

Trend in obtaining career information in the digital era within the context of post-covid-19 career anxiety

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Trend in obtaining career information in the digital era within the context of post-covid-19 career anxiety



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to analyze trend in obtaining career information in the digital era within the context of post-COVID-19 career anxiety. This was a comparative descriptive study and the data were obtained through random sampling. The sample consisted of 267 students randomly selected from various universities in East Aceh. Furthermore, career anxiety scale was used as the main measurement tool, which has high reliability with Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 and item reliability in Rasch 0.98. Descriptive analysis and ANOVA test were used to analyze the data. The results showed significant differences in level of post-COVID-19 career anxiety based on gender and addiction level. However, in the context of career information, there were no statistically significant differences. Another interesting result was that career information from friends remained trend in the digital era, and this trend persisted till present. Therefore, the results of this study can be used as a basis for the development of programs to overcome career anxiety.

Keywords:

Career anxiety, Post Covid-19, Addiction level, Career information, Digital era

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Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic was a condition that had a significant impact on the education and career prospects of students worldwide. Studies showed that the outbreak increased students concerns about their career (Aristovnik et al., 2020; Mahmud et al., 2021; Wathelet et al., 2020). Furthermore, students faced new challenges and worried about their future amidst the rapid changes in the world of work (Zakaria et al., 2023). Post-pandemic career anxiety had also become an important topic to investigate as it affected students well-being and success in planning and developing their career (Maharani & Oktariana, 2020). According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) records, the unemployment rate for university graduates increased from 3.09% in February 2020 to 3.11% and increased again to 5.02% in August 2020. This increase was due to the large number of universities in Indonesia which produced thousands of new scholars from various regions, both private and public institutions.

The current quality of life of individuals was often influenced by career uncertainty, which resulted to anxiety (Botha & Mostert, 2013). During the global pandemic, career-related anxiety increased, specifically among fresh college graduates (Hadi et al., 2022; Siregar et al., 2021). According to career development theory, students between the ages of 23 and 25 years form career expectations and commitments (Super, 1980; Tsai et al., 2017). Due to the emergence of an undesirable global phenomenon, normal expectation level have decreased, and situations like the fear of COVID-19 have

become the greatest threats to those planning their future career (Tsai et al., 2017). Therefore, in this uncertain environment, potential workforce fears have transformed into career anxiety, and individuals are unable to make sound future decisions (Kaplan & Brown, 1987; Vignoli, 2015). Studies in France (Vignoli, 2015) showed that the difficulties among French adolescents in making assessments about their future career were exacerbated by the fear of failure. This was characterized by the fear of unemployment or concerns about academic failure.

Susan Heitler presented the study results on career anxiety which is the most common type. The results showed that career anxiety affected about 25% of all male and 30% of all female students (Heitler, 1990). Experts have also observed trend of increasing anxiety level and disorders among college students and individuals in general. A mental health survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2018 showed teenagers were very anxious about their career. In the survey, as many as 70% of students or individuals who were pursuing higher education stated that anxiety and depression were their main problems, while only 26% considered anxiety to be a less significant problem.

There are additional factors that influence level of student career anxiety during the pandemic. such as gender. Study has shown that there were significant differences in level of career anxiety between male and female students (Ramanda et al., 2022). These differences may be attributed to varying social roles and expectations set by the society based on gender (Cadaret et al., 2017; Winkel, 2021).

Level of addiction can also play a significant role in post-pandemic student career anxiety. Students with high level of addiction to social media or online games may have difficulty in managing their time and attention. This can have a negative impact on their career information search and addressing future concerns. This was in contrast to (Sinkkonen et al., 2018), which explained that during the early stages of career decision-making, finish adolescents were advised to seek and gather educational and career information through the internet. Despite such recommendations, adolescents often used the internet as a means of entertainment, although not exclusively (Sinkkonen et al., 2018). Recent study that focused on the positive effects of playing video games in various aspects such as cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social have emerged (Granic et al., 2014). Furthermore, (Best et al., 2014) reported that the use of online technology enhanced self-esteem, perceived social support, and social capital. It is important to note that internet use comes with risks, specifically when used excessively or led to dependency (Syahputra et al., 2019). Several criteria have been proposed to evaluate internet addiction. For instance, (Tao et al., 2010) stated that spending a minimum of six hours daily online meets the diagnostic criteria for internet addiction. (Rumpf et al., 2014) considered six hours per day as a threshold that was too high. Syahputra et al. (2022) showed that narcissistic and social media-addicted students typically accessed the internet for more than six hours daily. Both males and females who spend 3-5 hours on the internet differ from those who spend 6-8 or more (King et al., 2016; Syahputra & Erwinda, 2020).

To further understand career anxiety among students in post-COVID-19 pandemic era, it was important to examine the relationship between gender, addiction level, and career information. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the differences and relationships between these variables in the context of student career anxiety after the pandemic. The study focused on career anxiety of students in post-COVID-19 pandemic era based on gender, level of addiction, and career information. Even though previous studies explored student career anxiety, there is still a gap in literature that specifically considers the interaction between these factors. Specifically, there is a need to investigate how gender differences in career anxiety affect students in post-COVID-19 pandemic era. Previous study has shown gender differences in career anxiety among students (Ramanda et al., 2022), but it is not yet clear how the pandemic-related changes affected these differences. Additionally, it is important to understand the impact of addiction level on student career anxiety in post-pandemic era. Factors like level of addiction to social media or technology can influence how students search for career information, manage their time, and respond to future uncertainties. However, there is still a need for in-depth understanding of the relationship between addiction level and student career anxiety in post-COVID-19 pandemic era.



The aspect of information needs to be considered in relation to student career anxiety. Even though there were study that highlighted the role of career information in student career decision-making, it was unclear how the influence of this information manifests in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. It was unclear how differences in addiction level and the use of career information affected student career anxiety. Therefore, this study aimed to fill the gap in literature by analyzing the interaction between gender, addiction level, and career information in relation to student career anxiety in post-COVID-19 pandemic era. By comprehensively understanding these factors, this study is expected to provide deeper insights into career anxiety and provide a stronger foundation for the development of more effective educational programs and services. In addition, the objectives were to analyze trend in obtaining career information in the digital era within the context of post-COVID-19 career anxiety

Methods

Participants

This was a quantitative study with a comparative descriptive design, and the data were obtained through random sampling. The target population was the general population, and the sampling was done through a scale distributed on social media accounts and counseling guidance professional organizations. Furthermore, informed consent was electronically obtained before collecting data from the respondents. The sample consisted of 267 students across various universities in East Aceh, including males with various addiction level (details in Table 1).

Gender **Addiction Level Career Information** n n Male (M) 82 Moderate user, 1-3 Jam (M) 105 Book/Magazine (B) 7 Female (F) 185 Excessive user, 4-6 Jam (E) 89 Friends (F) 8 Addicted user, > 6 Jam (A) 73 Parent (P) 39 Radio/TV(R) 3 Social Media (S) 185 Teacher/Counseling (T) 25

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Measures

Career anxiety scale was developed by (Gündüz & Yılmaz, 2016), and consisted of 14 items that measure two dimensions, namely family impact and concern about choosing a job. Career anxiety scale uses a five-point Likert scale that ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. An example item is "*I feel anxious when thinking about whether I will be happy with my chosen career*." This scale has high reliability (Cronbach's alpha of 0.85; item reliability in Rasch 0.98) and satisfactory validity with a raw variance of 42.3% (Bond & Fox, 2015b; Linacre, 2011).

Data analysis

This study used the Item Response Theory (IRT) method by applying Rasch model analysis. The aim was to descriptively examine the data and investigate differences using ANOVA (Bond & Fox, 2015a; Ifdil et al., 2018; Syahputra & Erwinda, 2020) with the assistance of WINSTEPS Version 4.7.0 (Linacre, 2011).

Results and Discussion

This study used descriptive analysis based on the Rasch model and ANOVA testing, and complemented by a line chart design to visualize the overview of career anxiety based on gender, addiction level, and career information. Furthermore, the descriptive test of career anxiety in Aceh is presented in the following Table 1.



Condition of Career Anxiety in Aceh

Table 2. Descriptive Results and Differences in Career Anxiety

Variable	Code	Person Count	Mean Measure	S.E. Mean	Median	SD	Model Separation	Model Reliability	RMSE	F-test (siq.)
Career Anxiety	*	267	0.23	0.05	0.25	0.89	2.52	0.86	0.33	
Gender	M	82	0.06	0.11	0.02	0.97	2.76	0.88	0.33	4.26
	F	185	0.30	0.06	0.35	0.84	2.37	0.85	0.33	(0.037)
Addiction	Α	105	0.19	0.09	0.16	0.97	2.74	0.88	0.33	3.59
Level	E	89	0.42	0.09	0.35	0.83	2.27	0.84	0.33	(0.028)
	M	73	0.06	0.09	0.07	0.81	2.31	0.84	0.32	
Career	В	7	0.39	0.30	0.07	0.79	2.02	0.80	0.32	1.36
Information	F	8	0.71	0.42	0.64	1.20	2.95	0.90	0.36	(0.239)
	P	39	0.02	0.16	0.07	0.99	2.80	0.89	0.33	
	R	3	-0.45	0.38	-0.11	0.66	1.45	0.68	0.31	
	S	185	0.24	0.06	0.25	0.85	2.41	0.85	0.33	
	T	25	0.32	0.18	0.25	0.90	2.49	0.86	0.33	

Explanation:

* = Tota

Gender = M (Male); F (Female)

Addiction Level = A (Addicted user/> 6 Jam); E (Excessive user/4-5 Jam); M (Moderate User/1-3 Jam)

Career Information = B (Book/magazine); F (Friends); P (Parent); R (radio/tv); S (social media); T (Teacher/Counseling)

There sections were discussed in Table 2, namely gender, level of addiction, and career information. Firstly, regarding gender, it showed that females tended to have higher career anxiety compared to males, and the F-test results indicated a significant difference in career anxiety between males and females. Secondly, concerning addiction level, there was a significant difference in career anxiety based on level of addiction. The group of participants with excessive usage (4-5 hours) had the highest level of career anxiety compared to other groups. Thirdly, regarding career information, it indicated that social media was the most widely used platform by individuals to seek career information. An interesting fact in the third section was that career information from friends had the highest average score. This result was noteworthy as it suggested that some individuals still relied on friends for career-related decisions in the current digital era.

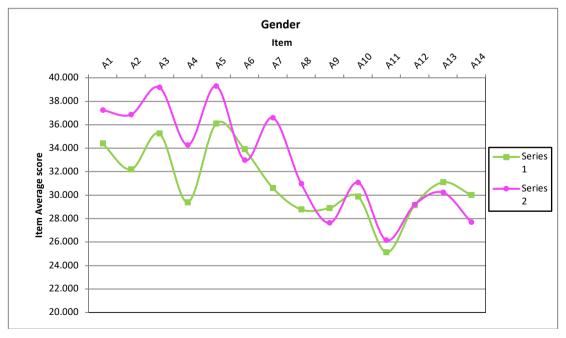


Figure 1. Conditions of male and female career anxiety M = Male; F = Female



Females were more concerned about their future career compared to male (Figure 1). Male, indicated by the green line with the code M, and female, indicated by the pink line with code F, showed that the average scores on career anxiety scale were higher for females than males. This means female were more worried about their future career compared to male (Figure 1). This may be related to different social expectations and gender roles that influenced students' perceptions and concerns regarding their career.

Figure two showed that students with a high level of addiction in playing smartphones were in a state of severe career anxiety. This was in contrast to the moderate level of user tendency which showed normal career anxiety. Furthermore, statements of 14-item career anxiety were more easily approved by students with a high addiction level (Addicted user/>6 Hours; Excessive user/4-5 Hours).

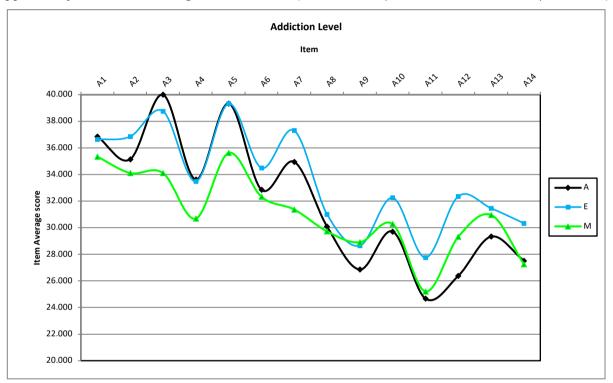


Figure 2. Conditions of career anxiety based on addiction level A (Addicted user/> 6 Jam); E (Excessive user/4-5 Jam); M (Moderate User/1-3 Jam); M (Moderate User/1-3 Jam)

In Figure 3, it was explained that career information from friends still remained a significant trend in the digital era and continued to persist. This phenomenon reinforced the evidence that many students have historically followed career planning based on the advice of friends. The consequence is the emergence of problems when students choose majors that are not aligned with their interests and potentials, leading to a mismatch between individuals and their chosen study programs. Despite having wide access to career information through online sources, such as company websites or professional platforms, individuals were still comfortable and relied on information obtained through personal interactions with friends (Mutiara & Rochmawati, 2021; Suwanto et al., 2021). This highlighted the importance of social relationships in the context of career and how individuals continue to rely on social networks to gain insights and advice (Salim et al., 2023). The influence of peers on early career provided unique support for individuals in their self-development (Merga & Mason, 2021).

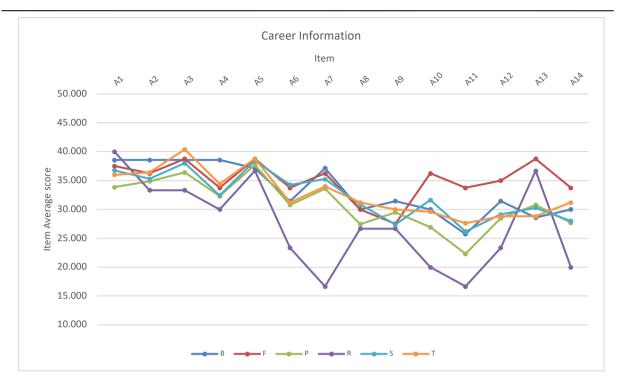


Figure 3. Conditions of career anxiety based on career information B (Book/magazine); F (Friends); P (Parent); R (radio/tv); S (social media); T (Teacher/Counseling)

Females tend to be more worried about their career than males, where the F-test score showed significant differences in career anxiety. In line with Hardin et al. (2006), female students experienced higher level of career anxiety than males after COVID-19 pandemic. This may be related to social expectations and different gender roles that influenced students' perceptions and concerns regarding career. In addition, one of the factors closely related to career anxiety in women was the socio-cultural environment (Winkel, 2021). This concerns family principles or views in many ways that are firmly held by each family. There were career expectations because this self-efficacy belief was lower for female students (Sevilla &Rangel, 2023). The perspective of career female was significantly shaped by cultural factors (Prastiwi & Rahmadanik, 2020).

For example, there is a proverb in Javanese culture that women only have 3M responsibilities. This proverb further perpetuates the perception that women's responsibilities are limited to dressing, giving birth, raising children, and cooking. Men are conceptualized as public workers (outside the home), while women are household workers in Javanese culture. Based on the example from Javanese culture, career anxiety tended to increase among women, and the negative stigma that existed in society exacerbated anxiety (Utaminingsih, 2017). Cadaret et al. (2017) found that awareness of stigma (in the form of awareness of sexism and negative attitudes towards women) was negatively related to women self-confidence in the ability to complete a bachelor's degree in Engineering. According to (Nalbantoglu Yilmaz & Cetin Gunduz, 2018), as career indecision increased, anxiety experienced by students also increased.

This study also found that career information from friends remained a significant trend in the digital era and continued to persist. The result highlighted the importance of considering the role played by social interactions in influencing individuals career choices (Zalsabil, 2014) and how they cope with post-pandemic career anxiety (Gunarti, 2014). Being aware of this trend helped career professionals and advisors better understand the best ways to provide the support and information needed by individuals in developing career in the digital era (Kadiyono et al., 2020; Pustika et al., 2019). Moreover, digitalization enabled companies to measure and track HR performance in real-time and provide feedback (Banjarnahor et al., 2022).



Career anxiety in the context of individual abilities include that personal branding is one way to reduce post-COVID-19 anxiety. An entrepreneur really needs good personal branding to build public charm and manage life without having to depend on others (Arafah et al., 2022). Personal branding, or personal image reduced career anxiety by providing direction and confidence to individuals about their identity and how they want to be known in the professional world (Sari & Fadilla, 2022). Meanwhile, in the context of career anxiety, personal branding enabled individuals to build strong reputations, increase self-confidence, and overcome future uncertainties (Haroen, 2014; Sari & Fadillah, 2023).

In developing personal branding, individuals can identify their values, expertise, and uniqueness (Sari & Fadilla, 2022). This helps facilitate better self-understanding, including interests and career goals. With a clearer understanding, individuals can direct their efforts to developing relevant skills and seek opportunities that match their image and career vision (Sari & Fadillah, 2023).

This study provided insight into the factors that influenced career anxiety and how individuals seek information. The results can be used as a basis for developing better programs and services to support individuals in overcoming post-pandemic career anxiety. Heppner & Hendricks (1995), stated that the use of relational and interpersonal skills of counselors helped individuals who are unsure about career, hence, they felt more supported, comfortable, and optimistic about career counseling process. Previous study (Braunstein-Bercovitz et al., 2012) on career development, anxiety, and attachment, highlighted the importance of relational relationships in emotional regulation. Counseling practices relied on supportive relationships (mostly peers, friends and parents for adolescents and young adults), structured routines, time management, self-care and relaxation techniques to help clients manage tension and anxiety (Vignoli, 2015). Therefore, personal emotional counseling can help reduce dysfunctional emotions and career views (Rottinghaus et al., 2009; Schultheiss, 2003).

Entrepreneurship counseling is an effective method in dealing with career anxiety. This condition often arises from uncertainty about the future, lack of self-confidence, or confusion about choosing the right career path. Through entrepreneurship counseling, individuals can develop a better understanding of their interests, values and career goals. In entrepreneurship counseling, counselors worked with individuals to identify unique potential, interests, and expertise (Sari & Fadilla, 2022; Sari & Fadillah, 2023). Furthermore, they helped individuals explore various career options and understand the challenges and opportunities associated with each path (Afdal et al., 2019). Counselors also helped develop entrepreneurial skills, such as critical thinking, creativity (Alizamar et al., 2019), measured risk taking, and the ability to overcome challenges.

Entrepreneurship counseling can help individuals overcome anxiety and uncertainty associated with career planning. Individuals can explore and strengthen their confidence in facing career challenges through open discussion and emotional support. Counselors provided relevant information and advice on industry trend, market opportunities, and self-development strategies to make better career plan through an application of Guidance and Counseling Information Systems (Haq et al., 2023). Further studies can be conducted to deepen the understanding of other factors that influence career anxiety and information seeking behavior.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the results of this study showed there were significant differences in level of career anxiety post-COVID-19 based on gender and addiction level. This indicated that gender and addiction level influenced an individuals level of career anxiety after the pandemic. However, in the context of career information, the differences were not statistically significant. Another interesting result was that career information from friends remained trend in the digital era. Despite technology and the internet changing the way information is obtained, there seems to be a tendency to rely on friend's advice and experiences regarding career.



The results highlighted the importance of considering factors such as gender and addiction level in understanding level of career anxiety post-COVID-19. Even though there were no significant differences in terms of career information, this study provided valuable insights into the factors that influenced career anxiety and how individuals seek career information. The results can be used as a basis for the development of better programs and services to support individuals in overcoming postpandemic career anxiety. Further studies can be conducted to increase the knowledge of other factors that influenced career anxiety and information-seeking behavior.

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