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The Effectiveness of Content Mastery Services on Career Self-Understanding for High School Graduates Who Do Not Pursue Higher Education

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to measure the effectiveness of mastering content services about career self-understanding among high school graduates who do not continue to higher education. The main focus of the research is how these content services can help adolescents recognize their interests, abilities, work values, personality, and life roles as a basis for making appropriate career decisions. The method used is a quantitative approach with a pretest and post-test design on a sample of high school graduates who have participated in the career self-understanding content services. The results show a significant improvement in mastering the concept of career self-understanding after participating in the content services. These findings indicate that effectively designed content services can be a useful tool for adolescents who do not pursue higher education in planning and developing their careers independently. The practical implication of this study is the importance of providing structured career content services to support adolescents' transition to the workforce or other alternative pathways.

1. Introduction

Self-understanding is a crucial process that individuals must undergo before making career choices. For high school graduates who do not pursue higher education, self-understanding serves as the primary foundation for career decision-making (Defriansyah et al., 2023). This understanding encompasses aspects such as interests, talents, values, and personal potential, which should be recognized early to enable individuals to design a future aligned with their own capabilities and aspirations. Career development is one of the critical developmental tasks during adolescence. According to Rohma (2023), a career is an integral part of individual development that must be carefully planned to ensure a meaningful life. However, in reality, many adolescents are still unable to plan their careers optimally (Hapiana

et al., 2022). They often follow the choices of parents or peers without considering personal factors that should form the basis of their decision-making.

Career planning is closely linked to an individual's psychological development (Maharani et al., 2022). Ginzberg, as cited in Winkel (2005), divides career development into three stages: (1) the fantasy stage (0–11 years), (2) the tentative stage (12–18 years), and (3) the realistic stage (19–25 years). High school adolescents are in the tentative stage, a period in which they begin to consider their interests, values, and capacities more rationally. This stage is also characterized by concrete efforts such as engaging in discussions, seeking information, and gaining work experience. Field observations indicate that many high school graduates who do not pursue higher education experience confusion in the career selection process. They often lack an understanding of their own interests, talents, and abilities. Moreover, they receive insufficient information about the labor market, making them vulnerable to decisions influenced by external factors. Common issues among high school graduates who do not continue to higher education include selecting jobs that are not suitable, facing difficulties in finding employment, and frequently following the choices of peers or parents in career or job selection.

One service that can be utilized to help adolescents better understand themselves is content mastery services. According to Prayitno (2004), content mastery services are forms of assistance provided to individuals, either in a classroom or group setting, to help them acquire specific competencies required in life. The objectives of these services include broadening knowledge, enhancing understanding, and developing certain attitudes and skills that are relevant to individual needs (Ramadhania et al., 2021). The implementation of content mastery services in the context of career self-understanding can have a positive impact on adolescents' career readiness (Aminudin & Lutfi, 2023). These services enable high school graduates to recognize their personal potential, interests, and values, allowing them to design career goals that are more realistic and aligned with their own capabilities (Maulana et al., 2017). The novelty of this study lies in its focus on high school graduates who do not continue to higher education.

To date, career content mastery services have generally been directed toward active students or those who continue to higher education (Putri et al., 2024). Meanwhile, high school graduates who do not pursue further education are vulnerable to confusion, indecision, and a lack of self-understanding in making career choices. Based on this issue, the present study aims to analyze the effectiveness of content mastery services in enhancing career self-understanding among high school graduates who do not continue to higher education. The results of this study are expected to provide strategic recommendations for guidance counselors, counseling practitioners, and relevant institutions in supporting high school graduates who do not pursue further education, enabling them to make career decisions in a precise and responsible manner.

2. Methodology

According to Latipun, as cited in Ghassani et al. (2020), the experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest design involves using a single group of subjects to measure the effectiveness of an intervention or to conduct measurements before and after the treatment is administered. The differences observed between these measurements are considered the effects of the intervention. This one-group pretest-posttest design is employed to determine the "effectiveness of content mastery services on career self-understanding among high school graduates who do not pursue higher education."

O1 X O2

Figure 1. One Group Pretest-Posttest Design

Explanation:

O_1 = Initial test (pretest) conducted before the training is administered.
X = Treatment or training provided to the subject group (Intervention)
O_2 = Final test (posttest) conducted after the training is administered.

The population in this study consisted of a group of high school graduates who did not continue to higher education in the Tembung Ps. 9 area. The sample in this study comprised 15 individuals. The research procedure began with a pretest, which was conducted by administering a questionnaire containing statements regarding career self-understanding. The study involved a total of seven sessions. The first session included orientation and the administration of the pretest questionnaire before the treatment. Subsequently, content mastery services on "career self-understanding" were provided to the subject group over five sessions. In the final session, a posttest similar to the pretest was administered to compare the results before and after the intervention. If the results indicated changes or improvements, the intervention was considered effective. The research focus was on career self-understanding. Data collection methods employed by the researcher included an initial test (pretest), a final test (posttest), and a single instrument, namely the career self-understanding questionnaire.

In quantitative research, data analysis is conducted after data from all respondents or other sources have been collected (Sugiyono, 2019). The activities involved in data analysis include classifying data according to variables and types of respondents, tabulating data based on variables for all respondents, presenting data for each variable under study, performing calculations to address the research questions, and conducting statistical tests to examine the predetermined hypotheses (Moleong, 2017). The data analysis technique in quantitative research uses statistical methods (Sugiyono, 2013). The data analysis model employed in this study is as follows:

a. Descriptive statistics are used to analyze data by describing or portraying the collected data as it is, without the intention of making generalizable conclusions or inferences.

b. Inferential statistics are used to test hypotheses. The statistical technique employed in this study is the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test is used to determine the differences in the means of two paired samples, with the assistance of SPSS version 31.

3. Results and Discussion

The sample in this study consisted of high school graduates who did not continue to higher education, exhibiting fairly diverse characteristics. Most of them were between 18 and 20 years old, a transitional period from school to the workforce or self-identity exploration. The respondents' family socioeconomic backgrounds varied, ranging from lower-middle-income families to those with relatively stable economic conditions, though they still faced limitations in financing higher education. In terms of motivation, some adolescents chose to enter the workforce immediately to support their family's finances, while others experienced confusion and uncertainty regarding their career direction.

Many of them had specific interests and potential but lacked adequate understanding of how to develop them properly due to limited information, guidance, and access to career services. Psychologically, some individuals displayed relatively good self-confidence in facing challenges, while others felt anxious, hesitant, and uncertain about their future. This situation was further exacerbated by the scarcity of opportunities to participate in non-formal training programs or skill-building activities that could serve as career preparation. Therefore, the overall condition of the sample reflects adolescents in a vulnerable phase, requiring direction and systematic guidance services to foster a deeper understanding of their career self-concept.

The data collection process in this study was conducted using a quantitative approach, specifically through the distribution of questionnaires to respondents who were high school graduates not pursuing higher education. The questionnaire employed a Likert scale with structured response options to facilitate objective and consistent responses from the participants. Prior to widespread distribution, the questionnaire was pre-tested to assess the validity and reliability of its items, ensuring that the data obtained were accurate and dependable.

Data collection was conducted directly by providing the questionnaires to respondents who met the study's criteria. Each respondent was given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire independently, with brief guidance from the researcher to prevent misunderstandings in interpreting the statements. Through this process, quantitative data regarding the respondents' level of career self-understanding were systematically collected, serving as a basis for analyzing the effectiveness of the content mastery services provided. The list of statements included in the questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Instrument

No	Statement
1	I know the fields of work that match my interests.
2	I already have a vision of a career that aligns with my personal interests.
3	I do not yet know which job suits my interests.
4	I feel that I do not have any specific interest in a particular job.
5	I am unsure whether my interests can serve as a basis for career choice.
6	I am confident in the skills I currently possess.
7	I feel confused when assessing my own abilities.
8	I feel that I have no advantages compared to others.
9	I rarely reflect on my abilities when facing challenges.
10	My personal values strongly influence my career choices.
11	I have never thought about what is important to me in the workplace.
12	I do not know whether a job should align with my personal values.
13	I have never considered the relationship between values and work.
14	I understand my personality and its influence on career choices.
15	I do not know how my personality affects my career choices.
16	I have never thought about the compatibility between my personality and job type.
17	I rarely consider how social roles and family influence my career.

The implementation of content mastery services in this study was conducted over five sessions, focusing on the topic of career self-understanding. The frequency distribution of content mastery regarding career self-understanding among high school graduates who did not continue to higher education, both before and after the treatment, will be described through categorization into Very Low, Low, Moderate, High, and Very High. This categorization is conducted to classify adolescents into graduated groups based on the measurement results. The score categories for assessing the level of career self-understanding among adolescents are as follows:

Table 2. Score Categories

Interval	Category
$X \leq 38{,}25$	Very Low
$38{,}25 < X < 426{,}75$	Low
$46{,}75 \leq X \leq 55{,}25$	Medium
$55{,}25 < X < 59{,}5$	High
$X \geq 63{,}75$	Very High

Descriptive statistics are used to analyze data by describing or portraying the collected data as it is, without intending to make conclusions that apply generally or for broader generalization. Based on the pretest results conducted on 15 adolescents, it was found that 2 participants had a very low to low level of career self-understanding. This category typically indicates that an individual has not yet developed a clear understanding of self-concept, reflecting a lack of readiness and awareness in recognizing and managing personal potential for effective career planning. Meanwhile, the remaining 13 adolescents demonstrated a medium level

of career self-understanding. This category generally represents a condition in which individuals experience confusion, uncertainty, or lack of clarity regarding their self-awareness and decision-making in career planning.The self-understanding of career development among adolescents before receiving the content mastery intervention can be observed from the pretest results presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Pretest Results of the Career Self-Understanding Questionnaire

Respondent	Pretest Score	Category
MRR	48	Medium
DN	46	Medium
MRI	53	Medium
MRKK	56	Medium
PRA	34	Very Low
DA	49	Medium
YU	46	Medium
MFAR	39	Medium
MRA	59	Medium
PUT	57	Medium
BU	55	Medium
MA	46	Medium
HA	55	Medium
MFK	59	Medium
MIL	57	Medium
Average	50,6	Medium

The purpose of this content mastery service is to assist adolescents in understanding their career self-concept by exploring content related to self-concept, including interests, potential, abilities, personality, values, and family roles. Following the content mastery sessions, a posttest was conducted to assess the adolescents' career self-understanding after the intervention. The posttest results, obtained after five sessions of content mastery, are presented in the table below. The comparison of adolescents' career self-understanding before and after the intervention shows that all group members experienced improvements, although they fall within the same category. This outcome is influenced by the active participation of group members during the content mastery sessions.

Table 4. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Results on Career Self-Understanding Questionnaire

Respondent	Pretest Score	Category	Post-Test Score	Category
MRR	48	Moderate	71	Very High
DN	46	Moderate	69	Very High
MRI	53	Moderate	73	Very High
MRKK	56	Moderate	79	Very High
PRA	34	Very Low	74	Very High
DA	49	Moderate	67	Very High
YU	46	Moderate	71	Very High
MFAR	39	Moderate	67	Very High
MRA	59	Moderate	75	Very High

PUT	57	Moderate	78	Very High
BU	55	Moderate	74	Very High
MA	46	Moderate	73	Very High
HA	55	Moderate	72	Very High
MFK	59	Moderate	74	Very High
MIL	57	Moderate	74	Very High
Average	50,6	Moderate	72,7	Very High

Based on the posttest results, there was a marked increase in the career self-understanding of adolescents, which initially fell into the very low, low, and moderate categories. After receiving the content mastery intervention, the career self-understanding of high school graduates who did not continue to higher education improved to the very high category. This indicates a significant enhancement in adolescents' career self-understanding following the intervention. After compiling the pretest and posttest scores, the next step was to conduct the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The Wilcoxon test, a non-parametric method, was employed to compare the pretest and posttest values. This statistical procedure was used to analyze whether the observed differences before and after the intervention were significant. The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test are presented in the following table:

Table 5. Wilcoxon Test Results

	Post test - Pretest
Z	-3.411[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001

The table presented above indicates whether the research hypothesis is accepted or rejected. The hypothesis of this study is as follows:

a. Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) in the table is reported as < 0.001.

It can be concluded from the table above that the Sig. (2-tailed) value is < 0.001. This indicates that the Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.001 < 0.05, hence the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted and the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that the content mastery service on career self-understanding is effective for high school graduates who do not continue to higher education. Based on the results of this study, it can be understood that high school graduates who do not continue to higher education exhibit very low career self-understanding, meaning they are not yet able to recognize and comprehend their self-concept in a mature way. This inability reflects a lack of readiness and awareness in career planning, leading to confusion, hesitation, and uncertainty in making career-related decisions. Such conditions pose a high risk of mismatch between the individual and the chosen occupation, which may ultimately result in difficulties in securing appropriate and satisfying employment.

Furthermore, low career self-understanding causes individuals to tend to follow career choices of friends or parents without undergoing critical self-reflection and evaluation. This reliance on external influence indicates weak independence in career decision-making, potentially producing long-term misalignment between

work and personal interests or talents. This aligns with principles in career development psychology, which emphasize that strong self-understanding and awareness of personal potential are crucial for finding congruence between an individual and their career path, enabling optimal development. These findings underscore the need for interventions or content mastery services that focus on enhancing self-understanding for high school graduates who do not pursue further education. Such content mastery services can help them identify their strengths, interests, and personal values as a foundation for informed career decision-making, fostering greater awareness and preparedness for the workforce, and reducing dependence on external influences that may not align with their personal potential. Therefore, improved self-understanding can serve as a key factor in mitigating job mismatch issues and difficulties in obtaining suitable employment for this group.

This finding aligns with Hartina's view as cited in Merdiasi & Kasandra (2023), which states that self-understanding is one of the essential skills students must possess for effective career planning. Self-understanding encompasses awareness of personal potentials, including interests, abilities, personality traits, values, and attitudes. A student's ability to realistically evaluate and understand themselves is beneficial in selecting a career that aligns with their personal circumstances. Ayu et al. (2022) also argue that the more positive an individual's self-assessment, the more capable they are of solidifying their career plans. However, many students still lack the ability to plan their careers because they have not yet developed sufficient self-evaluation and self-understanding skills, which often results in confusion when asked about their future career aspirations. This finding further supports the research of Widianita et al. (2024), which emphasizes that self-concept is closely related to career planning. Students with a well-developed self-concept are able to make more mature and informed career decisions for their post-graduation future. Nevertheless, students often encounter challenges due to insufficient understanding of career planning, despite having high aspirations. Therefore, an individual's self-concept significantly impacts the success or failure of their future career decisions (Rosyidah, 2024).

Based on the pretest results, the 15 high school graduates were provided with treatment in the form of a content mastery service delivered over five sessions. Following the intervention, the posttest results showed a significant improvement. The analyzed data were further supported by the Wilcoxon test, which indicated a "very high" category, demonstrating a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. These findings suggest that the content mastery service is effective in enhancing career self-understanding among high school graduates who do not continue to higher education, whose initial self-understanding was categorized as very low. Therefore, the content mastery service has been proven to have a positive impact on career self-understanding for this group of adolescents. This intervention is expected to assist high school graduates in developing a clearer understanding of their career paths. In conclusion, the implementation of the content mastery service on career self-understanding for high school graduates who do not pursue higher education is effective.

This study is supported by a case study conducted by Lestari et al. (2024), which highlights that content mastery services play a crucial role in helping students identify and develop their potential. Regar (2022) further states that the implementation of this service, particularly within the context of school counseling, is highly recommended to support students' development across various aspects of life, both academic and personal. School counselors are expected to utilize this service to provide more structured and effective guidance, enabling students to achieve optimal performance.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of content mastery services has been proven effective in enhancing career self-understanding among high school graduates who do not continue to higher education, who initially exhibited very low self-understanding. The initial condition indicated that a lack of career self-understanding led to confusion, uncertainty, and reliance on others' influence in making career decisions, which posed risks of job mismatch and difficulties in securing suitable employment. After receiving the content mastery treatment across five sessions, a significant improvement in career self-understanding was observed, as supported by the results of the Wilcoxon test analysis. These findings confirm that content mastery services can assist adolescents in recognizing their potential, interests, abilities, and personal values as a foundation for more independent and mature career decisions, thereby increasing their readiness to enter the workforce and reducing the risk of career mismatches. Consequently, content mastery services can be considered effective for developing career self-understanding and are necessary to support the career development of high school graduates who do not pursue further education.

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