

***Choices Student-Athlete Made in Education & Future Career Aspiration:
A Qualitative Study in Indonesia***

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Abstract

Indonesia has a special national education policy concerning students with notable talents in which they are entitled to special coaching to develop their abilities. However, the implementation of this special program for sport-talented students is limited to cover up to high school age with little attention being put on the older students in higher education. This study focuses on Indonesian talented university student-athletes to explore what was facilitating or hindering factors in making education and future career decisions. Interviews with 6 participants, an international award-winning martial arts aged 20-24 years old, provided in-depth descriptions of participants' personal experiences. They clearly stated what and how they wanted to achieve in sports settings and their general education and career attainment. When making career choices, talented student-athletes valued intrinsic motivation, the opportunity for self-development and expanding social networks, and also the support received from their close relatives of which all these factors become the reason why they are excellent in sports. However, this study portrays the challenges faced by these students as the field of sports itself is often discounted not as the primary option for their future careers. The lack of suitable education to pursue sport as a professional field of career, lack of opportunity for the field itself for a life-long career path, and the presence of other available options of career choice were often mentioned as the hindering factors. Some implications are also given.

Keyword: University Student-Athlete, Career Aspiration, Career Decision Making, Qualitative Study, Indonesian Sport Achievement, Sport Talented Student

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education as part of the individual education process is a significant step in the formatting of lifelong learners (UNESCO, n.d.). Education fosters critical thinking skills, helps students become part of an integrated society (Macur, 2020), and achieves future goals (Eriyani et al., 2020). In 2022, there were 4.02 million students (Mahdi, 2022) studying in 122 public universities in Indonesia (Handini et al., 2020). However, only 43 received an outstanding (A) accreditation (Handini et al., 2020). Based on the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) Number 1 of 2020, accreditation is a feasibility test for faculties and universities in Indonesia and is carried out every five years, with an A accreditation given as the highest accreditation. With only 35.2% of state universities having the highest accreditation, this indicated that the threshold is high to ensure the quality of education and graduates from A-accredited institutions.

Even so, the quality of education at a university is not the only determining factor in students' decisions to choose a particular university. The quality of a university is supported by other auxiliary resources, such as student academic and extracurricular activities. The availability of extracurricular sports has advantages for students as well. Previous research found that students who actively participate in sports activities have better academic performance (Muñoz-Bullón, Sanchez-Bueno, & Vos-Saz, 2017) and subjective well-being (Baltatescu & Kovacs, 2012). Students who had previously excelled in particular fields can continue to do so because of the availability of extracurricular activities for students.

In Indonesia, students who are talented in sports may enlist in a specialized training program, called the Student Training and Coaching Program (PPLP). At the university level, sports-talented college students can join the College Training and Coaching Program (PPLM) (Dharmadi, 2016). However, as reported by the official website of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (2020), there are only two PPLM training centers in Indonesia, namely in Jakarta and East Java. Furthermore, PPLM only includes five sports (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2020). The passion and abilities of all students in Indonesia, of course, cannot be accommodated by this program only. College students, who want to continue to succeed in their respective sports fields, will rely on student sports extracurricular programs at their university. These students are present in the Universitas Indonesia Taekwondo Student Extracurricular Club.

Universitas Indonesia (UI) is one of the A-accredited public universities in Indonesia. As the oldest university institution built during colonialism in 1849 (Ayu, 2017), UI has 14 faculties for undergraduate and one vocational program (CNN Indonesia, 2022). Due to UI's excellent standing, entrance to this institution is extremely competitive. In 2022, UI will only accept 7.13% of students from 113,758 applicants (Kasih, 2022; Maudisha, 2022; Purwadi, 2022). This demonstrates that UI's students are intelligent, academically driven people. Nevertheless, some UI students have interests and talents in sports, too. Unfortunately, these students could not continue their passion in this field due to various factors. One of these factors is that sports cannot sustain the life of athletes in Indonesia, as seen from the numerous news stories about former outstanding athletes in Indonesia who do not have jobs after retirement (IDN Times, 2017). Therefore, they chose to focus on academics and use the university's extracurricular activities to satisfy their passion for sports.

Previous qualitative research examined how student-athletes make professional decisions (Seward & Gaesser, 2018; Veldman-de Jonge & Jen, 2022), as well as how student-athletes

make decisions (Wendling & Sagas, 2020). However, researchers have not found a similar study conducted in Indonesia on student-athletes. Therefore, this qualitative research wants to see the factors that influence the career decision-making process of the sports-talented student. In particular, in deciding to continue their education at university and in designing career decisions when they graduate later.

METHODS

Participant

Table 1: Participant's Demographic Characteristics

Source person	Gender	Student at faculty	Year in college	Active time in Taekwondo	Active in	Level of competition
A	Male	Faculty of Math and Science	4th year	12 years	University level club	International & National
B	Male	Faculty of Psychology	4th year	15 years	University level club	International & National
C	Female	Faculty of Social and Political Science	3rd year	14 years	University level club & city level club	International & National
D	Female	Faculty of Math and Science	5th year	11 years	University level club & city level club	International & National
E	Female	Faculty of Social and Political Science	2nd year	9 years	University level club	National
F	Female	Faculty of Psychology	4th year	19 years	University level club & city level club	International & National

Theoretical framework

This study will look at the interaction of various internal and external factors that influence the career decisions of sports-talented undergraduate students. This study will use the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management (CSM) because CSM has been used to discuss problems, planning, and athlete career transitions in previous studies (Demulier et al., 2013; Wendling & Sagas, 2020). Compared to other frameworks, CSM can capture dynamic relationships between social cognitive, environmental, and personality factors that can influence adaptive behavior in career decision-making (Wendling & Sagas, 2020). Therefore, the researcher believes that CSM can answer the research question thoroughly.

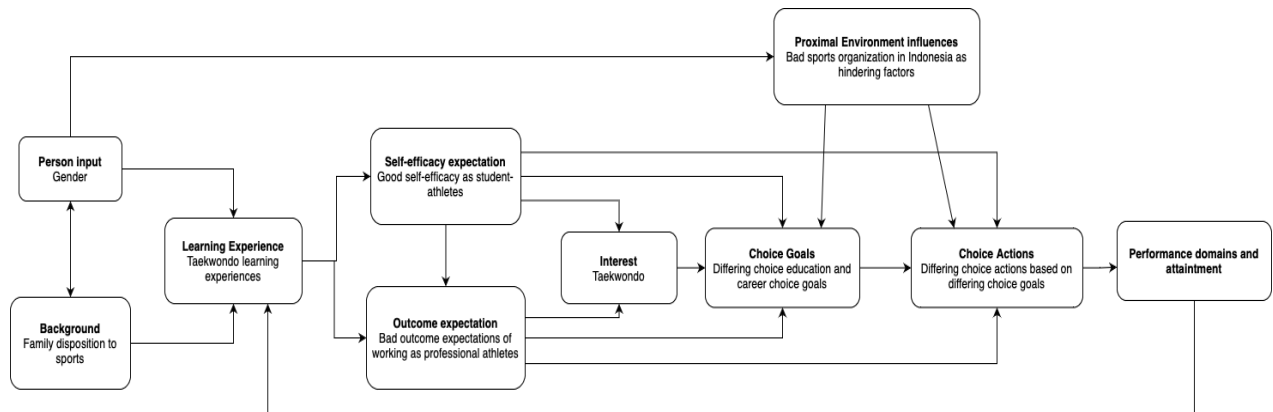
Data collection & analysis

Six sports-talented undergraduate students who were active in the Taekwondo club and willing to participate in interviews were used to gather information using semi-structured interviews. All participants were interviewed in one session on a different day within two

weeks. The researchers did a second interview session with the participants after speaking with everyone to probe deeper. Each session lasted 90 - 120 minutes and was carried out by the first and/or second authors via virtual meetings. The participants' answers were immediately transcribed after the meeting based on the recording.

RESULT

Figure 1: Factors behind Student-Athlete's Career & Education Choices



Note: This figure demonstrates the factors that influence and how those factors influence student-athlete's career and education choices

Factors Influencing Career Decision Making

The results of the interviews in this study will be reviewed using the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management (CSM) as follows.

Persons Input & Background

Individual identity and the context in which the individual originates are distal variables that affect individuals from birth (Lent & Brown, 2013). Individuals will be aware of the state of the environment and its abilities so that it influences the beliefs and expectations that individuals build regarding the possibility of completing a task (Gonzales, 2015). One of the sources we interviewed described that gender and the beliefs held by his parents were the main reasons for him to start working in Taekwondo.

So when I was little, I was encouraged by my parents to start learning Taekwondo because they believed that boys should be able to do martial arts... and for girls, it was optional.... This principle is inherited from the father's family. My father's job as a soldier in the army makes it obligatory for his son to master a martial art skill. So that when facing problems outside the house, we can protect ourselves. (Source person B)

Another student-athlete explained that her grandfather, who was active in other martial arts, made martial arts not a foreign field to her. On the other hand, the informant's gender identity, as a woman, is something that the local community discusses. People feel source person C is not suitable to practice Taekwondo and recommended more feminine sports, such

as dance. Even so, source person C decided to ignore it because both of the informant's parents supported her since she was young, as in the following quote:

My parents are not active in sports like taekwondo. Only my grandfather participated in Pencak Silat (Indonesia's traditional martial arts)... I did feel there was a stigma about why girls would participate in sports like this. Some say, such as my aunt, that it was better to join something feminine like dancing. But, I did not care about those words because my parents are very supportive. (Source person C)

The aforementioned quotations agree with past studies that indicated the importance of family in athletes' skills development (Portenga, 2019). The likelihood that a person will engage in certain sports can also be influenced by personal traits, as Source Person C that received negative views from those around her demonstrate. Furthermore, individual characteristics can influence which sport to pursue and how long to pursue the sport.

Experience in Establishing Self-efficacy and Outcome Expectations

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his ability to perform a behavior or complete particular tasks (Bandura, 1982 in MacAfee & Comeau, 2020; Lent & Brown, 2013). Meanwhile, outcome expectations are individual anticipations and beliefs about the physical, affective, and social consequences of their behavior (Fasbender, 2018). Based on the interview results, we found a link between short-term and long-term outcome expectations with different consequence outcome expectations.

In the short-term outcome expectation regarding the impact of Taekwondo, the source persons have a positive consequence outcome expectation. That is, the sources believe that the sport of Taekwondo has a good effect on their development. As in the following quote:

For example, when I was in middle school, my friends would hang out after school. On the other hand, I had to practice. The same goes for college. After class, people can go home, but I have to practice and prepare for matches... I became more disciplined. I have to be strict in my training, and strict with what I eat so I do not gain weight. I believe the self-control skills transferred to other aspects of my life. (Source person A)

I do not think that there is a big difference between athletes and non-athletes. But when it comes to me, I think I am braver. It's like if I go through a small road where there are shady people who are scary, I will be braver compared to non-athletes... My friendships also become broader and more diverse. (Source person F)

Furthermore, other interviewees have felt the positive impact of Taekwondo on themselves so they want to promote the sport they participate in so that other people can also experience it. That's why source person A plans to build a fighter school in his hometown. This school is for adolescents aged 12-17 who cannot attend school. Apart from teaching Taekwondo and other martial arts, source person B also wanted to teach basic lessons, such as math, to these adolescents.

People who participate in martial arts are less easily provoked and are better able to control their behavior when no one else is around. Of course, not all athletes are like that but on average... Time management should also be better because they have to

practice for matches, but there are still classes or other activities... In the future, I want to make a fighter school... This school will teach self-defense to children who can't go to school... Currently, I'm still alone but I want to take it to the Ministry (Source person B)

However, all interviewees had a bad relationship between long-term outcome expectations and consequence outcome expectations. All student-athletes stated and agreed that the career field as a Taekwondo athlete would not have a good impact on their future based on financial appreciation for Taekwondo athletes and career paths as an athlete in Indonesia.

Considering future careers come from the athlete's career path. I can not be there forever... So it's better to focus on another career with longer job prospects (Source person A)

I did not become an athlete because I also need money for my future... I think it is very selfish if I force myself to be an athlete to my family. (Source person B)

Based on the interview, we can see that the relationship between the length of the outcome expectation -short or long term-, and its consequences can vary. Furthermore, some sources show differences in the relationship between outcome expectations and self-efficacy. Source person E had good skills, but the student-athletes also understood sports in Indonesia would not be able to accommodate her skills to the fullest. She drew this conclusion based on her prior experiences. One of these instances was when a veteran athlete who had competed in multinational competitions as a national team member still played in the inter-provincial competition. She considers it to be unfair and evidence of the shortcomings in Indonesian Taekwondo culture. Because of this practice, young athletes have been deprived of the opportunity to grow and learn.

Yeah, it's not her class anymore... she (the senior athlete) has played in the SEA Games but was still sent down for the provincial level competition... (the coach and the team) want to chase the winning money... Other regions also feel it's unfair. (Source person E)

Additionally, Indonesian sports are still plagued with "politics," which can be detrimental to athletes.

I was replaced by an athlete who was not as good as me because the coach knew I would not continue as an athlete... Yes, politics exists... Parents can bribe the coach to put their child as an athlete or have private lessons with the coach... Parents bribe like that because XX (province resource person playing) is prestigious so the smaller teams and parents want to send their children to play for XX... Yes, there is a monopoly too. Good teams can monopolize who plays, so small teams want to sell their athletes to big teams. (Source person E)

Experiencing all these instances, the interviewees had bad outcome expectations of their careers as athletes. These different results indicate that good self-efficacy does not promise positive outcome expectations. Athletes' expectations for their performance will be influenced by several other variables, including their career field's capacity to nurture their talents, the culture of the career field, and the career field's ability to maintain their quality of life. Unfortunately, due to improper practices, as reported by our sources, Indonesian sports,

particularly Taekwondo, have not been able to establish a setting that develops the talent of athletes.

Nonetheless, source person E still loves Taekwondo so she adapts so that she can still contribute to that field other than as an athlete. The method chosen by the resource persons is to become a referee and/or coach.

Financial appreciation nowadays is better for referees or coaches... Referees need good analytical skills and can make decisions in a split second... I have been offered to be a national or national referee because I already meet the qualifications... Yes, I want to continue to become an athlete because there is still no vitality as an athlete in Indonesia... Taekwondo athletes in Indonesia are still few and there are no Taekwondo athletes who can live a prosperous life. (Source person E)

Based on that quote, we can see that source person E realized that financial appreciation as a coach or referee would be better than athletes and showed the outcome expectation as a coach or referee was better. Meanwhile, resource person E was aware of their abilities and intelligence, so the informants felt capable of being a referee even though they had heavier demands, which indicates positive self-efficacy. This finding was consistent with previous research that found that positive outcome expectations can increase individual interest and influence career decisions taken (Chen et al., 2016). Therefore, the informant decided to continue her career as a referee and a coach, not as an athlete.

Self-efficacy can be constructed from four sources, namely mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and psychological states (Huang, Mayer, & Usher, 2020; MacAfee & Comeau, 2020). Mastery experience refers to an individual's prior experiences of success or failure and is believed to most influence the formation of self-efficacy (Hendricks, 2015; MacAfee & Comeau, 2020; Sheu et al., 2018).

Our interviewee claimed that since she had practiced rigorously beforehand, she was confident in her ability to prevail in the game. Furthermore, source person D stated that the Taekwondo that she participated in was a Poomsae competition. Therefore, her success in doing certain movements during practice would increase his self-efficacy.

I feel that if the practice is good, the results will be good... I become more confident if I train consistently... I would be able to see the target more clearly. For example, for a belt rank increase test, I will make sure that I can do the techniques during practice so that when it is checked, I feel confident that I can do it. (Source person D)

The next factor is vicarious experience. When a person's perception of their chances for success is shaped by personal observations of other people's results, this is known as a vicarious experience (Hendricks, 2015; Huang, Mayer, & Usher, 2020; MacAfee & Comeau, 2020). If those who are similar to the individual experience success, the individual will believe that they can too (Bandura, 1997 in Huang, Mayer, & Usher, 2020; MacAfee & Comeau, 2020). The following remark is from one of the student-athletes we spoke with, who indicated that their older brother, who was already involved in Taekwondo, was the reason they felt capable and motivated to practice Taekwondo:

I started Taekwondo at the age of 3 because I have two older brothers and a younger sister. Everyone joins Taekwondo, but what makes me want to participate in Taekwondo is that I watched my brother practice Taekwondo. (Source person F)
At that time, I tagged along to pick up my sister and it looked interesting. The coach then asked me to participate. In the end, I have continued to practice Taekwondo until now. (Source person D)

Then, self-efficacy can also be formed from verbal persuasion or feedback from others. Positive feedback will make individuals feel capable of doing the tasks whereas negative feedback can make individuals doubt their abilities (Hendricks, 2015; MacAfee & Comeau, 2020). Supported by the statement of one of our sources. Source person D stated that when she wanted to give up in the middle of the match, her coach gave encouragement and motivated the resource person to keep trying and focus until the end. Based on the story of source D, sports clubs, especially Taekwondo, can be a crucial place for the development of talent in students. Furthermore, the trainer also provided input on the techniques used so that the student-athletes could improve their techniques.

I have many coaches, both in clubs and on-campus... My coach at UI used to encourage me when he found out I was injured because he knew I do not like pain... There was a moment when I wanted to give up in the second round because I felt that I would not win the third round. I told the coach, and the coach reminded me that there was only one game left for me to win gold. So the coach was like, 'Come on, focus! Just a little bit more to win.' It's like when I can't kick with my left foot, but the coach gave me advice on how to do it... I would practice again so that later in the match I can kick with my right or left foot. (Source person D)

Finally, psychological states can affect individual self-efficacy. Individual performance will decrease when individuals feel anxious (Huang, Mayer, & Usher, 2020). Therefore, individuals' confidence in their abilities can decrease when in high arousal (MacAfee & Comeau, 2020). In our interview, the student-athletes realized that her psychological state before the competition could affect her performance. Thus, source person D tries to always think positively before the match and does not try to find out information about her opponent so that source person D can concentrate on the competition.

What makes me sure of winning is because I have practiced. There are prayers from my parents, too. I just try to always think positively. If not, I will become nervous, and that will affect my performance... The coach also said to me to not look for information about my opponent after the bracket was out. Because people can change, we also don't know how hard they practice. So, I make sure not to be down or have a weird mindset before the game. (Source person D)

These various factors cause individuals to have high outcome expectations. That is, individuals believe that what they do will bring positive consequences (Lent & Brown, 2013). In our interview session, one of the student-athletes shared that an experience she could never forget was when she won bronze in a championship. This experience was unforgettable because the result was worse than her expectations and history of achievement. The quotation below shows that informants have high outcome expectations because of their previous experience:

An unforgettable championship moment was when my team won bronze. At that time, we always get gold. During the tryouts before the championships, the main thing is that we always get gold. Yet maybe because we are used to it, on the day of the big championships we only won bronze. (Source person E)

Barriers Affecting Career Decisions

Based on the information provided by the student-athletes regarding their future career plans, all the student-athletes expressed that they would not pursue their sports career professionally. There was a student-athlete who stated that he would quit Taekwondo completely, and there was a student-athlete who decided to become a referee or a coach. The consequence of personality and contextual influence on career goals that's what leads to this change in career.

Lent & Brown (2013) stated that environmental support and the absence of barriers will make individuals more likely to set goals and carry out adaptive career behavior. Environmental influences, in the form of support or obstacles, can directly influence objective and adaptive career behavior, affect the strength of the objective relationship with behavior, or affect self-efficacy and outcome expectations which then affect individual objectives (Lent & Brown, 2013). For student-athletes, barriers perceived by student-athletes can affect sports career planning (Urbanaviciute et al., 2016; Wendling & Sagas, 2020). For our informants, finance is the biggest barrier, so the informants decide not to continue their sports careers:

To be honest, there are those who offered me to become a professional athlete because the coaches see potential in me, and there are thoughts of becoming an athlete. But my father asked me to explore other fields, for example, the academic field. For sport itself in our country, it has not been paid much attention. It is different from abroad. That was the reason why my father was reasonable enough to think again and again to decide to become a professional athlete. (Source person B)

As for athletes, I have had enough. Seeing the capacity of Taekwondo athletes in Indonesia to live is still not there.... In addition, the financial appreciation for the referee or coach is better than for the athlete. (Source person E)

Another barrier is the age of the student-athletes. Informants feel that his age is not young anymore making it difficult to compete with other athletes who are still growing:

As for athletes, it seems I had enough. Looking at my age, I am not young, and this is my limit. For even higher levels it will be difficult. (Source person A)

Another factor to be considered by student-athletes is the fact that each of them has advantages in other fields, namely academics. Furthermore, the encouragement from parents who prioritize education makes student-athletes choose not to continue their careers as professional athletes. This makes them choose other options with less risk than pursuing a career as a student-athlete:

It's a shame in my opinion (to pursue the sport professionally) because the competition is also quite tough. While I also have potential in other fields. In academics. With my psychology studies, I can work in HR or continue pursuing

clinical psychology.... So my parents' suggestion is to pursue my academic education. (Source person F)

I really wanted to be a professional athlete since junior high school, but my parents are very concerned about education... When I wanted to enroll in a Specialized Sports School, one of the considerations was whether I was sure I would persist in Taekwondo and wouldn't get bored... When I was deciding on a major and university, I wanted to major in sports at Universitas Negeri Jakarta, but my parents still pushed me to focus on academics. (Source person D)

Interest, Choice Goal, and Choice Actions

Individual interest in a particular career area makes individuals select and pursue that field (Lent et al., 2006). At that time, individuals will gather information about that field before finally taking action to achieve their desired career goals (Chan et al., 2016). In our study, the same thing happened. All our sources have the same interest, namely in the field of Taekwondo. Hence, the chosen goal is to actively participate in Taekwondo. To achieve their chosen goal, the student-athletes used various methods, such as moving locations, and changing coaches, and teams to develop their careers (John, Gropper, & Thiel, 2019). These can be found in informant D who decided to move clubs with new coaches and team members because of his desire to focus on Poomsae Taekwondo.

Nonetheless, due to the factors previously explained, our interviewees' future career goal choice is not to become a Taekwondo athlete again. The interviewees have spent most of their lives engaging in this sport, like one of the interviewees who has been practicing since the age of 3 and collected various information about this field. Based on the experience and information they had, the student-athletes then determined whether this career field was right for them or not. All interviewees felt that this career field was not suitable and decided not to continue their career as an athlete. As a result, our sources have different choice goals. Regardless, some of the student-athletes wanted to continue practicing Taekwondo in their daily lives, some wanted to become referees, and some wanted to quit this sport. Differences in the choice goals of the resource persons occurred due to differences in the factors discussed earlier. Consequently, the student-athletes will then take action to achieve their new choice goal.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research interview indicate that the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-management model (CSM) can be used to explain career decisions and education of Taekwondo student-athletes in Indonesia. Where support from family, friends, and coaches is the main factor driving student-athletes to start and persist in this career field. Meanwhile, environmental factors, such as the ability of the sports field to support student-athletes lives and develop their talents, and personal characteristics, such as age and gender, can influence the decision of whether student-athletes will remain active in this field or not. Unfortunately, the field of sports in Indonesia has not been able to become an area that can develop the athlete's talents to the fullest. The sport also cannot be seen as a primary job in Indonesia, so all of the student-athletes we interviewed agreed not to play sports as their main job. Especially considering that these student-athletes have good intelligence so that they have other career options that still can be developed.

According to the study's findings, Indonesia's relevant parties should be aware of any gaps and implement suitable programs for the professional and academic advancement of student-athletes. Unseemly and greedy activities must end to prevent Indonesia's gifted children from having their gifts buried. Since we believe some of our source people might continue their athletic careers if Indonesia's sports area improves from where it is presently. Further research needs to be conducted to look at the factors that influence the career and educational decisions of student-athletes who are not intelligent in the academic field. We believe that these student-athletes can choose other career fields as their primary career because they have good academic intelligence. Different stories will be more likely to emerge for those student-athletes with less scholastic/academic competence under a similar climate of sport in Indonesia.

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