

Strengthening Career Literacy through Parental Mentoring and Interest-Based Vocational Program Mapping for Junior High School Students

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Abstract

Choosing a vocational specialization is an important educational decision that can shape students' future competencies and career trajectories. For junior secondary school (SMP) students preparing to enter vocational high school (SMK), the choice of specialization needs to consider the alignment between their interests, aptitudes, academic capabilities, and the characteristics of the selected vocational field. However, parents may face limitations in career literacy, which can hinder their ability to provide appropriate and evidence-based guidance. This community service program was designed to strengthen the career literacy of parents and junior secondary students in Kelurahan Jatinegara Kaum, East Jakarta, by broadening their understanding of vocational program characteristics and supporting the identification of appropriate matches between students' interests and aptitudes and the vocational programs offered by SMKs. The program employed a participatory career guidance model implemented through seven sequential stages: needs assessment, baseline assessment, career literacy workshops, RIASEC-based interest assessment, interest-to-vocational-program mapping, parent-student decision-making support, and program evaluation. Data were obtained from pre-test and post-test instruments, interest inventories, observations, and reflection sheets, and were subsequently analyzed using descriptive analysis and paired-sample statistical testing. The findings demonstrated a substantial improvement in parents' knowledge and career-related insights, as indicated by an increase in the mean score from 2.13 at the pre-test stage to 3.48 at the post-test stage, representing a 63.4% improvement. The mapping process further revealed that 75% of students' interest profiles showed a strong alignment with their selected vocational programs. In addition, the role of parents evolved from primarily determining their children's educational choices toward functioning as partners in their children's career development and mentoring. Overall, the program demonstrated potential as an effective and replicable model for supporting families during the transition from SMP to SMK, with its long-term impact strengthened through sustained parent-child communication and continued collaboration between families and schools.

Keywords: parental mentoring; career literacy; RIASEC interest assessment; vocational program selection; interest-aptitude fit

1. INTRODUCTION

The selection of a specialization program in vocational high school (SMK) represents an important educational decision because it may shape students' subsequent learning experiences, competence development, and career trajectories. For junior secondary school (SMP) students who plan to continue to SMK, this decision involves more than selecting a school; it also requires consideration of the alignment between students' interests, abilities, personal characteristics, and the competencies demanded by the chosen vocational field. Research on vocational education has emphasized the importance of person-vocation fit, as congruence between individual characteristics and vocational programs is associated with students' satisfaction and persistence in vocational training (Michaelis & Findeisen, 2022). Similarly, contemporary research on vocational interests highlights the continuing relevance of interest assessment in understanding individuals' preferences and their relationship with educational and occupational

environments (Nye, 2022). Consequently, the transition from SMP to SMK should be understood as an early stage of career development in which students need opportunities to explore their interests, understand available educational alternatives, and connect personal characteristics with future occupational possibilities.

Parents constitute an important part of this transition because they can provide information, encouragement, emotional support, and guidance when adolescents make educational and career-related decisions. Recent research indicates that family influence is associated with career decision-making self-efficacy, suggesting that the support available within the family can contribute to young people's confidence when considering career alternatives (Koçak et al., 2021). Research on parental career-related behaviors has likewise demonstrated that parents may influence adolescents' career development through the information, encouragement, expectations, and autonomy support they provide (Parola et al., 2023). From the perspective of social cognitive career theory, career development is also shaped by the interaction between personal characteristics, self-efficacy, environmental influences, and contextual supports (Wang et al., 2022). These findings indicate that parental involvement should not be limited to determining which school or specialization a child should attend. Rather, parents need sufficient career-related knowledge to facilitate exploration and help adolescents evaluate educational alternatives in relation to their interests, abilities, and aspirations.

The importance of early career exploration is further supported by evidence showing that career exploration is a multidimensional process that can contribute to adolescents' understanding of themselves and the opportunities available in the educational and occupational environment. A meta-analysis by Kleine et al. (2021) demonstrated that students' career exploration is associated with several individual and contextual factors, highlighting the importance of providing opportunities for young people to actively explore career possibilities. In the context of vocational education, the transition from school to work also requires students to develop an understanding of how educational choices relate to future occupational pathways (Findeisen et al., 2022). Therefore, career guidance at the SMP-to-SMK transition stage should ideally integrate self-exploration with information about vocational programs and potential career pathways. Such an approach can help students move beyond choosing a specialization based merely on familiarity, perceived prestige, peer influence, school accessibility, or parental preference.

Despite the growing body of research on parental influence and career development, existing studies have largely examined these relationships among adolescents or students who are already enrolled in vocational or higher education. Less attention has been given to preventive and participatory interventions that involve both parents and junior secondary students before the transition into vocational high school. This represents an important gap because the decision made before entering SMK may establish the initial direction of students' vocational learning and subsequent competence development. Moreover, information provision alone may be insufficient when students and parents lack a structured process for interpreting personal interests and relating them to available vocational alternatives. A more integrated approach is therefore needed, combining career literacy, knowledge of vocational specialization programs, interest assessment, and parent–student dialogue within a single mentoring process. Such integration is consistent with contemporary approaches to career development that emphasize proactive exploration and the active use of personal and contextual resources in navigating educational and career transitions (Bhaskar et al., 2026; Ulaş Kılıç & Çohadar, 2026).

Within this context, the present community service activity addresses the need for a structured mentoring intervention for parents and SMP students in Kelurahan Jatinegara Kaum, East Jakarta. The program is designed to strengthen career literacy by introducing the characteristics of SMK specialization programs, facilitating students' identification of their interests and aptitudes, and supporting parents and students in interpreting this information as part of the educational decision-making process. The use of an interest-based framework, including the RIASEC model, provides a systematic means of connecting students' vocational interests with potential educational environments. Recent scholarship on Holland's vocational choice framework confirms the continuing applicability of interest-based classification for understanding the relationship between individual preferences and vocational

environments (Hartmann et al., 2021). Accordingly, the mentoring process is positioned not simply as information dissemination but as an interactive mechanism through which parents and students can jointly evaluate educational alternatives.

The novelty of this community service activity lies in its focus on the period preceding entry into SMK and in its integration of parents and students as joint participants in the decision-making process. Rather than treating parental involvement solely as an external predictor of students' career decisions, the program positions parents as career-mentoring partners who support students' self-exploration and informed choice. At the same time, students are encouraged to become active participants by reflecting on their interests and potential rather than simply following predetermined preferences. This approach seeks to shift vocational specialization decisions from intuitive, socially influenced, or parent-dominated choices toward decisions grounded in self-understanding, relevant career information, and dialogue between students and their families. In this respect, the program offers a practical intervention model that connects career literacy, interest–vocation fit, and family participation at a critical stage of the educational transition.

Based on these considerations, this community service activity aims to strengthen the career literacy of parents and junior secondary students in preparing for the transition to SMK, improve their understanding of vocational specialization programs and related career pathways, and facilitate the identification of alignment between students' interests and aptitudes and their prospective specialization choices. More specifically, the activity seeks to enhance parents' capacity to provide constructive career support, assist students in recognizing and reflecting on their personal interests and potential, and establish a more informed and collaborative process for educational decision-making. Ultimately, the program is expected to provide a practical and potentially replicable model for supporting families in making more purposeful vocational education choices during the SMP-to-SMK transition.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This community service (PkM) activity was conducted in Kelurahan Jatinegara Kaum, East Jakarta, targeting parents and SMP students who were preparing to transition to SMK. The activity adopted a participatory career guidance approach in which students and parents were actively engaged in self-exploration, career-information exploration, identification of vocational alternatives, and educational decision-making. The approach was designed to place students as active participants in their career development while positioning parents as sources of support and partners in the decision-making process. Recent research indicates that career exploration and self-reflection are important components of adolescents' career development, while social support can strengthen the relationship between self-efficacy, career exploration, and career choice (Pham et al., 2024). In addition, parental career-related behaviors, including support and guidance, constitute an important contextual resource in adolescents' career development (Parola et al., 2023). Accordingly, the mentoring process integrated student-centered exploration with structured parent–student interaction.

The implementation consisted of seven sequential stages: (1) needs identification, (2) initial assessment, (3) career literacy workshop, (4) vocational interest assessment and potential reflection, (5) mapping of student interests to alternative SMK specialization programs, (6) parent–student decision-making assistance, and (7) evaluation and follow-up. The first stage involved identifying participants' initial needs, perceptions, and difficulties concerning SMK selection. The second stage consisted of a baseline assessment to determine participants' initial levels of career literacy and understanding of vocational specialization options. The third stage provided information concerning the characteristics of SMK education, specialization programs, competency profiles, learning pathways, and potential career directions. The fourth stage facilitated students' exploration of their vocational interests using the RIASEC framework, followed by individual reflection on their learning experiences, perceived abilities, aspirations, and preferred activities (Faz-Tapia et al., 2026). Interest assessment was employed as a reflective instrument rather than as a deterministic mechanism for selecting a specialization. This approach is consistent with recent scholarship

emphasizing the continued relevance of vocational-interest measurement for understanding person–environment relationships and educational or occupational preferences (Hartmann et al., 2021).

The fifth stage involved mapping students' RIASEC interest profiles against alternative SMK specialization programs. The mapping process considered not only the dominant interest dimensions but also students' expressed preferences, perceived abilities, academic experiences, aspirations, and information about the characteristics of each specialization. This procedure was intended to encourage students and parents to examine the degree of congruence between individual characteristics and vocational environments. The importance of such congruence is supported by research demonstrating that person–vocation fit is associated with satisfaction and persistence in vocational training (Michaelis & Findeisen, 2022). The sixth stage consisted of joint parent–student mentoring sessions in which participants discussed the results of the interest assessment, compared alternative specialization programs, considered potential career pathways, and formulated preliminary educational preferences. Parents were encouraged to adopt a supportive and dialogic role rather than making decisions unilaterally. The final stage involved evaluation and follow-up to identify changes in participants' understanding, remaining difficulties, and the need for continued communication between parents, students, and schools.

Data collection employed several instruments: (1) a career literacy questionnaire for parents and students, (2) a RIASEC-based vocational interest inventory, (3) a career decision-making readiness scale, (4) a parental career-support questionnaire, and (5) an activity evaluation and reflection sheet. The career literacy instrument assessed participants' understanding of SMK education, specialization characteristics, career pathways, and factors that should be considered when selecting a specialization. The career decision-making readiness instrument addressed students' exploration, planning, evaluation of alternatives, and confidence in making educational decisions. The parental support instrument focused on informational support, encouragement, involvement, and career-related mentoring. These dimensions were informed by recent research on career exploration, parental career-related behaviors, and career decision-making processes among adolescents and young adults (Liu et al., 2025; Söner & Yılmaz, 2025). The instruments were developed using Likert-type response scales and reflection questions and were reviewed by relevant experts before implementation to assess their content relevance and clarity.

Data were collected using a pre-test and post-test design, completion of the RIASEC interest inventory, direct observation, documentation, and participant reflection sheets. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively by comparing pre-test and post-test scores to identify changes in career literacy, career decision-making readiness, and parental understanding. Where the data satisfied the relevant assumptions of parametric analysis, differences between pre-test and post-test scores were examined using a paired-samples t-test. When the assumptions were not satisfied, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used as a non-parametric alternative. In addition to statistical significance, the magnitude of change was reported using percentage improvement and, where appropriate, an effect-size measure. Qualitative data obtained from observations and reflection sheets were analyzed thematically to identify changes in participants' understanding, difficulties encountered during the mentoring process, patterns of parent–student interaction, and follow-up needs. The combination of quantitative pre-test–post-test analysis and qualitative reflection was used to provide a more comprehensive assessment of changes resulting from the participatory mentoring intervention. Such an approach is consistent with recent career-development research emphasizing the interconnected roles of career exploration, self-reflection, social support, and career decision-making in adolescents and young adults.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the community service (PkM) program in Kelurahan Jatinegara Kaum was conducted through seven sequential stages: needs identification, initial assessment, career literacy workshop, student interest assessment, mapping of interests to SMK specialization programs, parent–student mentoring, and evaluation. The overall intervention was designed to strengthen parents' knowledge and insight in supporting their children's educational decisions by considering students' interests, potential, abilities, specialization characteristics, and future

educational and career prospects. Rather than positioning parents as the primary decision-makers, the program encouraged them to function as mentors, information providers, and discussion facilitators. This orientation is consistent with recent career-development research emphasizing that career exploration involves the interaction of individual characteristics, self-efficacy, social support, and environmental information. Sutiman et al. (2022), for example, found that career exploration plays an important role in the relationship between self-efficacy and career choice, while social support can strengthen this process. Similarly, Cai et al. (2025) demonstrated that parental career-related behaviors represent an important contextual resource in adolescents' and young adults' career development. Thus, involving parents as supportive partners rather than unilateral decision-makers provides a theoretically and practically relevant foundation for the SMP-to-SMK transition

3.1. Needs Identification and Initial Assessment

The initial assessment was conducted through discussions with parents and students and the administration of baseline instruments. The findings indicated that some parents had limited understanding of the relationship between students' interests, abilities, potential, and the selection of SMK specialization programs. Parents also needed clearer information about vocational fields, competencies taught in each program, opportunities for further education, and potential career pathways. In addition, some parents tended to prioritize employment prospects, program popularity, or family expectations when guiding their children. Students likewise needed more opportunities to explore their interests, compare educational alternatives, and understand the relationship between their abilities and future careers. These findings suggest that the main challenge was not only limited information, but also the difficulty of connecting vocational education options with students' individual characteristics. This is important because the suitability between students and their chosen vocational field may influence satisfaction and persistence in training (Michaelis & Findeisen, 2022), while career exploration helps students understand themselves and possible career environments (Ouyang et al., 2025).

Table 1. Results of the Initial Career Literacy and Decision-Making Readiness

Indicator	Mean Score	Category
Parents' career literacy	2.15	Low
Students' understanding of SMK	2.40	Low
Students' interest exploration	2.30	Moderate
Decision-making readiness	2.20	Low

Note: Scores are based on a 1–4 scale.

The initial assessment results are presented in Table 1. Parents' career literacy was categorized as low ($M = 2.15$), indicating limited readiness to support their children's vocational choices. Students also demonstrated low levels of SMK understanding ($M = 2.40$) and decision-making readiness ($M = 2.20$), while their interest exploration was categorized as moderate ($M = 2.30$). This indicates that although students had begun to recognize their interests, these interests had not yet been sufficiently connected to informed educational choices. Therefore, the PkM program emphasized strengthening parents' practical skills in identifying students' potential, interpreting interest-assessment results, accessing information about SMK programs, and communicating openly with their children. Parents were positioned as mentors and discussion partners rather than decision-makers, allowing students to participate actively in exploring and selecting suitable SMK specialization programs.

3.2. Career Literacy Workshop for Parents and Students

The career literacy workshop used presentations, discussions, case studies, question-and-answer sessions, and individual and group reflection in Figure 1. The materials covered SMK specialization programs, competencies, employment opportunities, further education pathways, and factors to consider when choosing a specialization, including interests, abilities, academic capacity, family conditions, values, and career aspirations. The workshop emphasized that these factors should be considered together. Discussions showed that parents began to understand

that choosing an SMK specialization should not depend only on program popularity or job prospects, but also on the match between students' characteristics and the learning environment. This is important because person–vocation fit is related to satisfaction and persistence in vocational education (Michaelis & Findeisen, 2022).



Figure 1. Workshop with students' parents.

The workshop also encouraged parents and students to discuss preferred activities, strengths, learning experiences, and future occupations through open-ended questions. Students were given opportunities to explain their interests and participate in decision-making. These activities helped shift parental involvement from giving direct instructions to providing information, emotional support, and opportunities for exploration. This finding is consistent with research showing that career exploration is related to self-efficacy and career choice, while social support strengthens the process (Pham et al., 2024). Parental career-related support is also important in adolescents' career development (Parola et al., 2023). Thus, the workshop served as an initial effort to improve shared career literacy and support more informed SMK specialization choices.

3.3. Interest Assessment and Potential Reflection

Students completed a RIASEC-based vocational interest assessment covering six dimensions: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. The assessment was used as a reflective tool to help students identify their dominant interest tendencies and explore potentially suitable SMK specialization fields, rather than as a single determinant of educational choice. As shown in Table 2, the largest proportion of students demonstrated a Realistic interest profile (5 students; 25.0%), followed by Social (4 students; 20.0%), while Investigative, Artistic, and Enterprising profiles each accounted for 3 students (15.0%), and Conventional represented 2 students (10.0%). The distribution indicates that students exhibited diverse vocational interest patterns, reinforcing the need to provide individualized guidance rather than recommending the same specialization based on general popularity or employment trends. RIASEC-based interest assessment is relevant for identifying vocational preferences and examining relationships between individual interests and educational or occupational environments (Hartmann et al., 2021; Yoto et al., 2024).

Table 2. Distribution of Participants' Dominant RIASEC Interest Profiles

Dominant Interest Type	Number of Students	Percentage
Realistic	5	25.0%
Investigative	3	15.0%
Artistic	3	15.0%
Social	4	20.0%
Enterprising	3	15.0%
Conventional	2	10.0%
Total	20	100%

The assessment was followed by individual and parent–student reflection sessions in which participants discussed activities they enjoyed, perceived strengths, learning experiences, preferred fields, and possible future occupations. The results indicated that students became more able to articulate their interests, while parents gained a more structured basis for understanding their children’s characteristics. Importantly, participants were reminded that interest profiles should not be interpreted as fixed prescriptions because educational choices also require consideration of abilities, academic experiences, aspirations, personal values, family circumstances, and the characteristics of available SMK programs. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing that vocational interests are useful for understanding preferences but should be considered within broader person–environment and career-development processes (Leon et al., 2025). Therefore, the RIASEC assessment in this PkM program functioned primarily as a starting point for self-exploration and dialogue, enabling students and parents to make more informed comparisons among potential SMK specialization options.

3.4. Mapping of Interests with SMK Specialization Programs

The mapping activity involved 20 parent–student pairs and compared students’ RIASEC profiles with their initial specialization preferences, perceived abilities, and alternative SMK programs. As presented in Table 3, the Realistic profile was the largest group (5 students; 25%), followed by Artistic and Social (4 students each; 20%), Investigative (3 students; 15%), and Enterprising and Conventional (2 students each; 10%). The mapping showed that 15 students (75%) were categorized as having a good match between their interests and selected specialization programs, 4 students (20%) demonstrated a fair match, and 1 student (5%) showed a poor match. These results indicate that most participants had a relatively consistent relationship between their vocational interests and initial program choices, although the presence of 25% of students in the fair or poor-match categories demonstrates that interest alone cannot be used to determine an appropriate specialization. The mapping therefore considered students’ perceived abilities, learning experiences, aspirations, and the characteristics of each vocational program. This approach is consistent with the person–vocation fit perspective, which suggests that compatibility between individual characteristics and vocational environments is associated with satisfaction and persistence in vocational training (Yan, 2025).

Table 3. Summary of Interest Profile Mapping and Specialization Program Choice of 20 Students

Child’s Interest Profile	N	%	Suitable Specialization Program(s)
Realistic	5	25%	Light Vehicle & Automotive Engineering; Computer & Network Engineering; Electrical Power Installation Engineering; Industrial Electronics Engineering; Machining Engineering
Investigative	3	15%	Laboratory Testing Analysis; Computer & Network Engineering; Software Engineering
Artistic	4	20%	Visual Communication Design; Multimedia; Fashion Design; Creative Craft and Batik
Social	4	20%	Health Services; Social Work; Nursing Assistance; Office Management
Enterprising	2	10%	Online Business and Marketing
Conventional	2	10%	Accounting & Institutional Finance; Office Management
Total	20	100%	—

The mapping also provided parents with direct experience in interpreting assessment results, comparing alternative specialization programs, and discussing their suitability with students’ characteristics. This practical process helped shift parental perspectives from selecting programs primarily because they were perceived as popular or promising in the labor market toward considering individual–environment fit. The 75% good-match result suggests that the mapping process was useful for identifying potentially appropriate educational alternatives, while the 20% fair-match and 5% poor-match findings highlight the importance of further exploration before finalizing specialization choices. This interpretation is consistent with recent research emphasizing vocational interest as an important source

of information for understanding educational and occupational preferences, but not as a standalone determinant of career decisions (Leon et al., 2025). Consequently, the mapping stage strengthened parents' practical career literacy by enabling them to use interest information alongside school information, students' abilities, aspirations, and discussions with teachers or counselors. The process also encouraged continued parent–student communication and monitoring of students' developing interests and abilities beyond the PkM activity.

3.5. Parent–Student Decision-Making Assistance

The parent–student mentoring stage involved 20 parent–student pairs and used the RIASEC assessment and specialization mapping results as the basis for structured dialogue. Facilitators guided parents to listen to students' aspirations, ask open-ended questions, clarify information, compare alternative SMK programs, and consider the advantages and potential challenges of each option. The discussion focused on four aspects: students' interests, perceived abilities, specialization characteristics, and future educational and career goals. The mentoring results showed that the majority of students (15; 75%) had a good match between their interest profiles and selected specialization options, while 4 students (20%) had a fair match and 1 student (5%) had a poor match. These findings provided a concrete basis for further discussion rather than allowing parents to rely solely on assumptions about program popularity or employment prospects. The process also reflected the importance of social support in facilitating career exploration and career choice (Pham et al., 2024) and the contribution of parental career-related support to adolescents' career development (Parola et al., 2023).

The mentoring process also indicated a shift in the way parents approached educational decision-making. Rather than determining the specialization directly, parents were encouraged to recognize their children's interests and potential, provide relevant information and opportunities for exploration, help compare alternatives, and respect decisions developed through discussion. This approach positioned parents as facilitators of career decision-making while maintaining students' active participation. The use of assessment results as discussion material also helped parents understand that RIASEC profiles should be interpreted alongside abilities, academic experiences, family circumstances, aspirations, and the characteristics of available SMK programs. This is consistent with the person–vocation fit perspective, which emphasizes the relevance of compatibility between individual characteristics and vocational environments for satisfaction and persistence in vocational education (Michaelis & Findeisen, 2022). Thus, the mentoring stage translated career literacy into a practical parent–student decision-making process and provided a basis for students and parents to continue evaluating educational choices beyond the PkM activity.

3.6. Evaluation and Changes in Parents' Understanding and Insight

The evaluation assessed changes in parents' understanding and readiness after participating in the career literacy workshop, interest assessment, specialization mapping, and parent–student mentoring. Data were collected using pre-test and post-test instruments, observations, reflective discussions, and participant feedback. The pre-test and post-test scores were compared using a paired-samples t-test because the same participants were assessed before and after the intervention. As shown in Table 4, the mean score increased from 2.13 before the intervention to 3.48 after the intervention, representing a 63.4% improvement. The paired-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ($p < 0.05$), indicating that parents' understanding and readiness improved significantly following the intervention.

All measured aspects demonstrated positive changes. The largest increase occurred in parents' understanding of the relationship between students' interests and specialization programs, which increased from 2.05 to 3.50 (70.7%). Parents' ability to interpret interest-assessment results increased from 2.00 to 3.35 (67.5%), while understanding of SMK characteristics increased from 2.10 to 3.45 (64.3%). Understanding of the parental role as a mentor increased from 2.20 to 3.60 (63.6%), and readiness to discuss educational choices with children increased from 2.30 to 3.55 (54.3%). These findings suggest that the intervention was associated with meaningful improvement in parents' career

literacy and readiness to support their children's educational decisions. The strongest improvement in understanding interest–specialization fit is particularly relevant because vocational interest provides important information for understanding educational and occupational preferences, while appropriate person–vocation fit is associated with satisfaction and persistence in vocational education (Michaelis & Findeisen, 2022).

Table 4. Comparison of Parents' Understanding and Insight Before and After the Activity

Aspect Measured	Pre-test	Post-test	Improvement
Understanding of the characteristics of SMK education	2.10	3.45	64.3%
Understanding of the relationship between interests and specialization programs	2.05	3.50	70.7%
Ability to read interest-assessment results	2.00	3.35	67.5%
Understanding of educational and career prospects	2.15	3.40	58.1%
Understanding of the parental role as mentor	2.20	3.60	63.6%
Readiness to discuss educational choices with the child	2.30	3.55	54.3%
Mean	2.13	3.48	63.4%

*Note: Scores are based on a 1–4 scale. The pre-test and post-test means were analyzed using a paired-samples *t*-test, which indicated a statistically significant difference at $p < 0.05$.*

The quantitative findings were reinforced by observations and reflective discussions, which indicated a qualitative shift in how parents approached educational choices. Before the intervention, some parents tended to emphasize employment prospects, program popularity, or perceived labor-market demand. Following the intervention, parents more frequently considered students' interests, abilities, learning characteristics, further education opportunities, and career aspirations when discussing specialization choices. Parents also demonstrated greater readiness to listen to their children, ask open-ended questions, interpret assessment results as preliminary information rather than fixed recommendations, and compare alternative SMK programs. This shift suggests that the intervention strengthened not only factual knowledge but also parents' practical career-mentoring insight. Such findings are consistent with recent research showing that career exploration is supported by social and parental support and contributes to more informed career-choice processes (Elegbede & Abidogun, 2025; Marcionetti & Zammitti, 2025). Nevertheless, because the evaluation used a one-group pre-test–post-test design without a comparison group, the statistically significant result should be interpreted as evidence of change associated with the PkM intervention rather than definitive proof that the intervention alone caused the observed improvement. Overall, the findings indicate that integrating career literacy, RIASEC-based reflection, specialization mapping, and parent–student dialogue can provide a practical framework for strengthening parents' capacity to support adolescents during the transition from SMP to SMK.

4. CONCLUSION

The community service program in Kelurahan Jatinegara Kaum, East Jakarta, supported parents and students in developing a more informed approach to SMK specialization decisions. Through career literacy workshops, RIASEC-based interest assessment, specialization mapping, and parent–student mentoring, participants gained a clearer understanding of the relationship between students' interests, abilities, vocational programs, and future educational and career pathways. The program's main contribution was the strengthening of parents' career literacy and their readiness to serve as mentors rather than unilateral decision-makers. Parents became more attentive to students' aspirations, more capable of interpreting interest-assessment results, and more prepared to compare educational alternatives based on students' interests, abilities, program characteristics, and career goals. The activity also helped identify the degree of alignment between students' interest profiles and their preferred specialization options, providing a practical basis for further discussion and guidance. Because the evaluation used a one-group pre-test–post-test design without a comparison group, the results should be understood as evidence of improvement associated with the intervention, not as definitive proof of causal effectiveness. More broadly, the program suggests that

integrated career literacy activities involving students and parents can be a useful approach for supporting informed vocational education choices at the community level. Continued parent–student communication, access to reliable educational and career information, and collaboration with schools and guidance counselors are recommended to help students make and periodically review their educational and career decisions.

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