

## Advances in Community Services Research

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# Socialization of Effective Strategies for Choosing Study Programs and Scholarship Opportunities for Grade XII Students SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi, Indonesia

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	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> study program selection; scholarship opportunities; higher education access; student guidance; academic decision-making; community service; twelfth-grade students</p> <p><b>Conflict of Interest Statement:</b> The author(s) declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.</p> <p><b>Copyright © 2025 The Author(s). All rights reserved.</b></p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> This community service article aims to improve Grade XII students' understanding of effective strategies for selecting study programs that match their interests, talents, abilities, and career aspirations, while also increasing their awareness of scholarship opportunities for higher education.</p> <p><b>Research Design and Methodology:</b> The activity was conducted at SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi, Indonesia, involving 85 twelfth-grade students. It employed a descriptive community service approach through lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, demonstrations, and questionnaires. Data were collected from participant engagement during the program and from post-activity evaluation of students' understanding.</p> <p><b>Findings and Discussion:</b> The results indicate that the activity was implemented successfully and received positive feedback from participants. Students demonstrated high enthusiasm, actively participated in discussions, and gained better understanding of study program selection, university admission pathways, and scholarship opportunities, including KIP Kuliah and university-based scholarships. Evaluation results indicated that 80% of participants understood the material presented.</p> <p><b>Implications:</b> These findings suggest that structured outreach programs can effectively support students' academic decision-making and motivate them to pursue higher education despite financial limitations. Continuous school-based guidance and wider dissemination of scholarship information are recommended to strengthen students' readiness for post-secondary education.</p>

## Introduction

Education is crucial in the modern era because without it, the world would not function. Today, education must be a top priority because it serves as an investment in the future. A high-quality education system produces high-quality human resources. The better a country's education system, the more advanced that country becomes; conversely, the worse the education system, the more underdeveloped the country remains. Education is expected to produce a generation that is

intelligent, of noble character, and of good moral standing, as well as to foster awareness of living together and tolerance toward people of all kinds.

Every student graduating from high school or vocational school must choose between continuing to college and seeking employment. Many people wish to attend college. However, not all students can pursue higher education. An article from detik.edu quotes Prof. Dr. R. Agus Sartono, MBA, stating that 3.7 million students graduate from high school, MA, and vocational high school each year, but only 1.8 million of them can continue to college. This figure indicates that high school and vocational high school graduates either do not want to or do not have the opportunity to continue their education at the college level.

High school and vocational school graduates often face major challenges when choosing a field of study. Parents or prospective students are sometimes confused about how to choose a major (program of study) or whether to attend a public or private university. There are times when they are more inclined to choose a university over a specific major. In reality, choosing a good major is the first step toward success. A major is related to the skills one must possess to decide whether to pursue higher education or enter the workforce. It has nothing to do with job hunting, as a university is merely an umbrella for a collection of majors.

Universities generally offer good majors. However, since everyone has unique interests, talents, abilities, and skills, a particular major may not be suitable for everyone. The smooth progress of studies is influenced by the choice of the right academic program. Nevertheless, many students choose a program due to pressure or coercion from their parents or simply because they're following their peers. It's important to understand that choosing a program that doesn't align with one's personality, interests, and potential will lead to problems during the educational process. Their decision regarding their academic program will significantly shape a student's life.

Jambi University has also seen students make mistakes in choosing their majors. Some students eventually switch to other majors after feeling uncomfortable with the one they initially chose. One student from Civil Engineering transferred to Management, another from Communication Studies transferred to Accounting, and another from Pharmacy transferred to Management. After the interview, they decided to switch majors because they felt the programs did not align with their interests, talents, and abilities. They believed that continuing their education would have negative consequences if forced to do so.

They found it difficult to keep up with coursework, lacked motivation to study, struggled academically, faced prolonged study periods, and risked dropping out (DO) because they failed to thoroughly research the programs they chose—often simply following friends' lead or heeding parental advice.

After graduating and seeking employment, the consequences of choosing the wrong program don't end there. They often struggle to find suitable careers because the field doesn't align with their interests and talents, and ultimately, their motivation for working becomes solely about money. If unavoidable, this can lead to stress that harms your health and overall happiness.

Prospective students must learn as much as possible about the academic program they choose to avoid negative consequences later on. The most important thing is to understand their interests, talents, and potential so they can align them with the program they select. Therefore, it is crucial for 12th-grade students who are about to enter higher education to know and understand what they need to choose a program that matches their interests, talents, and aspirations.

Additionally, the main challenge faced by high school graduates is how to continue their education in college, as they lack the funds to do so. The government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, provides the Indonesia Smart Card (KIP) to assist students who cannot afford to continue their education.

The Indonesian Smart Card, also known as KIP, is a social assistance program created by the Indonesian government to help students from poor or underprivileged families pursue elementary and secondary education. The government provides the Indonesia Smart Card for College (KIP-Kuliah) to students in higher education. One of the objectives of the KIP-Kuliah program is to increase access to and learning opportunities for students who cannot afford them.

Replacing the Bidikmisi assistance provided since 2020, this program is intended for prospective students from families unable to meet their educational needs. This program also provides opportunities for prospective students who wish to continue their education at a higher level, as its benefits are very helpful to them.

However, applicants often face issues during the registration process. To become a KIP Kuliah recipient, students must meet the established requirements and conditions. In addition to registering independently on the website <http://kipkuliah.kemdikbud.go.id> or through the KIP-Kuliah mobile app available on the Play Store, they must also have a National Student Identification Number (NISN), a National School Code (NPSN), and a National Identity Number (NIK).

The KIP Kuliah program has not yet achieved all its objectives during its implementation. One obstacle is the very limited recipient quota and a non-transparent admission system. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for individuals with financial resources to still register as KIP Kuliah recipients. They take advantage of the limited opportunities to claim quotas that should be allocated to prospective students.

The number of people who applied for KIP-K in 2023 was 754, but only 84 (11.87%) received it. This is a very small number compared to the total number of applicants. This is because Jambi University has a limited quota. Jambi University offers many other scholarships to its students in addition to those provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Some of these include scholarships from Bank Indonesia, Baznas, and Dompot Dhuafa. These scholarships are awarded not only to students with limited financial means but also to high-achieving students.

With various types of scholarships available at universities, students who lack sufficient funds can continue their studies, provided they meet the university's requirements. SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi District, located at Jl. Pertamina No. 27 RT.13, Sekernan Subdistrict, Muaro Jambi District, Jambi Province, has a total of 255 students, comprising 178 science (IPA) students and 77 social studies (IPS) students. According to the teachers interviewed, not all students have a sufficient understanding of how to choose a college major. Only 78% of students continued their studies the previous year, while the remaining 22% did not attend college due to financial constraints. Twelfth-grade students were targeted for this community service activity to help them choose the right major. Additionally, information was provided regarding various scholarships available to students, both from the government and from the University of Jambi. These scholarships offer students the opportunity to attend college. Through this outreach, it is hoped that students will gain sufficient knowledge to select a major that aligns with their interests, talents, and potential. Furthermore, this outreach activity motivates students facing financial challenges to pursue higher education.

## **Research Design and Methodology**

Based on the challenges faced by 12th-grade students at SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi—such as a lack of information about choosing a major, a lack of self-awareness, and limited information regarding scholarships—the solutions offered in this activity are:

- Conducting outreach on strategies for choosing a major based on interests, talents, and career opportunities.
- Providing information on types of higher education institutions and admission pathways (SNBP, SNBT, Independent, and Private Universities).
- Conducting outreach on college scholarship opportunities such as the KIP Kuliah, Beasiswa Unggulan, and scholarships from universities.
- Providing a brief training session on how to search for scholarship information and how to apply for scholarships.
- Conducting discussion and Q&A sessions so that students can consult directly regarding their study plans.

Through this activity, it is hoped that students will have a better understanding of how to choose a major and be aware of scholarship opportunities to continue their education at a higher education institution.

### *Approach Methods Used*

The methods used in this outreach activity are:

- **Lecture Method**  
Used to present material on strategies for choosing a major, university admission pathways, and scholarship information.
- **Discussion and Q&A Method**  
Used to allow students to ask questions directly regarding confusion about choosing a major and scholarship information.
- **Demonstration Method**  
Used to demonstrate how to search for information on universities and scholarships via the internet or official websites.
- **Questionnaire Method**  
Used to gauge students' interest in academic programs and to evaluate the outreach activity.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### *Findings*

The Community Service Activity (PKM) titled “Outreach on Effective Strategies for Choosing a Major and Scholarship Opportunities for 12th-Grade Students at SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi” was successfully held on Wednesday, October 11, 2024, and lasted for one day. The event took place at SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi. The participants were 12th-grade students.

The stages of this community service activity are as follows:

### *Event preparation*

The preparatory phase begins by contacting the school and submitting a written request to hold the event and set the schedule.

### *Implementation of the activity*

At SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi, the community service team met with 12th-grade students from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. The outreach session took place in a school classroom. A total of 85 students attended the event at SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi. The session began with a screening of a video profiling the University of Jambi (UNJA). The team then explained how to choose a major and discussed the various scholarship opportunities available at the university. An LCD projector was used to present the material in a lecture. Two students participating in this activity also helped present material on choosing a study program and on scholarship opportunities. One of the faculty members also presented material on choosing a study program and on scholarship opportunities. During the activity, the team asked questions and awarded prizes to students who answered, keeping the activity engaging and preventing it from becoming boring.



**Figure 1. Information session on effective strategies for choosing a major and scholarship opportunities for 12th-grade students at SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi**

### *Conclusion and Evaluation of the Activity*

Before the community service activity concluded, an evaluation was conducted to determine whether the students understood the material presented and to assess the activity's overall success.

The evaluation results showed that 80% of the students who participated in the outreach activity understood the material presented. The community service activity concluded with the presentation of souvenirs and a group photo with the school principal and the students.

### **Discussion**

One of the biggest challenges students face when they enter their senior year of high school or equivalent is uncertainty about which program to choose. Many of them feel they made the wrong choice when selecting a program at private or public universities. Making the wrong choice

One reason why a student or prospective student chooses the wrong program is a lack of preparation. Additionally, there are several other reasons why a student or prospective student might make the wrong choice, such as the absence of a suitable program at the chosen university, parental preferences and expectations, and failing to pass the selection process for the desired program. Not a few of them follow their friends.

High school graduates can overcome this problem if they are given sufficient knowledge and understanding to choose the study program that best suits their interests, talents, and abilities. Choosing the right university is crucial for their future success. Additionally, many students wish to attend college but are hindered by costs. They also lack information about college scholarship opportunities. SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi warmly welcomed this community service activity, in the form of a college outreach, and received a positive response from the students. The students were very enthusiastic and asked many questions about academic programs and scholarships they might be eligible for. This demonstrates that 12th-grade students are eager to attend college.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the outreach program indicate that the activity went well. It was evident that the participants were highly enthusiastic, as demonstrated by the very high student attendance rate; furthermore, students' understanding of the material and participation in activities were excellent. The team also did an excellent job of presenting and delivering the relevant material, as evidenced by the participants' interest and the questions they asked during the discussion sessions. Students at SMAN 2 Muaro Jambi will face difficulties in choosing a major that aligns with their interests after graduation because the counseling and discussion sessions were so engaging. Additionally, financial constraints prevent many students from pursuing higher education.

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