

The Role of Identity Statuses on Freshman Student's Decision Making in Choosing Education Degree Program

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Abstract

The development of a stable sense of self is considered to be one of the central tasks of human being. Erikson (1902-1994) explained that during normative development, the influence of experimentation and exploration in personality and vocational roles became the important aspects in constructing individual identities (Santrock, 2007). Extending this theory, James Marcia proposed four identity statuses of psychological identity development, which are identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. Using this theory, Marcia explained that one's sense of identity is determined largely by crises (exploring choices) and commitments (Papalia & Martorell, 2012). It is believed that person with well-developed identity had experienced decision making period and committed to a certain choice (i.e. education degree program, occupation, sex-role orientation, and religious belief). Based on the well-known theory that adolescence is a period of identity formation, authors attempted to investigate how adolescents' identity statuses may influence their decision making, specifically in choosing education degree program. Choosing educational degree program is important for a person since it influences the person's career in future. Furthermore, authors will also discuss the possible factors influencing adolescents' identity statuses and potential solutions to deal with issue of less developed identity statuses.

Keywords: identity statuses, decision making, education degree program

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Introduction

Many high-school graduates in Indonesia are unable to decide their further study for they are uncertain about their area of interests (Sarwono, 2005). Psychologists, especially in big cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan are having more clients to participate in aptitude tests, primarily in the month of January to May, to know their interests and to determine which area of educations are more proper to their potentials and personality (Sarwono, 2005). Moesono reported (in Sarwono, 2005) that high-school students did not really know what exactly they wanted, which exactly the direction of education they pursued. They did not get the information in details on the area of study they were looking for, they were not get used to find the information in details, 40% of them tended to obtain informations merely based on the information from their parents, and the rest of their decision tended to be based on risk taking behavior. They did not develop critical thinking and they did not know how to use feedback if they ever obtained them.

Decision making may not be that simple. Making decision to participate in an education program that is not suitable for a person may later inhibits the learning process. Stoner and Winkel (2003), explained that decision making is deciding to act in one single direction as a form of problem solving. Rakhmat (2012) explained that there are various forms of decision making which contained as such: (a) a decision as the result of thinking process and thus a form of intellectual effort, (b) a decision always includes choices from various possible alternatives, and (c) a decision is followed by action although it may be postponed or forgotten.

A person who has decided to attend high education in a university generally is an adolescent, the developmental stage between children and adult. Ali (2007) explained that the tasks in adolescent years consisted of adjusting the self in the developmental process whether physically or psychologically, becoming independent and getting adjusted with the social norms and values, and affirming the personal identity. Affirming personal identity determines who he or she is and what he or she wants to be. To affirm the the self identity, one must seek for working alternatives, choose one of the best possible vocation or work based on the personal interest, and has the commitment to have achievement in accordance to the identity (Marcia, 1966).

Erikson explained this developmental stage as the psychosocial stage of identity vs identity confusion (Papalia & Martorell, 2012). Erikson also stated that this stage of development as a crucial stage for a person to obtain identity between the crisis and commitment. Marcia (in Papalia & Martorell, 2012) divided the process into four (4) conditions: the identity achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, and diffusion. According to Marcia (1966) the adolescents who had achieved identity achievement had made personal commitment toward a particular identity after going through the period of crisis and exploration. Whereas they in the moratorium stage were they who had explored but not having commitment. They in the foreclosure stage had not experienced crisis but had determine their identity commitment. The identity diffusion happens when adolescents confuse on their identities and they do not explore to change their identities. Erikson portrayed how the committed identity can grow in the choosen carrier, sex-roles, family roles and in religious, and political perspectives.

Success in forming the self identity will help adolescents to obtain the proper roles in their life (Afrilyanti, Herlina, & Rahmalia, 2015). Development of self identity in the adolescents will influence the directions of their behaviors, their attitudes toward the environment, their personal conducts in their jobs, and reasons of their choices (Martono, 2006). Based on the above considerations, college students are expected to make good decisions. This research is aimed at finding the role of identity statuses of freshmen students on their decisions to choose the direction of their studies.

Conclusion

The results indicate that identity status has the role as much as 26,9% on decision making of freshmen, and the other 73,1% are influenced by other factors. This result is parallel with the statement of Moesono (in Sarwono, 2005), that students tend to utilize minimum information to choose their educational program; they are not so critical and they do not use feedback.

This research also obtained that identity achievement has significant role on decision making. This result is similar to Marcia (1966) concept that student who have identity achievement have made personal commitment following the period of crisis and exploration. Thus they have gone through the process of decision making in choosing their educational programs. Students in the foreclosure stage do not experience crisis but they also have determine their identity commitment, similar to the concept of Marcia (1966). They may be conform to others such as based on parental direction or they follow friends. Therefore, they may change their interests in the middle of the program, change their study program or terminate their education for good.

Students in the stage of identity moratorium have been experiencing crisis, thus they have not really determine their choice in attending their program. Most of them make decision based more on trial and error. For example, some students in psychology are not so sure whether they want to have carrier as psychologists. They are trying to see if the program fits their interests. These students may continue the program if they later on feel the program fits them, they may change or terminate if they consider non fit their interests.

The identity diffusion has no significant role to decision making. They who are in this stage basically do not know exactly the reason for attending the program. They are still confused on their identities as explained by Marcia (1966). They may remain in their program for unclear reason, they may leave the program for various reasons, or they may stay in the program because being instructed by parents. They do not make personal decisions, rather their social environment determines their decision, or they make decision based on their social environment requests. The solution for such problems, specially for students in identity diffusion stage is give them psychoeducation about all kinds of program they can choose, the challenges they have to deal with along the way, and job opportunities they can have with a spesific type of degree.

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