interviews are not conducted with children, so that researchers cannot describe the process of children's career choice and the stages in the children's vocational thinking phase, namely association, sequence, and interaction (Howard & Walsh, 2011).

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