

Role of Peer Groups in Career Exploration of Generation Z in Responding to Work Transitions

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Abstract

This research examines the influence of peer groups in determining student career life. By using a quantitative approach, we aim to investigate the role of peer groups in Generation Z's career exploration to respond to work transitions. The subjects of this study were 72 vocational high school students. Data collection was carried out using the Peer Group and Career Exploration scales which were developed by adapting the Likert scale. Our analysis results suggested that peer groups carry 57 percent effects on the participants' career exploration of students. In addition, the results of the Pearson correlation test also showed a 0.755 correlation coefficient between the peer group and career exploration, indicating a strong correlation between the peer group and career exploration. Therefore, the higher peer group support increases the students' career exploration abilities and vice versa. The influence of the peer group on career exploration ability is classified into a strong category.

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1. Introduction

Education is a lifelong process. It takes place throughout an individual's life, from his birth to his end of life. Education is held in a widely accessible and flexible open system across education units (Mahrus, 2021). Therefore, education covers all learning activities that take place throughout an individual's life (Alaydrus & Abd. Hamid, 2019). Referring to this explanation, education has a strategic role in enhancing students' decision-making skills and aspirations. Further, those skills impact individual career decisions.

A career is an essential component in the process of determining life goals and expectations (Kusumawati & Wahyuningsih, 2020). Accordingly, every individual has equal rights and obligations in planning their career. As reported in a previous study, an individual's career depends on the analysis of their potential and their surrounding environment (Salimah, Wibowo, & Mulawarman, 2019). Thus, someone's potential and his environment remarkably regulate their career development. Linearly, students' careers emanate from their personal and environmental interactions obtained from learning outcomes. During the learning process, individuals rationally make decisions influenced by various aspects, including their parents, teachers, hobbies, and interests (Chasanah & Salim, 2019).

However, students encounter several different types of issues in relation to careers, especially students from vocational high school. The research conducted in 2020 concerning the vocational school environment reported students' problems of confusion, anxiety, and uncertainty in decision-making (Hadi, Aryani, & Suwidagdho, 2020). In addition, vocational high school students also face problems related to project determination and job specifications. In order to solve those problems, students should have a strong view of internal and external support (Chasanah & Salim, 2019).

Meanwhile, career problems are influenced by culture, friends, parents, and the adults who have an essential role (Anwar, Musyrifin, & Zakiyah, 2021). From this theory, friends or peer group becomes one of the most critical factors in career problems. Through their peer groups, students are facilitated to interact and exchange opinions on career issues using various sources. The importance of peers for students is in accordance with their environment (Kadir & Salija, 2018). Besides, peer acceptance is crucial for students in the adolescent phase, so they find it challenging to stay away from their friends (Sathiyah, 2022). In the teenage phase, they express their plans, aspirations, career exploration, academic problems, and difficulties in life to their close friends freely and openly.

Especially for students who have difficulty exploring careers and have no courage to communicate those difficulties to the school counselor, the role of peer acceptance is exceptionally crucial for solving problems, including career problems (Yunita & Isnawati, 2022). People in peer groups believe they have something in common, such as age, wants, and objectives, which can enhance their group's strength.

Peer group is a group of adolescent peers with close and interdependent relationships (Yunita & Isnawati, 2022). Therefore, we often see groups of friendship in our environment, including in schools. In these groups, the members have a reasonably strong bond, so they always do different activities together. Besides, a peer group allows individuals to interact, get along, support, and motivate each other (Fajriyah, Demartoto, & Murti, 2018). This communication and mutual encouragement can serve as an alternative for solving career-related problems, aside from guidance and counseling services.

In addition to peer groups, guidance and counseling services, especially in the field of careers using peer group techniques, aid students in solving problems related to career exploration. The peer group counseling technique will foster adaptability among peers to interact actively in solving a professional difficulty. Consequently, peer communication carries a significant influence on students' career exploration (Naz et al., 2014).

The peer (peer group) carries an essential role in determining the career of students. However, the influences from peers (peer group) can be positive or negative, depending on their position. The peer can be positioned as a friend, parent, or source of support in exploring a career. Therefore, this study examines the role of peers in students' career exploration before transitioning to the world of work.

2. Method

This study used a quantitative approach to investigate the role of peer groups on Generation Z's career exploration in transitioning to the world of work. This research was conducted at Vocational High School Muhammadiyah 1 Prambanan Klaten, Indonesia, due to our initial interviews with students from this school suggesting their confusion in exploring their future careers. Besides, students also faced difficulties in planning their careers. In this study, 72 students participated. This study was carried out in August-September 2022.

The data collection process was carried out using the peer group and career exploration scales developed by adapting the Likert scale. The provided values reflected the distribution of respondent's responses. The Likert scale ranged between 1-4, representing strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA). Through this scale, we eliminated the neutral choice to reduce the respondent's biased response. Meanwhile, for the questionnaire items, we used a clear statement and an unfavorable statement.

After the instrument was constructed, we conducted an instrument trial involving 30 tenth-grade students from Vocational High School Muhammadiyah 1 Prambanan Klaten, Indonesia. The instrument trial results showed 53 valid items with an alpha coefficient of 0.954. As for the Career Exploration scale, 44 items were valid, with an alpha coefficient of 0.931. In addition, we also conducted hypothesis testing using the Pearson Product Moment correlation and SPSS. 26. Before the hypothesis test, we conducted the assumption test using the normality and linearity tests. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test on the Peer Group scale was 0.200 ($p > 0.05$), and the

Career Exploration scale was 0.200 ($p < 0.05$), so the data had a normal distribution. Meanwhile, the results of the linearity test using the ANOVA analysis showed the value of Sig. 0.486 ($p > 0.05$), indicating linear data.

3. Results

3.1. Description of Peer Group Data

In this study, the role of the peer group was identified using a Likert scale, with scores ranging from 1 to 4 with a total of 53 statement items. In detail, the scoring categories are listed in Table 1. On Table 1, M_i mean ideal mean, and SD_i mean ideal standar deviation. As summarized in Table 1, the highest and lowest ideal score for the peer group role is 212 and 53, respectively. Our data also showed the obtained average peer group score of 132.5, with a 26.5 standard deviation. Consequently, the scores are classified as high if the score range > 159 , the average peer group score lies between 106 to 159, and the low peer group category is < 106 .

Table 1. Limitation of Peer Group Categorization

Category	Formula	Limitation
High	$> (M_i + SD_i)$	> 159
Middle	$(M_i - SD_i) \text{ to } (M_i + SD_i)$	106-159
Low	$< (M_i - SD_i)$	< 106

Consequently, the role of peer groups in our participants is in the high category. The detail of frequency distribution is summarized in Table 2. Table 2 shows that 66 (91.7%) of participants have a high category of peer group role, while six students (8.3%) are in the medium category, and 0% in the low category. Therefore, the peer group support is included in the high category, with a score reaching 91.7%.

Table 2. Distribution of Peer Group Categorization

No	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Category
1	> 159	66	91.7	High
2	106-159	6	8.3	Middle
3	< 106	0	0	Low
	Σ	72	100	High

3.2. Description of Career Exploration Data

In this study, we identified the participants' career exploration using a Likert scale, with scores ranging from 1 to 4 and 44 statement items. The scoring category is presented in Table 3. On Table 3, M_i mean ideal mean, and SD_i mean ideal standar deviation.

Table 3. Limitation of the Score Categorization of Participants' Career Exploration

Category	Formula	Limitation
High	$> (M_i + SD_i)$	> 132
Middle	$(M_i - SD_i) \text{ to } (M_i + SD_i)$	66-132
Low	$< (M_i - SD_i)$	< 66

As shown in Table 3, the highest and lowest ideal scores for career exploration are 176 and 44, respectively, with an average score of 110 and a standard deviation of 22. Consequently, the high career exploration score is > 132 , the average career exploration score ranges between 66 to 132, and the low career exploration score is < 66 .

The overall results from the data analysis indicated that our participants have high career exploration abilities. The frequency of scores distribution is presented in Table 4. According to Table 4, 59 (81.9%) of our participants have high career exploration, while 13 participants (18.1%) are in the medium category and 0% in the low category. Therefore, the career exploration of students from Vocational High School Muhammadiyah 1 Prambanan Klaten is in the high category, with a score reaching 81.9%.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Career Exploration

No	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Category
1	> 132	59	81.9	High
2	66-132	13	18.1	Middle
3	< 66	0	0	Low
	Σ	72	100	High

4. Discussion

Based on our data analysis results, 91.7% or 66 students of the total 72 students of Vocational High School Muhammadiyah 1 Prambanan Klaten have high peer group scores. Meanwhile, six students have moderate peer group scores. Based on the results of field observations, the importance of peer groups is determined by positive relationships among students, a sense of shared destiny, and friends' assistance in future planning.

Our results of interviews with several students suggested that environment is one of the influencing factors for the level of career stability. The environmental factor includes good relationships with teachers and other school members, friendship and solidarity between friends, as well as families, and support related to their future careers. Further, some of our respondents have greater trust in their peers than their parents in relation to their confusion on career choices or further level of education. Consequently, they mostly lean on information conveyed by their peers. These students frequently follow the advice given by their friends. Even in their choice of early career, these adolescents usually follow the opinion of their peers. Some students, they regard their friends as the best partners for telling stories when their parents cannot give definite suggestions for career continuation.

At the age of adolescence, interest in association with the social environment began to develop. During this stage, they want to be part of an existing social group. Consequently, teenagers really need a peer group to fulfill their developmental tasks, one of which is youth career exploration (Olalekan, 2016). In peer groups, individuals feel that they share common elements, such as in the areas of age, needs, and goals, which further strengthen the group (Aryani, 2022). Additionally, Uzezi and Deva (2017) uncovered that the peer group carries two advantages in the delivery of educational materials, namely, culturally appropriate and easily understood.

From the career exploration data, 59 participants (81.9%) out of 72 students have high career exploration abilities, while 13 participants (18.1%) have medium career exploration skills, and none of them have low career exploration skills. Therefore, the career exploration skills of Vocational High School Muhammadiyah 1 Prambanan Klaten students are in the high category.

The participants' high career exploration capabilities are induced by their excellent peer relationships. Peer support (peer group) is very influential in individual career maturity. Besides, the positive role of peer groups shows the immense support from the peers, such as through providing motivation, agreeing statements, positive responses, lending goods (mobile phones or laptops), and providing information related to jobs which facilitate the attainment of desired career (Filade, Bello, Uwaoma, Anwanane, & Nwangburka, 2019). In addition, the support can also be in the form of

informational support, which reduces the difficulty of making career decisions. Thus, the selection of friends may carry positive or negative influences on students' careers. Having the right friends is essential for adolescents' academic success, career planning, and psychological stress (Cutrín, Gómez-Fraguela, & Luengo, 2015).

In addition, peers also serve as a source of comfort and security because adolescents can learn together and take shelter in groups. Even during the initial phase of puberty, peers are often the mainstay, especially when experiencing a period of crisis or confusion (Shim & Shin, 2016). The amount of peer support can be measured by the number of social contacts in establishing relationships with sources in their environment (Putri & Salim, 2021). Therefore, the level of intimacy between students and their peers is also influential in their career decisions. Their higher level of familiarity reflects more excellent peers' significant role in the adolescent's career decisions.

From these analysis results, we concluded that peer groups are very influential in the formation of individuals' career exploration. Linearly, Jiang and Zhou (2019) described that through peer interaction, students might change their career decisions. In detail, the influence of peer groups on career exploration is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. ANOVA Table

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Career exploration*	Between Groups (Combine d)	4.200	38	.111	3.444	.000
	Linearity	2.995	1	2.995	93.322	.000
Peer group	Deviation from Linearity	1.205	37	.033	1.014	.486
	Within Groups	1.059	33	.032		
Total		5.259	71			

As indicated by ANOVA results, we obtained Sig. 0.00 (Sig. 0.05), suggesting that peer group role has a significant effect on career exploration. This is in accordance with the results of the research reported by Lent, Ezeofor, Morrison, Penn, and Ireland (2016) that the role of peers is crucial and influential for students in determining their career life. However, peers' influence may be either good or detrimental, depending on the friend they rely on. When making professional decisions, peers may serve as sources of support by setting an example and providing guidance, especially when the parents provide no direction. Besides, peers also carry the function of affection in the form of support in determining the further level of education or field of work.

Our data analysis also showed a positive relationship between peers (peer group) and career exploration in our participants. This finding signifies that the higher peer support (peer group) illustrates higher career exploration ability possessed by the participants. In contrast, the lower peer support (peer group) shows their lower career exploration ability. The relationship between peer group and career exploration is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlation Between Peer Group and Career Exploration

		Peer Group	Career Exploration
Career exploration	Pearson correlation	1	.755**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	72	72
Peer group	Pearson correlation	.755**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	72	72

The results of the Pearson correlation test demonstrated a 0.755 correlation coefficient between peer group and career exploration. This score shows a strong correlation between peer group and career exploration. Besides, we also attained Sig level. (1 tailed) = 0.000, revealing a significant relationship between the two variables because $0.000 < 0.05$, and 0.05 is a significant level. The decision-making was carried out with the assumption of greater or equal probability value than Sig. (0.05 Sig.) suggested that H_0 was rejected and H_a was accepted, showing significant results, and vice

versa. If the value was Sig. or 0.05 0.00, there was a relationship between peer group and career exploration. In addition to the relationship between the two variables, we also identified the contribution of peer group influence on career exploration ability by calculating the r^2 value. We obtained 0.570 or 57% r^2 values, signifying 43% of participants' career ability is still affected by factors other than peer groups.

The obtained relationship between peer groups and career exploration abilities is similar to the results of a previous study conducted by Olalekan (2016) that peer groups are one of the influencing factors for individual career exploration abilities. These findings show that peer groups have a significant role in career exploration for Vocational High School Muhammadiyah 1 Prambanan Klaten, Indonesia students as they adjust to working life. In addition, peers can also serve as precedents of career decisions and role models. Besides, Laras and Aryani (2021) reported that peers could serve as role models or behavior examples, become a source of information, and be comparisons representing the world outside the family. Consequently, from their peers, adolescents receive feedback and learn about the world outside their families.

Through peer groups, teenagers can acquire the interpersonal skills necessary to form close relationships. They are able to improve relationships with friends through their sense of togetherness. In addition, students are also motivated to gain achievement and a sense of identity. Additionally, they also learn leadership and communication skills, cooperative skills, role-play, as well as constructing or obeying rules (Hadi et al., 2020). Therefore, through positive support, peer provides the required assistance to achieve career maturity. Conversely, without peers' assistance, students have lower skills to reach career maturity.

5. Conclusion

Based on our analysis results, peer groups carry 57% role in the career exploration of students at Vocational High School Muhammadiyah 1 Prambanan Klaten, Indonesia. In addition, the results of the Pearson correlation test showed that 0.755 correlation coefficient between peer group and career exploration, indicating a strong correlation between peer group and career exploration. Accordingly, higher peer group support reflects more excellent students' career exploration abilities, and vice versa. Thus, the peer group carries significant effects on career exploration ability.

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Peran Teman Sebaya dalam Eksplorasi Karier Generasi Z: Sebuah Respon terhadap Transisi Karier

Kata kunci

Eksplorasi karier
Peer group
Transisi kerja

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengenai peran teman sebaya (*peer group*) dalam menentukan kehidupan karier siswa. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran *peer group* terhadap eksplorasi karier generasi Z dalam merespon transisi kerja pada peserta didik. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 72 siswa SMK. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan skala Peer Group dan Eksplorasi Karier yang dikembangkan dengan mengadaptasi skala model Likert. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian dapat disimpulkan bahwa peran *peer group* dalam eksplorasi karier peserta didik sebesar 57 persen. Selain itu, hasil uji korelasi pearson diperoleh nilai koefisien korelasi antara *peer group* dengan eksplorasi karier sebesar 0,755. Angka ini menunjukkan korelasi yang kuat antara *peer group* dan eksplorasi karier. Hal itu berarti semakin tinggi dukungan teman sebaya (*peer group*) maka akan semakin tinggi pula kemampuan eksplorasi karier peserta didik, begitu pula sebaliknya. Besar pengaruh *peer group* terhadap kemampuan eksplorasi karier termasuk dalam kategori kuat.