Students' Motivation in Studying Psychology

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Abstract: This study was conducted on third semester students enrolled in the Department of Psychology, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI). The research subjects were 85 people. The purpose of this exploratory study was to figure out the subjects' reasons for enrolling in the Department of Psychology. To achieve this purpose, a qualitative approach was employed. The data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire consisting two questions. The result revealed that 65.9 % of students expressed that psychology was their first choice, and 27.5% and 7.5% said that it was their second and third choice respectively. They decided to be majored in psychology based on their personal free-will. Data of students who chose psychology as their first choice were analyzed following a grounded theory framework using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding method (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). It was revealed that there were five categories of students' reasons for choosing psychology: (1) personal interest, (2) desire to understand human behavior, (3) future career opportunities, (4) the significance of psychology in everyday life (5) others.

1   INTRODUCTION

Psychology is a study of interest to many students in Indonesia especially in the last 15 years. Therefore, many of both public and private universities start to offer an undergraduate degree program in psychology to fulfill the demand. Indonesia Association of Psychology Higher Education Providers (AP2TPI), as the coordinator and organizer of annual psychological colloquium in Indonesia, notes that 113 undergraduate psychology programs become its members (ap2tpi.or.id, accessed in 2016).

UPI is one of many public universities to seize the opportunity by offering an undergraduate program in psychology since 2004. The Department of Psychology of UPI was just accredited B by the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) in 2015. Although this program is only 13 years old, but the number of applicants to this program is always increasing from year to year and outperforms some older programs offered by UPI. In 2016, the number of applicants was ranked third after Economics and Business and Communication Science. One had to compete with other 4,364 applicants in order to be granted admission to this program. This condition is satisfactory because it shows that this program has been widely acknowledge and has earned public trust.

And it raises a question as to why they decided to enroll to this program. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2006), motivation is a driving force of an individual to take an action. This action stimulates response towards a behavior and provides a specific goal.

Motivation has three aspects: (1) driving: a force that makes an individual to act in a specific manner, (2) orienting: an individual's behavior is oriented to a certain goal, and (3) supporting.

Motivation comes in two types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is frequently defined as performing an action out of individual interest. For example, a child plays football because he just wants to. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation refers to behavior driven by external rewards. As case in point, a child plays football because he wants to make his parents happy or to be a champion (Reiss, 2012).

So, motivation is an individual driving force to do something to achieve a certain goal. This force is actually not only initiating, but also persisting a behavior. This force could come from within (intrinsic) and outside (extrinsic).

A study conducted by Ho et al. (2016) shows that a cultural factor in a certain setting influence student in choosing a career path. Students in Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan choose to be a librarian because

this career path provides security, stability, and comfort.

The reasons why students choose the Department of Psychology at UPI have already been figured out through informal interviews. Based on initial interview results, they chose to study psychology because they wanted to help others, wanted to be a psychologist, wanted to work in a human and resources department in a company, wanted to be a better individual, and so on.

This study was conducted to collect more accurate evidence to complement the results of interviews. The researcher wanted to know what were students' motivation and reason for choosing this program and if they chose it based on their personal free-will and interests or under influence of parents.

To date, no study has investigated students' motivation to take psychology especially in the Department of Psychology of UPI. This topic is interesting to be studied considering that the Department of Psychology of UPI is a relatively new compared to other programs, but has earned ever-increasing applicants.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

The research population were students enrolled in the Department of Psychology of UPI in the 2016/2017 academic year, from which 85 samples were taken.

The study employed an exploratory qualitative approach in order to conduct a deep analysis about a certain phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher developed an open-ended questionnaire consisting of two questions: (1) was the Department of Psychology your first choice? and (2) what was your reason for choosing this program? The research subjects were given sufficient time to answer these questions in accordance with their natural condition. They could freely answer the questions without any pressure from any party.

The reason for using an open-ended questionnaire among others are: (1) open-ended questions give the respondents the freedom and space to answer in as much detail as they like, (2) open-ended questions enable the respondents to tell their actual response, (3) open-ended questionnaire enable the researcher to develop the questions according to the needs and objectives of the research, and (4) open-ended questionnaire enables a relatively high research participation in a short time (Hayes, 2000).

The data were then sorted. Data of respondents who chose psychology program as their first choice were the only data analyzed in this study. Every sentence unit of their statements were analyzed. The data were then categorized following a grounded theory research framework using open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research subjects were 85 students enrolled in the Department of Psychology of UPI. 65.9% of them said that psychology was their first choice, and 27.5% and 7.5% said was it was the second and the third respectively.

Those who chose psychology as their first choice said that this program was what they wanted and nobody forced them to enroll in this program. What follows is two examples of students' statements regarding this matter:

"I always chose psychology, be it in the National Selection for Entrance to State Universities (SNMPTN), the Joint Selection for Entrance to State Universities (SBMPTN), and Independent Selection (SM). There was no other major I was interested in."

"So, here's a deal. I participated in the SBMPTN twice. The first time, I didn't know there was UPI, so I chose another state university. The second time, I just knew that there was UPI. So, I wrote psychology as my first choice, but I didn't pass. Then, I took UM, and then I was given admission."

The researchers then categorized responses to the second question. It was revealed that there were five categories of students' reasons for choosing psychology. Table 1 presents examples of students' responses to the second question.

Table 1: Examples of students' responses to the second question.

Theme of Response	Example of Response
Personal Interest	"I chose to study psychology because I am interested in this study, and psychology can help me understand people around me"
	"I did not have specific reason for studying psychology. However, since psychology is associated with the study of human behavior, I am slightly interested in it. And it turns out that it fits me"
Desire to understand human behavior	"[I need it] to study human [behavior] thoroughly, to be more emphatic, to socialize better, and specially I want to learn how to read human gesture"

The significance of psychology in everyday life	"Studying psychology is very beneficial in real life for myself and others"
	"Based on experience and phenomena occurring around me, I feel I need to study psychology for self-improvement and to help others"
Future career opportunity	"... and the job opportunity [in the field of] psychology is widely open. When I am a psychologist, I can offer [counseling and psychological services] at home so that I can pursue my career without losing much time for family.
Others	"Actually, I was not interested in psychology. I was more into mathematics or chemistry and planned to choose chemistry education or accounting in the SNMPTN. However, I was not allowed [to choose those programs by my parents]. I am here because my parents wanted me to.

The number of responses for each category is as follows:

Table 2: Theme of response.

Theme of Response	
Personal Interest	35
Desire to understand human behavior	21
Future career opportunity	14
The significance of psychology in everyday life	13
Others	3
Total	86

This response categorization shows that most students chose to enroll in the psychology program due to their personal interest in the study. As many as 35 students provided such responses. They chose the psychology program because they were interested in the study like personality theories and felt that this program suited them. Most of the students expressed their interest in being accompanied by their desire to better understand human behavior, self or others.

As shown in Table 2, 21 students expressed their interest and desire to study human behaviors because they had to interact with other in everyday life.

Future flexible career opportunities, especially for women, became another reason for studying psychology. As many as 14 respondents were noted to provide such responses. It is understandable because most psychology students are women who will have to balance their role as a wife and a mother in the future and their career.

The fourth response category was the significance of psychology in everyday life. They expressed that psychology could help them the quality of life. There were 13 responses for this category.

Some students even expressed their experience of dealing with people who needed psychological services. Personal experience or observing that people benefit from psychological services intrigued them to pursue a career as a psychologist.

This is in line with the opinion of Ho et al. (2016) that personal experience of being involved with a certain profession influences one's career choice. Such experience allows them to study what career suits them and to develop the skills required to pursue the career in question in the future.

Sometimes, they joked that the reason for studying psychology was *'berobat jalan'* (It is a common joke among Indonesian psychology students. It literally means *being an outpatient,* so studying psychology allow them to receive psychological treatment during lesson).

There were three responses that did not belong into the above four categories.

The researcher did not find a reason associated with financial income they could get once the work in the field of psychology or with career security and comfort. It implies that they had intrinsic motivation in choosing the program. This is very important to the success of their academic study. As a study conducted by Martin et al. (2014) suggests, personal motivation is a contributing factor to an individual success because when one decides what he wants to achieve in his life, he will think that nothing can stop him.

According to Schunk et al. (2008), intrinsically motivated students have curiosity and are focused on their study, and extrinsically motivated students are more into external rewards, ranking, etc., rather than their academic works.

Intrinsic motivation can predict student participation in academic works (Froiland and Worrel, 2016) and has correlation with self-respect (Topcu and Leana-Tascilar, 2016).

Therefore, it can be concluded that students found the relevance between their interests and personal needs and saw a career opportunity in the field of psychology.

Although, student's responses can explain the existing phenomenon, this study has a limitation in how the data were collected. The researcher did not carry out interviews and observation to obtain richer data.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result of study, it can be concluded that:

1. Students chose the Department of Psychology of UPI based on their personal interest and free-will.
2. The reasons why they chose this program were their personal interest in the field of study, desire to understand human behavior, the significance of psychology in everyday life, and future career opportunities.

The researcher recommends that as the program organizer, the Department of Psychology of UPI:

1. enrich or design a special course to optimally improve students' social life skills apart from their academic skills,
2. revise the curriculum in order to provide students with a more practical experience in providing psychological services, and

Improve instructional facilities that can be used by students to improve themselves.

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