THE SECRET BEHIND STUDENTS' CHOICE OF CONCENTRATION: BETWEEN INTEREST, ABILITY, AND DECISIONS IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the factors that influence students in choosing a concentration in Human Resources (HR), by examining the role of interests, abilities, and the decision-making process. Concentration selection is a crucial process that impacts career direction, learning motivation, and readiness for the world of work. Using a qualitative approach based on literature review, this study examines theories regarding academic motivation, self-perception of ability, and psychological factors that play a role in educational decisions. The results indicate that interest has a significant relationship with concentration choice because it is related to learning satisfaction and self-confidence. Academic ability and interpersonal skills strengthen students' confidence in pursuing HR, while external factors such as peer influence, supervisors, and job prospects also influence the final decision. By understanding the relationship between interests, abilities, and the decision-making process, universities are expected to provide more targeted academic guidance and help students choose fields that align with their potential.

Keywords: Interest, Abilities, Decisions, Student Concentration, Human Resources

Introduction

Determining a concentration of study is one of the most important decisions in a student's academic journey. This decision relates not only to the field of study to be studied but also to the career path they will pursue after graduation. In management programs, particularly in Human Resources (HR), the process of selecting a concentration often involves complex considerations. Students are faced with the dilemma of pursuing personal interests, assessing their abilities, and considering future job opportunities.

Interest is a key factor driving someone's choice of field. When students are interested in HR, such as employee development, recruitment, or organizational behavior, they are more motivated to learn and strive for the best results. However, strong interest alone is insufficient without the appropriate skills. Analytical thinking, interpersonal communication, and sensitivity to human dynamics are essential skills in HR. When abilities and interests align, students feel more confident in their concentration choice and are more motivated to learn (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

In addition to internal factors, the decision to choose a concentration is also influenced by external factors such as career trends, peer influence, and family encouragement. Many students consider career prospects before making their choice. The HR field is increasingly in demand due to its strategic role in modern organizations, especially in the era of digitalization and changing work patterns. Companies are increasingly recognizing that business success depends not only on technology but also on the ability to manage and develop their human resources (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

On the other hand, social pressure often makes students doubt their personal choices. Some choose a concentration based on family advice or following trends, rather than on an inner drive. As a result, they can experience confusion or dissatisfaction with the path they take. Therefore, it is important for students to engage in self-reflection early on, identify their interests and abilities, and seek information about job market needs to make more informed decisions.

The role of supervisors and educational institutions is equally crucial. They help students identify their potential, provide a realistic view of the world of work, and prepare them to face future professional challenges. With this support, students can make decisions that balance personal desires with career demands.

Therefore, the secret behind choosing a concentration truly lies in balancing interests, abilities, and an awareness of the realities of the working world. Decisions based on a deep understanding of these three aspects will help students in the field of HR not only become competent graduates, but also individuals who have a clear career direction and satisfaction in their professional journey.

Theoretical Framework

Students' choice of a major is a complex academic decision, involving psychological, social, and contextual factors. According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, human behavior is influenced by the interaction between personal factors, the environment, and the behavior itself, known as reciprocal determinism. In the context of major selection, students' decisions are not only determined by personal desires but also by their abilities and the support of their environment, such as family, friends, and the job market.

Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) later developed Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which explains that interest, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations are the primary factors influencing career choice. Students who are confident in their academic abilities and perceive a particular field as having positive outcomes are more likely to choose that particular major. In the context of HR, interest in human behavior and interpersonal communication skills are often key drivers in students' career choices.

Super (1990), through his Life-Span, Life-Space Theory, explains that career choice is a lifelong developmental process, in which individuals continuously adjust their self-concept to environmental demands. The choice of a concentration of study can be considered the initial stage in the formation of a student's professional self- concept. The better a student understands their interests and abilities, the more appropriate the direction their career development will take.

In addition to individual factors, Robbins and Judge (2019) emphasize that career decisions are also influenced by the organizational context and job opportunities. Students often consider workforce trends and salary prospects before making a choice. In this case, external information can reinforce or even change their initial interests. Therefore, the decision to choose a concentration is the result of an interaction between internal factors (interests and abilities) and external factors (social support and career opportunities).

Based on these theories, it can be concluded that students' decisions in choosing a concentration in HR are influenced by three main components: interest as an emotional drive, ability (ability/self-efficacy) as a belief in their own competence, and decision-making factors influenced by the environmental context. These three components interact to shape the direction of students' academic choices.

Method

This study used a quantitative approach with an associative descriptive design, aiming to illustrate the relationship between students' interests, abilities, and decisions in choosing a concentration in Human Resources (HR). The quantitative approach was chosen because it provides measurable, objective, and statistically testable results. Through an associative descriptive design, this study not only describes the phenomenon but also examines the relationships between the variables studied.

The population in this study was all final-year students in the Management study program at Pamulang University who had chosen a specific concentration. A sample of 103 respondents was drawn from this population using a purposive sampling technique, which selects the sample based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria were students who had chosen or were currently pursuing a concentration in HR, ensuring that the data obtained were more focused and relevant to the research context.

Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire (closed-ended questionnaire) distributed online using Google Forms. The questionnaire was structured based on predetermined indicators for each variable. The interest variable was measured through personal interest, alignment with ideals, and learning motivation. The ability variable was measured through understanding the material, academic experience, and self-confidence in the HR field. Meanwhile, the decision

variable for concentration selection was measured based on career considerations, environmental influences, and the availability of job opportunities in the HR field.

The research instrument, a questionnaire, used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Before distribution, the questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability to ensure each item measured the variable consistently. Validity was tested by examining the item-total correlation value, while reliability was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a minimum threshold of 0.70 as an indicator of instrument reliability.

The data analysis method was carried out in stages, starting with descriptive analysis, classical assumption testing, and multiple linear regression analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the characteristics of respondents and the tendencies of their responses to each variable. Classic assumption testing, including tests for normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, was conducted to ensure the data met the requirements of regression analysis. Afterward, multiple linear regression was conducted to determine the extent to which interests and abilities influence students' concentration selection decisions.

The results of the analysis will be presented in tabular form and narrative interpretation for ease of understanding. In addition, partial (t-test) and simultaneous (F-test) tests were used to determine the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable, with a significance level of 0.05. Through this methodology, it is hoped that the research will provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors underlying students' decisions in choosing a concentration in HR, as well as provide input for educational institutions in developing more targeted academic guidance strategies.

Results

Table 1. Multiple Regression
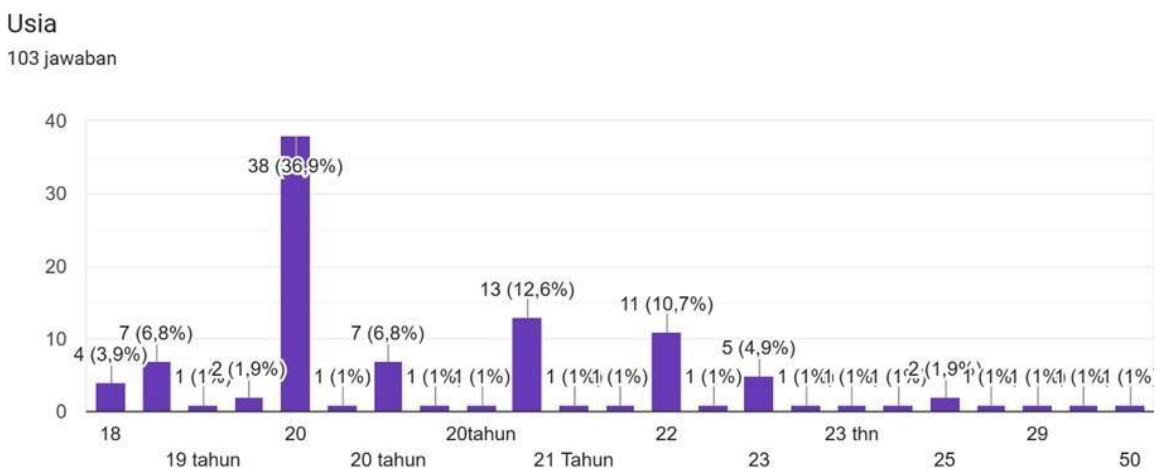
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.032	1.771		1.147	.254					
	Interest	.305	.125	.303	2.452	.016	.866	.238	.110	.132	7.592
	ability	.648	.133	.604	4.880	.000	.887	.439	.219	.132	7.592

a. Dependent Variable: dacision-making

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that the Interest variable does not significantly influence the level of student decisions because its significance value is 0.016 (>0.05). Conversely, ability has a positive and significant effect on the level of student decisions with a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05). The VIF value of 7.592 indicates no multicollinearity problem. This means that only Ability has a significant effect on the level of student decisions, while Interest does not.

Table 2. Simple Regression

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.112	1.832		2.790	.006
	Interest	.872	.050	.866	17.417	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Decision making

The results of the simple regression test show that the regression coefficient (B) for the interest variable is 0.872 with a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05. This means that interest has a positive and significant influence on decision-making. Every one-unit increase in interest will increase decision-making by 0.872 units. The calculated t-value of 17.417, which is much greater than the t-table, strengthens the evidence that this variable plays an important role in the student decision-making process. Thus, the higher a person's interest, the greater their tendency to make decisions with more confidence and direction.

Table 3. Simple Regression

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.012	1.815		1.109	.270
	ability	.951	.049	.887	19.267	.000

a. Dependent Variable: decision making

In the this table, the regression analysis results show that the ability variable has a regression coefficient (B) of 0.951 with a significance level of 0.000 < 0.05. This means that ability also has a positive and significant influence on decision-making. The calculated t-value of 19.267 indicates that ability contributes strongly to decision- making. Therefore, students with good abilities, both academically and in terms of self-awareness, tend to find it easier to make the right choices according to their potential and goals.

Table 4.T Test Table
Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.032	1.771		1.147	.254
	Interest	.305	.125	.303	2.452	.016
	ability	.648	.133	.604	4.880	.000

a. Dependent Variable: dacision-making

Based on the table above, the constant value of 2.032 with a significance of 0.254 indicates that the student's initial Decision level is 2.032 before being influenced by other variables. The Interest variable has a significance value of 0.016 (> 0.05), so it does not significantly influence the Decision level. Meanwhile, the Ability variable has a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), meaning it has a significant effect on the student's Decision level. Thus, only Ability has a significant effect on Ability, while Interest does not have a significant effect.

Table 5..F Test Table
ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7566.887	2	3783.444	197.828	.000[b]
	Residual	1912.491	100	19.125		
	Total	9479.379	102			

a. Dependent Variable: dacision-making

b. Predictors: (Constant), ability, Interest

Based on the ANOVA table above, the calculated F value of 197.828 with a significance level of 0.000 (<0.05) indicates that the regression model used is suitable for use in this study. This means that simultaneously, the Interest and Ability variables have a significant effect on Student Decision-Making. In other words, both independent variables together have a significant influence on the level of student decisions to take the HR concentration, although partially only Ability is proven to be significant.

Table 6. Test Of Coefficient Determination
Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.893ᵃ	.798	.794	4.373	1.715

a. Predictors: (Constant), ability, Interest

b. Dependent Variable: dacision-making

Based on the Model Summary table above, the R Square value is 0.798 or 79.8%, which means that the Interest and Ability variables together are able to explain 79.8% of the variation in changes in student decisions. Meanwhile, the remaining 20.2% is explained by other factors outside this research model. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.794 indicates that after adjusting for the number of variables and samples, the model's ability to explain the dependent variable remains quite good. The Durbin- Watson value of 1.715 is within the normal range (1.5–2.5), which means there are no autocorrelation problems in the regression model. Thus, this model can be said to be quite appropriate to describe the relationship between Interest, Ability, and Decision Making.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the Interest variable has no significant influence on students' decision-making in choosing a concentration in Human Resources (HR), while the Ability variable has a positive and significant influence. The significance value for Interest is 0.016 (>0.05), indicating that students' interest in a particular field is not necessarily the primary determinant in academic decision- making. Conversely, the significance value for Ability is 0.000 (<0.05), indicating that individual ability plays a significant role in influencing student decisions. This means that students tend to consider their own abilities when choosing a concentration rather than simply personal interest.

Related to the research objectives, these results provide insight that student decisions are not only a reflection of interest but also an evaluation of their competencies. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), a person's actions are influenced by intentions formed through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In this context, ability can be defined as a control factor that determines an individual's belief in success in a chosen field. Thus, students who perceive themselves to possess the appropriate academic abilities or skills are more confident in their decision-making than those who simply have interest but not adequate ability.

These findings align with research by Setiawan and Lestari (2020), which confirmed that academic ability and self-confidence are dominant factors in students' career decision-making. However, these results differ from the findings of Rahmawati (2019), who stated that interest significantly influences major choice. This difference in results may be due to the characteristics of the respondents and the different academic environments, where students in this study may have considered personal readiness more than subjective interest in a particular field.

A simultaneous ANOVA test revealed that the Interest and Ability variables jointly had a significant influence on students' decisions, with an F- value of 197.828 and a significance level of 0.000 (<0.05). This indicates that although

interest is not partially significant, the combination of the two variables still contributes to students' decision-making process. In other words, interest plays a supporting role when coupled with adequate ability. The R-square value of 79.8% also indicates that this research model is quite robust in explaining variation in student decisions, while the remaining 20.2% is influenced by factors outside the model, such as family support, perspectives on career prospects, and social influences.

In terms of scientific implications, the results of this study enrich theoretical understanding of the factors influencing students' academic decision- making, particularly in the context of higher education in Indonesia. This research also emphasizes the importance of ability as a cognitive factor mediating academic decisions, thus contributing to the development of the theory of planned behavior in education. In terms of practical implications, the results of this study can provide input for universities in designing career and academic guidance programs. Universities should encourage students to recognize and develop their own abilities so that their decisions are more rational and aligned with their personal potential.

However, this study has limitations because it only used two independent variables and involved respondents from a single institution. External factors such as social pressure, perceptions of the job market, and family support were not further analyzed. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the variables, involve more respondents across universities, and examine the mediating role of psychological variables such as motivation and self-efficacy to achieve more comprehensive and broadly generalizable results.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, this study concluded that the ability variable has a positive and significant influence on students' decision-making when choosing a concentration in Human Resources (HR). Meanwhile, the interest variable did not show a significant influence on students' decisions. This finding suggests that students tend to consider their own abilities and academic readiness more when making decisions than simply following their personal interest in a field.

Simultaneously, both variables remained significant in influencing students' decisions, as indicated by the ANOVA test results with an F-value of 197.828 and a significance level of 0.000. The R-square value of 79.8% also indicates that this research model is quite robust in explaining the factors influencing students' decisions in choosing a concentration. This means that ability and interest together make significant contributions, although ability is the most dominant factor.

In terms of academic contribution, this study strengthens the Theory of Planned Behavior, which explains that a person's actions are determined by their belief in their ability to achieve success. These findings also enrich the literature related to student academic decision-making in higher education, particularly in the context of choosing a field of study or concentration.

From a practical application perspective, the results of this study provide input for universities to design academic guidance programs that not only help students understand their interests but also enhance their abilities and confidence in

determining their study direction.

This study has limitations because it only used two independent variables and was conducted at a single university. Therefore, future research is recommended to add other variables such as motivation, family support, and perceptions of job prospects, as well as expand the study population so that the results can be more broadly generalized.

Acknowledgments

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