

Indigenous Psychology Research on the Meaning of Work and Getting the Desired Job for Young People in Indonesia

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Abstract. Job is an important aspect and is part of human desire in life. Using indigenous psychological approach that worked bottom-up, this study aimed to describe the meaning of work and to know things that are perceived as obstacles in getting the desired job. This research also informs who's the most influential person affecting the subject in determining the job in the job selection process. Data from open-ended questionnaire was collected from 216 (male: 119, female: 97) new working forces and bachelor level (working less than 2 years old and aged between 22-30 years). Subjects' tabulated responses after content analysis showed that: first, job was seen as an independency in fulfilling the economic needs (42%), self-actualization (29%) and daily activity (9%). These findings suggest that work is less associated with matters related to the foundation for future live (4%) or career (1%). Secondly, the obstacles encountered in getting the expected job were; limited opportunity (25%), self motivation (20%), failure to compete (16%), skills (10%), psychological problems (10%), family support (6%) and limited networking (4%). The high rates of unemployment in Indonesia, even for bachelor degree, showed that the opportunity in getting the job was very limited and competition for the jobs was very tight. This fact led the working force to perceive the job less as the foundation for future live and career. In addition, this study also obtained the result that in job selection, people who have influence in determining the job is; by own account (35%), parents (31%), family (16%), partner (girl friend/boy friend, wife/husband) (9%).

Keywords: Indigenous psychology, meaning of working, job, new work force

1. Introduction

Young generation is the leader of tomorrow. Fate of the nation is determined by their hands. In the history of change, young people have a role and contributed substantially to the changes occurred in the world. Their values determine social change.

Researches that aim to describe the meaning of work have been performed in several studies over the years. Although there is no widely agreed definition about the meaning of work, equal understanding between employee and employer about meaning of work has been widely known as valuable factor that linked to positive outcomes.

Nowadays, the meaning and function of work is not only as financial security anymore but also as an extension of identity [8]. Baruch (2004) said job gives a person a sense of direction, challenge, self-fulfilment and self development, more than preserving basic needs [2]. Work lay at the very core of contemporary life for most people, providing financial security, personal identity, and an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to community life [8]. In the end, individual level of mental health is also determined by work conditions.

Smith and Gast (1998) said that the technological advancement and change in the labor market along with the global economical transition are the possible reasons why the complex problem of making career decision occurs [9]. Twenty years ago, employees offered loyalty, trust and commitment in exchange for job

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security, training and development, promotion and support from employers. Employees are now expected to work long hours, with high risk and responsibility, and be more flexible to changes and ambiguity. This situation then leads transactional relationship where employee demanded higher pay level, performance-linked rewards and simply “a job” [4]. Transactional relationship between individual and organization has provoked lower level of mutual commitment and trust [3].

Globalization usually offers economics opportunities and other benefits for young people. But like a double-edged sword, globalization also results a social cost. Technological advancement influences young people’ perception concerning heavy pressure in relation to developed skills expected by the labor market. Changing economic needs may increase level of consumerism and encourage young people to pursue financial benefits of work.

World Youth Reports stated that globalization has led to consumerism in China. Young people are attracted to cities not only by job opportunities, switching from agricultural to non-agricultural job, but also by distant appeal of urban lifestyles that leads to consumerism. Case study conducted in Korea showed that the economic successes have been accompanied by unexpected and hidden pitfalls such as oversupply of college graduates in the labor market [11].

In Indonesia, working problems and unemployment of its college graduates is still a big homework for its government. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistic shows that until February 2011 the number of open unemployment is about 8,12 million [1]. Many experts believe that this number is “under value” for it is likely more than that. This happens because in reality the working population is still dominated by the level of elementary education, about 55,1 million (49,53%) of it filled with low-incomes of informal sector. In contrast, unemployment rate is still dominated by the level of diploma (12,78%) and undergraduate (11,92%). This is quite unsettling because it will increase from year to year.

On the other hand, although there are many college graduates applying for a job, the company still had difficulties in getting satisfying candidates. According to the company, the criteria of fresh graduates who can easily be accepted for a job opportunity are graduates who have appropriate skill development, adapt quickly to change, have good social skill and have a high commitment. Meanwhile, the criteria of fresh graduate who are difficult to be accepted are those who frequently change work, have a low commitment, have high salary expectations, incompatible with the skill that is required and want to get everything instantly. In this case, college graduates might only smarter, but not a fighter.

Of course, the absence of commitment which has been a complaint from the employer side is so much more related with the level of employee’s job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of ones job or employee’s perception of how well their job provides things that are considered as important. In example, if salary is received unequal with level of hard work then negative attitude toward work will emerged.

Lack of meaning of work has been considered responsible for Quarter Life Crisis phenomenon, where young people are becoming increasingly disillusioned with their jobs and are consequently leaving for more successful and fulfilling careers [3]. It is important to find out about meaning of working, for both employer and employee to get a clear understanding and commitment between the two sides.

Over the years, it has been realized that work can meet a variety of individual needs more than a financial one. It has been recognized that many people rate purpose, autonomy, satisfaction and learning as a more important aspect than salary. Meaning of Work International Research Team mentioned six factors which supposed to characterize a meaningful work: work centrally, economic orientation, interpersonal relation, intrinsic orientation, entitlement, and obligation norm [7].

This study aimed to describe the meaning of work, to know things that are perceived as obstacles in getting the desired job, and the people who have influence in the young subject’s job determination process in Indonesia.

2. Method

The study participants consist of 216 (male: 119, female: 97) new working forces and bachelor level (working less than 2 years old and aged between 22-30 years). This study used an indigenous approach that

is generally examining beliefs in natural contexts and seeks to discover how the cultural view, theories, assumptions and classifications for psychological topics in each respective culture. An open-ended questionnaires developed by researchers. The answered question were analyzed with content analysis. The answers were subsequently categorized in accordance with the themes that emerged among the responses. During the categorization process, information is sorted to a number of themes. Themes in this context, refers to ideas and topics that are detected within the analyzed material, and emerge more than once in the data set.

3. Result

Based on the statistical analysis on 216 responses, the content analysis showed that work perceived to has meaning as; first, job was seen as an independency in fulfilling the economic needs (42%), self-actualization (29%) and as daily activity (9%).

Table 1. Meaning of work

No	Categorize	%
1.	Economic needs	42
2.	Self actualization	29
3.	Daily activity	9
4.	Status	6
5.	Future live	4
6.	Career	1
7.	Others	9
Total		100

These findings suggest that work is less associated with matters related to the foundation for future live (4%) or career (1%). On the other side, the obstacles encountered in getting the expected job were; limited opportunity (25%), self motivation (20%), failure to compete (16%), skills (10%), psychological problems (10%), family support (6%) and limited networking (4%).

Table 2. Obstacles in getting job

No	Categorize	%
1.	Limited opportunity	25
2.	Self motivation	20
3.	Failure to compete	16
4.	Skills	10
5.	Psychological problems	10
6.	Family support	6
7.	Limited networking	4
8.	Others	9
Total		100

In addition, this study also obtained that in a job selection the people who have influence in a subject's job determination process are; subject's own account (35%), parents (31%), extended family (16%), partner (girl friend/boy friend, wife/husband) (9%).

Table 3. People who have influence in determining the job

No	Categorize	%
1.	Own account	35
2.	Parents	31
3.	Extended family	16
4.	Partner	9
5.	Friend	5
6.	Other	4
Total		100

4. Discussion

The present study shows that fulfilling the economic needs was a common meaning of work for young people in Indonesia. In other hand, work was less associated with matters related to the foundation for future or career. These findings consistent with Wray-Lake et al, value about work had changed substantially. Young people today were less likely than in previous generations to believe work will be a source of meaning or purpose in their adult lives. In times of economic change, extrinsic rewards such as salary and status or prestige may be the only sure things the work world provides [10].

Result of the findings also showed that limited opportunity was still a major obstacle in getting desired job for young people in Indonesia. As mentioned before, just like Korea, there were great opportunities but limited only for those who willing to work with low salary and security. Meanwhile, opportunity to get appropriate job was still very limited and competition for the jobs was very tight. This fact led the working force to perceive the job less as the foundation for future live and career. The fulfillment of economic needs and enjoying work without thinking about a further career, regarded as more important.

In addition, this study shows that parents no longer be the sole holder for career decision. Young people in Indonesia were able to determine their own desire. This suggests a modernizing cultural change where parents are no longer authoritatively determine the child's future. Interestingly, the extended family also has a role in decision making. This finding consistent with LaFave & Thomas that highlight the role and importance of extended family in development of Indonesian child [6] . In general, these results reflect the picture of the working environment and economic condition of the third world countries like Indonesia.

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