



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ARTICLE

Career Planning for Students at Angkatan Belia Islam, Penang, Malaysia

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Abstract

This community service activity focuses on addressing the challenges faced by teenagers in the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) Penang branch regarding their lack of understanding and skills in career planning. Teenagers in ABIM encounter several key issues when determining their future careers, primarily the absence of guidance and limited access to career-related information. The program aims to enhance the participants' knowledge of the importance of career planning, help them identify their potential, and develop strategies to achieve their career goals. This activity employs a combination of educational and practical approaches. Education is delivered through interactive seminars covering career planning, professional introductions, and personal skill development. Practical activities include individual consultations, mock job interviews, and workshops on creating a Curriculum Vitae (CV). The results of this activity demonstrate improved participant understanding of career planning concepts, enhanced ability to formulate strategic steps towards their career aspirations, and increased self-confidence. This initiative is expected to have a long-term impact on participants as they navigate the competitive job market. Strengthening partnerships with local organisations is also a crucial element in ensuring the sustainability of this program in the future.

Keywords

Student; Career planning; Future career.

Abstrak

Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk mengatasi tantangan yang dihadapi remaja di cabang Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) Penang terkait kurangnya pemahaman dan keterampilan dalam merencanakan karir. Remaja di ABIM menghadapi beberapa masalah utama dalam menentukan karir masa depan mereka, terutama ketidakadaan bimbingan dan akses terbatas terhadap informasi terkait karir. Program ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman peserta tentang pentingnya perencanaan karir, membantu mereka mengidentifikasi potensi diri, serta mengembangkan strategi untuk mencapai tujuan karir mereka. Kegiatan ini menggunakan pendekatan gabungan antara pendidikan dan praktik. Pendidikan diberikan melalui seminar interaktif yang mencakup perencanaan karir, pengenalan profesi, dan pengembangan keterampilan pribadi. Kegiatan praktik mencakup konsultasi individu, simulasi wawancara kerja, dan lokakarya pembuatan Curriculum Vitae (CV). Hasil dari kegiatan ini menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman peserta tentang konsep perencanaan karir, kemampuan yang lebih baik dalam merumuskan langkah strategis menuju aspirasi karir mereka, serta peningkatan rasa percaya diri. Inisiatif ini diharapkan dapat memberikan dampak jangka panjang bagi peserta dalam menghadapi pasar kerja yang kompetitif. Memperkuat kemitraan dengan organisasi lokal juga menjadi elemen penting untuk memastikan keberlanjutan program ini di masa depan.

Kata Kunci

Siswa; Perencanaan Karir; Karir Masa Depan.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Students' ability to plan their careers must begin with their ability to conduct career exploration within themselves. According to Purwanta (2012), career exploration is an effort to understand the characteristics of an individual and the characteristics of the career environment within various career and cultural settings where careers exist. The goal of career exploration for students is to filter and select various information about themselves and their environment, enabling them to make appropriate choices aligned with their personal characteristics, ultimately achieving independence.

Thus, to help enhance students' career planning, it can begin by providing various career-related information so that students can filter and select information about themselves and their environment, allowing them to plan their careers in accordance with their personal characteristics. Providing career information to students can be facilitated by teachers through the use of guidance media. Media is one of the crucial components in the process of delivering guidance. The use of guidance media is essential to ensure that the guidance process between counsellors and students runs effectively, remains engaging, and stimulates students' activeness and creativity.

Junior high school students are generally aged between 13-15 years, or psychologically, they are in early adolescence. According to Yusuf (2010, p. 26), early adolescence is characterised by negative traits, often referred to as the "negative phase." Broadly, these negative traits include: (a) underachievement, both physically and mentally; and (b) social attitudes, such as withdrawal from society or aggression towards others. During this stage, students experience rapid development in their intellectual abilities. From a career development perspective, junior high school students are in the exploration phase. At this stage, they are capable of identifying the career direction they desire. It is no longer a mere wish but a phase where they begin to consider and seek information related to their desired career paths. To ensure that their career aspirations are realised effectively, proper career planning is essential.

Adolescents in the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) Penang branch face challenges in planning their future. The primary difficulties include a lack of understanding of career planning concepts, insufficient information about career opportunities, and limited access to professional guidance. Effective career planning significantly influences an individual's contribution to society and their level of success. Consequently, this community service activity aims to assist ABIM Penang adolescents in preparing for their careers. The Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) Penang branch is a youth organisation focused on fostering the moral, spiritual, and intellectual development of adolescents. However, many ABIM adolescents face limitations in knowledge, skills, and access to relevant information when developing their careers. Most of them are unaware of the importance of career planning as a foundational step towards future success. Moreover, many feel uncertain about choosing educational or occupational paths because they lack awareness of their own potential and how to align it with current job opportunities.

The low career literacy level among adolescents in ABIM Penang is the main issue addressed by this community service initiative. The key challenges include a lack of understanding of career planning, limited access to career information, and insufficient practical skills, such as creating a CV and handling job interviews. The focus of this initiative is to provide education and practical training that can help adolescents plan their careers in a more structured and strategic manner. ABIM Penang was chosen as the subject of this service project due to its strategic role in nurturing adolescents with great potential for development, yet who have not received adequate support in career planning. As a community-based organisation, ABIM has members who are eager to actively participate, allowing the programme to have a direct and significant impact. Enhancing the career skills of adolescents in ABIM Penang will have a long-term positive effect on the broader community.

2 | METHOD

The Career Planning for Students program is designed to assist the youth of Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) in Penang in understanding their potential and planning for their future careers. This program employs a structured, participatory, and results-oriented approach. Initially, the program begins with close collaboration with ABIM to identify the specific career planning needs of the participants. This collaborative effort involves gathering data through surveys and interviews to understand the challenges and goals of the youth. Based on this analysis, customized training modules are developed to address key areas such as self-development, career planning, and essential job market skills. Additionally, a team of professional mentors from various industries is appointed to lead the program and provide expert guidance throughout the training sessions. These mentors bring valuable insights from their own career experiences, ensuring that participants receive relevant and practical advice.

During the implementation phase, the program consists of a series of interactive sessions, workshops, and

simulations. One of the first components is the Career Inspiration and Motivation Sessions, where experienced professionals share their career journeys, offering inspiration and a realistic perspective on various career paths. Following this, a Self-Assessment Workshop is held, which helps participants identify their strengths, interests, and personality traits. This step enables them to better understand their potential and make informed decisions about their future careers. Based on these insights, the next stage focuses on Targeted Career Planning, where participants begin to develop tailored career plans that include specific, actionable steps aligned with their aspirations. To support this further, participants will engage in practical activities such as mock job interviews, CV writing workshops, and other simulations that mimic real-world recruitment processes, helping them hone the skills necessary for success in the job market.

Finally, the program includes an evaluation and follow-up phase. Participant satisfaction and the overall success of the program will be assessed through surveys and feedback forms, which will measure both the effectiveness of the training and the participants' understanding of career planning concepts. A detailed report of the program's outcomes, including the feedback and evaluation results, will be submitted to ABIM, providing them with insights and recommendations for future improvements. This evaluation not only ensures the program's immediate success but also contributes to its long-term sustainability and impact. By following this methodical approach, the program aims to equip the youth with the necessary knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate their future careers successfully.

Tabel 1. Metode Pelaksanaan

Stage	Main Activities	Output	Implementers
1. Programme Preparation	- Coordination with ABIM. - Development of training modules.	Training modules and activity schedule.	PKM Team and ABIM
2. Programme Implementation	Session 1: Career Inspiration Professional speakers share their experiences..	Participants understand various career pathways.	PKM Team
	Session 2: Self-Assessment Tests on interests, talents, and personality.	Participants have a profile of their interests and talents.	PKM Team
	Session 3: Career Planning Development of career plans based on assessments.	Individual career plan.	PKM Team dan participant
	Session 4: Practical Simulation Job interview and CV writing training.	Participants have CV and interview skills.	PKM Team dan participant, ABIM
3. Evaluation and Follow-Up	- Evaluation of implementation through satisfaction surveys. - Follow-up online mentoring.	Evaluation reports and active participants implementing the plan.	PKM Team



Picture 1. Group Photo of ABIM Partners and Participants



Picture 2. Programme Implementation



Picture 3. Evaluation and Follow-Up

3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The Implementation of the Career Planning Program for Students at Angkatan Belia Islam Penang (ABIM) aimed to provide participants with a deeper understanding of their potential and equip them with the necessary skills to plan their future careers in a structured and realistic manner. The program began with a series of self-assessment workshops designed to help participants identify their interests, talents, and personal characteristics. According to the evaluation

results, over 85% of participants found the self-assessment tools highly beneficial in helping them better understand the personal traits that influence their career choices.

- 1) **Enhancing Career Planning Skills.** One of the primary objectives of the program was to improve participants' ability to create clear and directed career plans. 80% of participants successfully developed career plans that were not only realistic but also achievable in the long term. These plans were based on a deep understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and personal aspirations. The participants utilized insights gained from previous sessions, including knowledge of various career opportunities aligned with their interests and the skills they needed to develop to reach those goals. Individual mentoring also played a significant role in helping participants outline more specific and measurable steps toward achieving their career objectives.
- 2) **Improving Career-Related Abilities.** The program also included several practical sessions designed to enhance participants' skills in facing the challenges of the workforce. One of the sessions that received positive feedback was the mock interview simulations, which gave participants the opportunity to practice real-world interview scenarios. Additionally, the CV writing workshops were extremely helpful in guiding participants on how to craft effective and professional documents that would catch the attention of potential employers. Observations during the mock interview simulations revealed that participants not only gained greater self-confidence but also sharpened their communication skills, making them more prepared to establish professional relationships and present themselves convincingly in front of potential employers.
- 3) **Positive Participant Feedback.** As part of the overall program evaluation, participant satisfaction surveys revealed highly positive results. 90% of participants expressed their satisfaction with the program's content, delivery, and overall experience. They greatly appreciated the interactive and engaging approach that encouraged active participation and group discussions, allowing them to directly apply the skills they had learned. The program not only provided theoretical knowledge but also offered practical experience, which participants found invaluable in preparing for their careers.

The program significantly contributed to the development of participants' career planning skills, increased their preparedness for entering the workforce, and provided valuable experience in building professional networks. The success of this program also highlights the importance of education that is focused on practical skills, preparing students to face future career challenges.

The success of the program can be attributed to its structured approach, participatory elements, and results-driven design. Several key aspects played a significant role in making the program effective and achieving positive outcomes for the participants. These factors not only ensured the program's relevance but also enhanced the overall learning experience, creating an environment that supported personal growth and career development.

- 1) **Relevance of Programme Content:** A significant strength of the program was its focus on self-assessment and career planning, which met the participants' core needs. By offering insights into each participant's individual strengths, weaknesses, and career goals, the sessions were tailored to help participants better understand their personal traits and aspirations. This focus ensured that participants could engage with the material in a way that aligned with their ambitions, making the content both meaningful and practical.
- 2) **Engagement Through Interactive Methods:** The program used a variety of interactive techniques such as role-playing activities, simulations, and practical workshops to increase participant engagement. These methods were effective in blending theory with real-world application. By combining hands-on activities with academic content, the program addressed various learning styles, ensuring that every participant was able to absorb and apply the lessons effectively. The interactive nature of the sessions encouraged active participation, which helped participants gain a deeper understanding of the topics covered and retain key concepts.
- 3) **Role of Mentors and Facilitators:** Mentors and facilitators played an essential role in the success of the program. Their involvement extended beyond just presenting material; they guided participants by offering feedback and sharing valuable personal experiences. The mentorship provided the necessary support to help participants clarify their career objectives and devise actionable plans. These professionals helped build confidence among the participants, ensuring that they felt equipped to take practical steps toward achieving their career goals. Their engagement added credibility to the program and inspired participants to fully commit to their personal development.
- 4) **Alignment with Organisational and Cultural Values:** The program's integration with the values of Angkatan Belia Islam Penang (ABIM) was a key factor in its success. Collaboration with ABIM allowed the program to reflect the core principles of the organization, creating a sense of trust among participants. This connection fostered a learning environment where participants felt supported and motivated. The alignment with ABIM's values helped ensure that the program resonated with participants on a personal level, contributing to a deeper sense of engagement and participation.

The program's success stemmed from its carefully thought-out structure, practical engagement strategies, expert guidance, and alignment with organizational values. These aspects worked together to create a dynamic learning environment, where participants could achieve their personal and professional goals. By focusing on career planning and providing hands-on experience, the program proved to be highly impactful and valuable for all involved.

The challenges or obstacles faced during the program include time constraints and the need for ongoing mentoring. Some participants expressed that they required more time for certain activities, such as the career planning sessions, to explore their aspirations further. Extending the duration of these sessions could be considered in future programs to allow participants the opportunity to delve deeper into their career goals. Additionally, while participants appreciated the initial mentoring sessions, many voiced a desire for continuous support and follow-up sessions to track their progress. To address this, implementing an online mentoring system could provide a sustainable solution, enabling participants to receive ongoing guidance.

Despite these challenges, the program successfully achieved its goal of equipping ABIM youth with essential career planning skills. Through interactive workshops, simulations, and self-assessment sessions, participants were able to identify their interests, talents, and personal characteristics. This increased self-awareness allowed them to create more realistic career plans for the future. As Purwanta (2012) points out, career exploration is a crucial first step in the career planning process, helping individuals understand their own characteristics and potential. By participating in mock interviews and CV writing workshops, participants not only gained insights into their personal strengths but also learned about the professional world. These practical exercises are highly relevant in preparing them for their future careers. This approach aligns with career planning theory, which emphasizes the importance of understanding one's interests, skills, and values when creating an effective career plan (Super, 1990).

However, despite the positive results, there are issues that need to be addressed for future improvements. One challenge faced by participants was the limited time allocated for the career planning sessions. Career planning theory suggests that career plans should be continually evaluated and adjusted over time, and longer sessions with follow-up could help participants better understand and develop their potential (Savickas, 2013). Furthermore, the need for ongoing mentoring was highlighted, aligning with mentoring theory, which suggests that a sustained relationship between mentor and mentee is critical for both emotional and professional support, especially when navigating career advancement (Kram, 1985). To meet this need and provide more sustainable impact, an online mentoring system could be implemented to facilitate continuous support.

3.2 Discussion

The implementation of the Career Planning Program at Angkatan Belia Islam Penang (ABIM) showed that providing students with structured career guidance has a significant impact on their career development. The program's focus on self-assessment helped participants identify their strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations, which are essential steps in career planning. According to Purwanta (2012), career exploration is crucial for fostering self-awareness, which in turn allows individuals to align their career choices with their personal characteristics. The program successfully integrated these aspects, with over 85% of participants finding the self-assessment tools highly beneficial, validating the importance of these tools in career planning (Dharmakarya, 2021).

In line with career planning theory, a significant achievement of the program was the development of career plans by 80% of participants. These plans were both realistic and achievable, crafted from a deeper understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses. This success is consistent with Super's (1990) concept of career development, which emphasizes that effective career planning requires a comprehensive understanding of one's interests, skills, and personal values. By using the knowledge gained from previous sessions, such as the exploration of career opportunities and required skills, participants were able to create detailed and attainable career plans. This approach reflects Dharmakarya's (2020) argument that career planning plays a vital role in enhancing students' employability skills, as it empowers them to make informed decisions about their future careers.

The inclusion of practical skills training further contributed to the program's effectiveness. Mock interviews and CV writing workshops were highly appreciated, with participants gaining not only the technical skills required for job applications but also the confidence to engage in professional interactions. The simulated interview exercises demonstrated that the program had a significant impact on the participants' ability to communicate more effectively and professionally. This finding aligns with Savickas' (2013) assertion that career development activities should focus on enhancing skills directly applicable to the workforce.

The role of mentors and facilitators in the program was also crucial. Their guidance, feedback, and real-world experience provided participants with personalized support and encouragement. This mentorship aligned with Kram's (1985) mentoring theory, which highlights the importance of sustained mentor-mentee relationships for both professional and emotional support. The mentors played a critical role in helping participants clarify their career goals and break them down into actionable steps, boosting their confidence and ensuring that they felt equipped to pursue their aspirations. The importance of such mentorship is further emphasized by Setiawan (2018), who found that career guidance programs with active mentoring significantly aid students in making better career decisions. However, challenges emerged, particularly regarding time constraints and the need for ongoing mentoring. Many participants expressed a desire for more time to explore their career plans in greater detail, which aligns with Savickas' (2013) theory, suggesting that career plans should be continually revisited and refined. Extending session durations or adding follow-up sessions could help participants continue developing their career plans. Additionally, many participants requested continued mentorship even after the

program's completion. This aligns with Dharmakarya's (2021) findings that sustained mentoring contributes significantly to students' long-term career success. To address this need, implementing an online mentoring system could offer continuous support and track progress, as suggested by Hadi (2019), who emphasized the effectiveness of digital tools in providing ongoing career guidance.

The program at ABIM successfully enhanced participants' career planning skills, employability readiness, and confidence in pursuing their career goals. The alignment of the program with career development theories and its combination of practical skills training and mentorship provided significant value to the participants. Despite the challenges related to time constraints and the need for ongoing support, the program's design and structure proved effective in preparing participants for their future careers. For future improvements, expanding session durations and integrating online mentoring systems could further strengthen the program's impact, ensuring that participants continue to benefit from the guidance and support needed for long-term career success.

4 | CONCLUSION

The Career Planning for Students program at Angkatan Belia Islam Penang (ABIM) Malaysia successfully enhanced students' understanding of the importance of early career planning. The program effectively increased participants' awareness of their potential, including their interests, talents, and personal characteristics, which are essential for career development. Through the self-assessment workshop, participants gained a clearer understanding of who they are and how their personal traits align with future career paths. The practical sessions, including mock interviews and CV writing, provided participants with valuable work-related experience, helping them better prepare for the workforce. The success of this program supports the theory that early career exploration plays a critical role in helping students identify clearer career options, as noted by Purwanta (2012).

To further improve the impact of the program, several recommendations are proposed. First, participants suggested that the program duration should be extended, as they felt the career planning sessions did not provide enough time to plan their careers in greater detail. By adding more sessions or increasing the duration of existing ones, the program could offer more comprehensive support. Second, while mentoring sessions were provided, many participants expressed a desire for long-term guidance. Implementing an online mentoring system would address this need and offer continuous support beyond the program's duration. Third, the program has the potential to be expanded and integrated into schools and other educational institutions, reaching a wider audience and offering more students the opportunity to gain valuable insights into career planning. Finally, developing a more comprehensive training module that includes various aspects of career preparation—such as technical skills, time management, and social skills—would help participants gain a deeper understanding of the job market and better prepare for the challenges of the workforce.

The program successfully achieved its objective of improving participants' career planning skills and preparing them for future employment. The recommended improvements, including extending program duration, establishing ongoing mentoring, expanding its reach, and enhancing the training module, will further strengthen the program's effectiveness and sustainability.

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