

Effectiveness of Career Centers for Islamic Universities

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ABSTRACT

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This research examines the vital role of career centers in universities, specifically in facilitating and guiding students towards successful career paths after completing their college education. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study involves counselors as informants and incorporates the perspectives of students who utilize the services of the career center. The findings emphasize the pivotal responsibility of universities in nurturing the career growth of their graduates. Consequently, universities collaborate closely with career centers to establish effective frameworks, plan comprehensive career development programs, and furnish students with crucial career-related information. The career center serves as a dynamic platform where students can actively engage in discussions pertaining to career exploration, access up-to-date job market intelligence, and acquire the essential skills demanded by prospective employers.



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INTRODUCTION

The unemployment rate in Indonesia reached 1.98% or approximately 4.15 million people in 2022 (Central Statistics Agency, 2022). Having a job and a position is the dream of students after graduating from college. Career refers to all positions or jobs held or carried out by an individual during their working period (Arismunandar & Khair, 2020). To obtain a job and a position, students are required to have solid career preparation in order to adapt to the working world. Career maturity is an individual's willingness to face career development tasks (Syamsu & Satrianta, 2021). The career maturity of students in their final year can be seen from their willingness to work in line with their education.

Career is a set of attitudes and behaviors related to lifelong work and job experiences, and a series of ongoing activities (Multiya, 2018). Thus, an individual's career involves a series of different path choices. Currently, many graduates do not work in fields related to their majors or do not have any profession due to the limited number of job vacancies in specific fields compared to the number of job seekers in government agencies, offices, private companies that only prioritize vacancies and positions without considering educational backgrounds (Rahman et al., 2020). In 2022, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Lhokseumawe (IAIN Lhokseumawe) graduated a total of 715 students (IAIN Lhokseumawe Public Relations, 2022). Considering the number of graduates, it becomes one of the reasons why students find it difficult to secure jobs, and many of them end up unemployed. In this case, colleges play a crucial role in guiding students in determining their careers.

Colleges collaborate with career centers to guide and provide guidance to students regarding the working world. A career center in a college has many advantages. Therefore, career guidance can become an information center for work-life and can help solve career-related issues (Rahmat, 2020). Career centers can provide information to students about the types of jobs that are currently in demand. Additionally, career centers provide an overview of the types of workforce needed in the job market.

Career Center is a guide for preparing oneself to face the world of work in choosing a specific job, position, task, or profession, and preparing for accepting a job position and adapting to various requirements of the chosen job (Anwar, 2021). College career centers not only offer programs that facilitate students in starting their careers but also enhance the quality of students so that they have very high standards (Rahmat, 2020). College career centers should have a broad mission or role because they not only think about where graduates work but also pay attention to the personalities of the graduates produced. Personal development of students is also a task of professional orientation at the college.

The research aims to determine the role of career centers in a college in helping or nurturing students to face the world of work and also provide information on the character needed by the job market. Career centers in a college play a very important role in helping students and graduates design their future careers and provide solutions to students and graduates regarding job vacancies that are relevant to the majors they have previously taken.

According to previous research conducted by Fitriani, with the existence of a career center, information can be made more effective and provide information to students about the work skills needed to produce excellent human resources in their respective fields (Arifin & Hendro, 2017). Career centers are a means for college students and graduates to ask, discuss, and solve career problems faced by students or graduates in a college. With the existence of college career centers, it is expected that alumni or graduates can find suitable jobs.

Career centers at colleges serve the knowledge requirements of professional life needed by colleges and respond to the challenges of the working world (Wahyudi et al, 2021). College career centers play an important role in helping students and graduates solve career problems. Additionally, career centers also provide information on the character currently needed by the job market and provide an overview for students and graduates regarding the working world.

METHODS

This research uses qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The sources of information are college counselors, several students, and graduates of Ar-raniry State Islamic University as users of the career center services. The determination of information sources is based on the data needs of the career center. This research was conducted at Ar-raniry State Islamic University. The data collection technique was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data management technique was done by testing the validity of the data. The data management stages include data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification or conclusion. Then, the data is analyzed comparatively.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to Pasmawati, a career center is a guide to preparing for a professional life, choosing a specific field of work, position, or profession, and getting ready to take on job responsibilities and adapt to the different requirements of the field of work (Anwar, 2021). A career center is a service for students to develop their careers and a source of information about the working world. It not only focuses on career development but also emphasizes the students' character in facing the working world. During the career development

process, students are expected to understand and be aware of the need to make career choices, understand their own interests and skills, and identify and engage in work that aligns with those skills and interests. Training courses or workshops are provided to prepare students for their career paths (Rahma et al., 2020).

According to Hidayati, there are three steps that need to be completed in a career center: planning, decision-making, and self-adjustment (Rahmat, 2020). Career planning involves desires and dreams for the future and is planned well in advance. According to Frank Parson, as cited by Wilken & Hastuti, career planning helps students choose a job that aligns with their potential, making it easier for them to perform their work (Atmaja, 2014).

A career center is extremely important for students because it aims to assist them in self-discovery, understanding their environment, and planning for their future (Rahmat, 2020). Meanwhile, Yusuf states that a career center is a guide that helps individuals plan, develop, and solve career-related problems. It involves understanding job positions and responsibilities, understanding terms and self-efficacy, understanding environmental conditions, career development, and job adjustment (Lestari, 2017). Career guidance is an effort to assist individuals in self-discovery, understanding the working world, and developing a future that aligns with their desired work lifestyle.

The Career Center is an institution that aims to assist students in preparing for the workforce. They provide career resources such as information on career opportunities, industry trends, job requirements, and qualifications needed. Additionally, the Career Center offers career counseling services to help students explore their interests, values, skills, and career goals. Through individual or group counseling sessions, students can gain a better understanding of themselves and match their interests and skills with available career opportunities. The Career Center also organizes skill development training relevant to the workplace, such as communication, leadership, professional development, and technical skills. These trainings help students enhance the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.

The Career Center assists students in searching and obtaining job information. They provide access to job databases, connect students with companies and organizations, and provide information on the recruitment and selection process. With this assistance, students can improve their chances of

finding jobs that align with their interests and qualifications. The Career Center also helps students in crafting resumes, writing cover letters, and preparing other important documents needed in job applications. They provide valuable guidance and feedback to help students create effective documents that highlight their strengths and achievements.

The Career Center conducts job interview simulations. Through these simulation sessions, students can practice answering interview questions, improve their communication skills, and receive useful feedback. These interview simulations help students feel more confident and prepared to face real job interviews in the workforce. Through this support, the Career Center helps students develop job readiness, enhance necessary skills, identify suitable career opportunities, and approach the challenges of job searching with greater confidence.

The Function and Purpose of a Career Center in higher education institutions

A Career Center is an institution within the structure of a higher education institution that has a mission to connect students and graduates seeking employment with the workforce. Career centers can offer benefits to colleges and educational institutions such as: (1) determining the proportion of graduates entering the workforce, (2) preparing graduates for the skills required and expected by industries, (3) guiding the government in identifying industry needs and development to support education in Indonesia (Syafiq, 2018). Career centers play a strategic role as a bridge or connector between higher education institutions and the labor market, but also play a role in enhancing the skills of graduates.

Career Centers strive to assist students in developing and planning their careers in preparation for the workforce (Rahma et al, 2021). Career Centers are vital for students to provide guidance in preparing for the transition to work life and ensuring that the existing skills are properly developed. Additionally, Career Centers are available for senior students, graduates, or alumni who are waiting for employment, to minimize job demands and issues related to unpreparedness in entering the workforce (Prasmawati, 2018).

Career centers in higher education institutions serve many purposes. They can serve as centers of information on the workforce, career planning, and problem-solving related to employment (Subhan et al, 2019). Career centers provide orientation to students to inform them about the jobs in demand.

Additionally, Career Centers provide an overview of the types of jobs currently needed in the labor market.

The goal of the Career Center is to ensure that students and graduates are aware of, understand, and comprehend their potential so that they can develop that potential (Setyono & Ingsih, 2019). The career center services also provide students with psychological interventions to enable them to have a healthy, rational, and emotional mindset to function productively and at their best.

The mission of the Career Center is to help students plan their careers and provide them with the personal information needed in the job market. Career planning is a process where individuals can identify their career goals and take action to achieve them (Syahputra & Hati, 2015). Career planning involves identifying career-related goals and making plans to achieve those career goals.

It is expected that the existence of the Career Center services can assist students and alumni in finding jobs that match their skills and knowledge. Additionally, it can be used to track the acceptance, progress, and status of students and alumni in their professional lives. The Career Center services help and provide the workforce that meets the needs of companies or industries that employ such workforce. As a Career Development Center, alumni and students are recruited and selected. It is hoped that with this function, in collaboration with companies or industries, unemployment can be reduced.

The goal of the Career Center is to support students with their professional maturity (Fadhilah et al, 2015), until students acquire the following education and insights: 1) understanding the appropriate conditions and skills, 2) being aware of the values that exist within oneself, others, and society, 3) learning about different job skills and interests, types of upbringing and specific nurturing fields, 4) becoming aware of the desire to contribute to the development of society and the country, 5) the ability to make decisions and create plans to implement those decisions, 6) preparation that can facilitate entry into professional life, 7) the ability to solve specific career problems, and 8) appreciation for a healthy work environment (Rahma et al, 2020).

The Process of The Career Center in Higher Education

There are several stages in the implementation of a career center, namely planning, decision-making, and student adaptation in their careers (Hidayati, 2015). In the planning stage, counselors conduct initial observations of students' interests and abilities. Then they adapt to the available jobs.

There is a strong correlation between jobs and students' interests and abilities because it relates to the basic capabilities of individuals in working. The first step is the design process, which can be done by reviewing students' personal information and then conducting interviews. Interviews are conducted by asking questions that can reflect students' interests and abilities. Counselors must be good communicators, competent, and empathetic so that students can clearly express their identities as graduates of the Career Center.

The second stage is decision-making, which is done through discussions between counselors and students. Counselors offer guidance regarding career options available in the professional world. Then, students can ask any questions they have. This serves as the basis for decision-making. In the career center, the decision-making process is carried out by the students themselves, as counselors only play a role as guides to assist and address students' career issues.

The final step is student adaptation in the working world, planning, and decision-making. In the decision-making process, students make changes to their desired career choices with guidance from counselors. Counselors establish the appropriate criteria for students. These criteria should be available to students so that they can easily be accepted into their desired positions.

A Higher Education Career Center is designed to serve various functions, including: (1) facilitating graduates in finding job vacancies, (2) posting job vacancies through bulletin boards, social media, and websites, (3) collaborating with Career Center service users, (4) organizing career coaching seminars and training for students and alumni to expand their professional networks and enhance their professional lives, (5) providing career advice for students and alumni, (6) collecting tracer studies, (7) collecting user satisfaction data from Career Center services, (8) organizing discussions with stakeholders for curriculum development (Setyono & Ingsih, 2019).

Optimizing Career Center Strategies in Higher Education

Career Center services include four models of career guidance: personal counseling, social counseling, study counseling, and career counseling tailored to the students' developmental levels. These services aim to help students develop optimally so that they can plan their career achievements based on their skills. Career counseling is highly essential as it serves as a center for advice on selection, preparation, search, and adaptation to careers. With the

assistance of the Career Center services offered, students are expected to understand their interests, values, skills, and personality characteristics, and be able to identify various tasks that may be more suitable for them rather than what is expected of them when seeking and pursuing an effective career and achieving their rightful livelihood.

Gibson & Mitchell explain that a career is the sum of someone's life experiences and lifestyle. Conceptually, a career is closely related to work, career development, career training, career guidance, work knowledge, tasks, and career training (Afrida, 2017). It also explains that continuous career, career training, career development, and career counseling are related terms. Professional training encompasses all planned activities and experiences for professional life, and professional development is part of a development package based on learning and preparation for professional life.

Some career issues that arise are: (1) the burden of obtaining a strong understanding of further education after graduation, (2) entering a degree program that is not their choice, (3) not having a job that aligns with their skills and understanding, (4) still being confused in choosing a job based on their interests and skills, and (5) being pessimistic about obtaining the desired job after graduation.

Acquiring a Comprehensive Understanding of Post-Graduate Educational Opportunities: Transitioning individuals face the significant responsibility of gaining a deep understanding of the various educational pathways available after completing their undergraduate studies. This entails exploring and evaluating the different options to make informed decisions about further education.

Enrolling in Degree Programs Misaligned with Personal Preferences: Some individuals may find themselves entering degree programs that do not align with their personal preferences. This mismatch can lead to dissatisfaction and hinder their ability to pursue careers that truly resonate with their interests and aspirations.

Lack of Employment Opportunities Aligned with Skills and Comprehension: Transitioning individuals may encounter challenges in finding job opportunities that match their skills and understanding. This discrepancy can result in difficulties securing employment that effectively utilizes their capabilities and knowledge.

Confusion in Career Path Selection: Many individuals experience persistent confusion when it comes to selecting a career path. Factors such as personal interests and aptitudes play a crucial role in this decision-making process, and without clarity, individuals may struggle to identify a suitable career direction.

Pessimism Regarding Attainment of Desired Employment: A significant concern for transitioning individuals is the pessimism they may harbor regarding their ability to secure desired employment opportunities after graduation. This pessimism can stem from various factors, such as market competitiveness or a lack of confidence in their skills and qualifications.

The importance of addressing these career-related challenges to ensure a smooth and successful transition from academia to the professional world. By providing support and guidance in navigating these issues, individuals can enhance their prospects and increase their chances of achieving fulfilling and satisfying careers.

CONCLUSION

Higher education institutions provide career centers for graduates and students to assist them in designing their careers, providing information about the working world, and the character traits needed by the job market. Universities collaborate with career centers to prepare competent graduates who are ready to compete in the professional world. Career centers also serve as a bridge for students, graduates, or alumni to communicate about work-related issues and the desired characteristics sought by the job market. Career centers work together with universities to help plan and design students' careers after graduating from higher education institutions.

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