
CAREER INTEREST OF POLITEKNIK NEGERI MANADO STUDENTS IN AGRICULTURE: INFLUENCE OF FAMILY BACKGROUND AND MINAHASA CULTURE

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Abstract

North Sulawesi has significant potential in agriculture and plantation sectors, yet vocational graduates show low interest in pursuing careers in these fields. This study aims to explore the influence of family background and Minahasa local culture on the career interest of Politeknik Negeri Manado students in the agricultural sector. Using a qualitative method with a case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with students from various study programs related to agriculture, such as 7th semester students in the "Wirausaha Merdeka" program. The findings reveal that students from farming family backgrounds tend to have more positive perceptions of careers in the agricultural sector, although societal views often consider agricultural jobs less prestigious. Minahasa local culture, emphasizing family and communal values, also plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions, particularly regarding career choices deemed stable and beneficial for the community. Other challenges identified include a lack of student understanding of modern career opportunities in agriculture and insufficient campus support and facilities to promote this sector as a viable career option. This study recommends revising curricula to align better with agricultural technology trends and developing more targeted internship programs in plantation and agribusiness sectors. Additionally, campuses need to intensify career promotion efforts in technology-based agriculture to effectively attract students' interest.

Keywords: Agricultural sector, Career interest, Family background, Local culture, Vocational students

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector in North Sulawesi, especially Minahasa, has great potential to support the local economy. Agricultural and plantation commodities such as cloves, coconuts, and nutmeg have become an important part of people's lives and the regional economy. However, along with modernization and shifts in career preferences of the younger generation, interest in professions in the agricultural sector has decreased. This shift in interest is influenced by the appeal of other sectors that are considered more modern and profitable. On the other hand, there is great potential from the local cultural values of Minahasa and the influence of family background that can be a driver of student interest in choosing a career in the agricultural sector. However, this influence faces challenges from social change, especially in terms of the regeneration of a competent and innovative workforce. The main problem of concern in this study is the mismatch between the importance of the agricultural sector for the sustainability of the local economy and culture with the low interest of students to enter this field. Based on this reality, a fundamental question arises: how do the family background and local culture of Minahasa influence students' interest in careers in the agricultural sector? Do these two factors support each other, or do they have different influences?

Previous studies have discussed economic and educational factors in determining career interests in the agricultural sector. However, research that combines the influence of family and local culture as the main analytical framework is still limited, especially in the context of Minahasa culture. This creates a research gap that this study aims to fill. The literature review shows that family plays an important role in shaping the values and views of the younger generation towards certain professions, while local culture can strengthen positive perceptions towards the agricultural sector. In Minahasa, the agrarian tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation has the potential to shape the interests of the younger generation, but its influence may be weakening due to modernization and globalization.

This study contributes by offering a new perspective that integrates the influence of family background and local culture in understanding students' career interests in the agricultural sector. Focusing on the local context of Minahasa provides a novelty that has not been widely discussed in previous literature. The author argues that, although family and local cultural factors play a significant role, social changes and developing modern values can reduce the influence of both. The purpose of this study is to understand how family background and local culture of Minahasa influence the perceptions of Manado State Polytechnic students towards the agricultural sector. In addition, this study aims to identify barriers that hinder students' interest in this sector and provide strategic recommendations for educational institutions in supporting the sustainability of the agricultural sector in Minahasa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career Interest

Career interests reflect students' choices of certain fields of work that are considered interesting or in accordance with their potential (Mudhar *et al.*, 2020). This term refers to a person's interest in a particular field or type of work, usually influenced by their interest in a particular topic, subject, or activity that aligns with their personal values, goals, or aspirations. Career interest is how students' interest in their chosen field of study or academic subject affects their level of certainty about pursuing a career in that field (Quinlan & Renninger, 2022). The study suggests that career interest in the engineering field is influenced by both internal factors, such as motivation and understanding, and external factors, including the learning environment and family background (Maharani *et al.*, 2024).

Family Backgrounds

Family background is the situation and circumstances that exist within a family. The family is an institution that is formed because of the bonds of marriage (Hendrisman, 2020). Family background generally refers to the conditions or situations of the family that influence a person's life in various aspects. Emotional support from the family, such as parental attention and guidance, plays an important role in shaping an individual's mindset and decisions, including in determining career choices. In addition, the values and culture adopted in the family and parenting patterns also have an influence. The family also functions as a source of information and a place for consultation, where someone can share ideas and get input, especially when facing major decisions. The family's social and economic circumstances, including the family's work or business background, contribute greatly to shaping a person's interests and career direction (Soyawan *et al.*, 2022). Family background plays a crucial role in shaping financial management behaviors, as evidenced by research indicating that

financial education within the family significantly influences personal financial management among students (Sumiarti, 2023).

Local Culture

Local culture is local values that are the result of the cultivation of a region's society, the culture owned by the society is different from the culture owned by the society in a place or in another region. This culture grows and develops over time and its existence is recognized and owned by the local community (Aisara *et al.*, 2020). Form of art, tradition, thought, or customary law. This cultural wealth can be a valuable Local culture is the local values for cultivating the people in a naturally formed option for the country to introduce Indonesia to the outside world (Oktarina *et al.*, 2022). Local culture significantly influences students' career interests and aspirations, as it shapes their perceptions of various professions and the value placed on different educational paths within their communities (Abdul Rahman R *et al.*, 2022).

Agriculture

Agriculture is the most comprehensive word used to denote the many ways in which crop plants and domestic animals sustain the global human population by providing food and other products (Harris & Fuller, 2020). Agriculture has seen many revolutions, whether the domestication of animals and plants a few thousand years ago, the systematic use of crop rotations and other improvements in farming practice a few hundred years ago, or the "green revolution" with systematic breeding and the widespread use of man-made fertilizers and pesticides a few decades ago (Walter *et al.*, 2017). The agricultural sector plays a crucial role in structural transformation and economic growth, where improvements in agricultural productivity can accelerate industrialization and mobilize labor towards non-agricultural sectors (Douglas Gollin, Stephen Parente, 2002). Agriculture is the cornerstone of development, especially in low-income countries, serving as a key driver of economic growth, poverty reduction, and food security by providing livelihoods, raw materials, and labor for other sectors (Dethier & Effenberger, 2012). Agriculture is essential for human survival, as it ensures food and resource supply while addressing challenges like environmental degradation, economic viability, and social equity through sustainable practices that integrate ecological, economic, and social goals (Velten *et al.*, 2015).

Vocational Students

Vocational students are students who are active in doing meaningful practices, which requires learning that connects with real-life experiences. Basically, all learning approaches that connect with real-life experiences are elements of context-based learning (Putera & Shofiah, 2021). One of the advantages of graduates of applied vocational undergraduate students in the world of work is that students are able to determine their career choices more freely in the industrial world, as well as in the business world. Along with the advancement of technology, digital, and information, students have a variety of broad job choices based on the competencies and skills they have mastered (Putri, 2022). Vocational students face significant challenges in career decision-making, often struggling with self-knowledge and the ability to align their skills with job opportunities, which can hinder their transition into the workforce (Rosantono *et al.*, 2021).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to analyze the career interests of Manado State Polytechnic students in the agricultural sector, especially 7th semester students in the "Wirausaha Merdeka" program, focusing on the influence of family background and local Minahasa culture. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, perceptions, and motivations. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with Manado State Polytechnic students who have academic backgrounds related to agriculture. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, taking into account the variety of family backgrounds and their involvement in local Minahasa culture. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow exploration of key themes, such as the influence of parental employment, family support, and local cultural values on their career decisions.

Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis methods. This process includes identifying, coding, and grouping themes based on patterns that emerge from informant responses. Key findings were further analyzed to understand the relationship between family background, local cultural values, and students' interest in careers in the agricultural sector. By using this approach, the study is expected to provide a richer picture of the factors that influence students' career interests. The findings of this study are also expected to contribute to the development of strategies to increase workforce regeneration in the agricultural sector, especially in the North Sulawesi region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study shows that the interest of Manado State Polytechnic students in careers in the agricultural sector is influenced by a combination of technological factors, product sustainability, social perceptions, and local Minahasan culture. Technology-based innovation and the added value of traditional products provide the main attractions, while family support and cultural environment strengthen their career preferences in this sector. To increase student interest, a promotional strategy that highlights sustainability, economic opportunities, and the global relevance of the agricultural sector is needed.

The Influence of Family Background and Local Minahasa Culture on the Perception of Manado State Polytechnic Students towards the Agricultural Sector

The results of the study showed that students who come from families with a farming background have a more positive perception of the agricultural sector. This is driven by direct experience in seeing the benefits and opportunities in agriculture, although the community in general still considers work in this sector to be less prestigious. In addition, the local Minahasa culture that upholds family and community values is an important factor in shaping students' views. Minahasa culture encourages students to consider stable jobs and contribute to society. For example, innovation in agricultural technology is an important element that attracts students' attention. The example of the hydroponic case that uses catfish waste as a source of nutrition shows the success of integrating agricultural and livestock activities simultaneously. This is evidence that the agricultural sector has room for technological development, even though it is in the midst of limited urban land. Students see this as an opportunity that not only increases productivity but also provides profitable business prospects. In addition, innovative products based on local culture, binahong leaves and

herbal captikus reflect a focus on sustainability and innovation. Binahong leaves processed into traditional medicine show how agricultural products can be utilized to create added economic value for local farmers. Likewise, herbal captikus changes the negative public perception of this traditional product into an opportunity to produce health drinks that can attract investors.

Barriers That Hinder Students' Interest in the Agricultural Sector

Despite its great potential, the agricultural sector in Minahasa faces various obstacles that affect the interest of Manado State Polytechnic students to pursue a career in this field. One of the main obstacles is the still strong social stigma against professions in the agricultural sector. Many students view jobs in agriculture as less prestigious than careers in technology, business, or other professional services. This stigma affects how students assess job prospects in this sector, even though agriculture has great opportunities for innovation and growth.

In addition, students' lack of understanding of modern opportunities in agriculture is also an obstacle. Many students are not yet familiar with concepts such as precision agriculture, IoT-based technology for agriculture, or digital-based agribusiness opportunities. As a result, they often think of the agricultural sector as just manual work on traditional land. In fact, modern technologies such as hydroponics that use catfish waste for nutrients and processing agricultural products into value-added products show that agriculture can be an innovative and promising field.

The lack of support for facilities and supporting programs on campus is also a significant obstacle. Students complain about the lack of access to agricultural laboratories, supporting technology such as modern machines, and demonstration gardens that can be a means of direct learning. Although programs such as Wirausaha Merdeka have been initiated, their implementation is still not optimal, and funding for students who want to develop agricultural-based products is often limited. In addition, access to markets and investment is also a major challenge. Students who try to develop innovations such as fertilizers from agricultural waste or herbal drinks made from corn often have difficulty marketing their products to a wider level due to lack of networks and support.

Strategic Recommendations for Educational Institutions to Support the Agricultural Sector

To support the sustainability of the agricultural sector in Minahasa while attracting students to Manado State Polytechnic, educational institutions need to adopt various strategies. First, revising the curriculum to be more integrated with modern technology must be a priority. A curriculum that adopts the concept of precision agriculture, the use of digital technology in agriculture, and innovation-based agricultural processing can provide students with new insights into the prospects of this sector. In addition, learning materials that highlight local potential such as Minahasa-based agro-industry will provide direct relevance to the culture and needs of the local community. Second, the development of agricultural-based entrepreneurship programs needs to be improved. Programs such as Wirausaha Merdeka must be equipped with intensive training, technical assistance, and business capital support so that students are able to realize their ideas to the production and marketing stages. Institutions can also partner with agribusiness companies or the government to create internship and job training programs in the modern agricultural sector. In addition, students need to be given access to digital platforms to promote and sell their products, such as organic fertilizers, herbal drinks from corn, or products based on binahong leaves.

Third, improving campus facilities and infrastructure is an important step to support practice-based learning. Modern agricultural laboratories, demonstration gardens, and agribusiness innovation centers should be a priority in campus development. With these facilities, students can

learn directly using the latest technology in agriculture, such as automated agricultural machinery or sensor-based irrigation systems. In addition, educational institutions can develop community-based training centers, where students and local communities can collaborate to develop Minahasa's agricultural potential. Fourth, educational institutions need to hold promotional and educational campaigns about career opportunities in the agricultural sector. Through seminars, workshops, and collaboration with industry players, students can better understand modern job opportunities in this field, including roles as agripreneurs, digital agricultural consultants, or agricultural technology developers. This education also needs to highlight the success of alumni or local figures in the agricultural sector to inspire students. Finally, educational institutions need to utilize local culture as inspiration in agricultural innovation. Minahasan values such as community cooperation and utilization of local resources can be integrated into learning. An example is the development of local culture-based products such as herbal captikus and herbal drinks from corn which show how innovation can strengthen cultural identity while opening up new business opportunities. With these strategies, it is hoped that the agricultural sector can become an attractive and relevant career choice for Manado State Polytechnic students.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that family background and local Minahasan culture have a significant influence on the interest of Manado State Polytechnic students in choosing a career in the agricultural sector. Students who come from families with an agricultural background tend to have a more positive perception of the sector because of direct experience with the benefits and opportunities of agriculture. Minahasan culture, which upholds family values and community contributions, also encourages students to consider stable and beneficial jobs for society. However, the agricultural sector still faces a number of challenges that hinder students' interest, such as social stigma against the agricultural profession, lack of understanding of modern opportunities in agriculture, and limited campus facilities for practice-based learning. These obstacles often make students consider agriculture as a traditional field that is less prestigious than other sectors.

To overcome these obstacles, strategic strategies are needed from educational institutions. Revising the curriculum to integrate modern technology in agriculture, developing agricultural-based entrepreneurship programs, improving campus facilities, and educational campaigns that highlight the potential for careers in agriculture are crucial steps. In addition, local Minahasan culture can be integrated into agricultural innovations to increase the attractiveness of the sector and open up business opportunities based on cultural identity. With the implementation of these steps, the agricultural sector in Minahasa has the potential to become an attractive and relevant career choice, supporting the regeneration of an innovative workforce, and contributing to the sustainability of the local economy and culture.

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