

# Career Support Programme to Expand Career Interests of Partners

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## Abstract

Students with special needs often face unique challenges in identifying and pursuing career paths that align with their abilities and interests. Previous studies have shown that tailored career guidance and vocational training can significantly enhance their career prospects and independence. This study explores the career interests of students with special needs at SMALB Pangudi Luhur, Jakarta, using the Strong Interest Inventory (SII) to identify interests across various fields such as STEM, Marketing, Sales and Services, Hospitality and Tourism, and Education and Training. The research, involving 30 students aged 17-21, reveals that many career options align with their visual abilities, while abstract and high-intelligence roles are less feasible. The findings highlight the need for tailored career guidance programs that include hands-on training and practical experiences to help these students understand and pursue suitable career paths. This study underscores the importance of vocational training and self-awareness in fostering career independence for students with special needs. It provides a basis for developing inclusive and culturally relevant career counseling programs.

**Keywords:** career interest, deaf students, career guidance, Strong Interest Inventory

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## INTRODUCTION

Deaf children have the same right to work as citizens of other countries. In Indonesia, this right is guaranteed by several laws and regulations. Article 27 Paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution states that every citizen has the right to work and a decent livelihood for humanity. In addition, Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities emphasizes that people with disabilities, including deaf children, have the same right to obtain jobs by their respective abilities and privileges.

However, the 2021-2023 graduation tracing data at SLB X shows that of the 20 students who graduated, only 30% are working, and 15% are self-employed. Meanwhile, 25% of students choose to help their parents, 5% care for them, and 10% take courses. This fact shows that there are still many deaf students who choose not to continue their education or work but to help and take care of their parents.

This confirms that there is still a need to upskill children with special needs so that they can create employment opportunities that match their talents and interests. In their research, Meilina

Juwita Andini shows that career guidance is one way to help deaf students practice life skills so that they have independence or the right job choices when they graduate from school (Andini, 2020).

In exceptional schools, this mentoring becomes crucial to equipping students with the necessary skills for post-school life, allowing them to develop their full potential. These skills include not only the ability to create work but also the ability to access career information, make informed decisions, and plan their career future after graduating from Exceptional High School (SMALB).

Making the right decisions and planning for the future is an independent attitude that must be built among deaf students. Independence is an attitude related to the ability to make choices, express ideas and thoughts, dare to make decisions, and be responsible for those decisions (Zulkhair & Mubarak, 2021). It reflects an attitude to prepare deaf students to face the wider world with confidence and independent abilities.

Developing independence for deaf students in planning their career future is essential. That requires them to build a positive attitude and career skills necessary to complete various developmental tasks appropriate to their life phase. This concept, career maturity, was first introduced by D. E. Super in 1981. D.E. Super (1981) marks career maturity with 1) involvement in career planning, 2) career exploration, 3) knowledge of good decision-making, 4) career information, 5) exploration of preferred jobs/careers, and 6) realistic career (Fitria et al., 2024).

Career maturity is an essential factor determining a person's success in work (Winarsih & Gufron, 2022). That is not only related to experience or age but also to the awareness needed to manage and improve that maturity. Deaf students, as part of the education system, must be equipped with adequate support services to develop their career maturity. Thus, they can plan and choose their careers more steadily, ultimately positively affecting their career maturity level. These services ensure deaf students can work according to their abilities and contribute effectively in relevant sectors.

A study by Iswari et al. 2018 on career planning for deaf students in West Sumatra High School showed that 41.7% (40 students) were in the medium category, which means that the students did not have optimal career planning. Meanwhile, 28.1% (27 students) are in the low category, and 12.5% (12 students) are in the deficient category (Iswari et al., 2018). The data shows that deaf students at West Sumatra High School do not have a clear picture of the career they will pursue after completing their education. Lack of self-understanding and work environment, as well as difficulties in making concrete choices and plans of action, can affect the interest of deaf students in pursuing specific careers.

In education and careers, self-understanding interests are essential for individuals to make informed decisions regarding their education and future careers. As quoted from the research of Nurul Insani Putri Aulia, Nuruddin Araniri, and Diny Kristianty Wardany (2021), Poerwanto said that in language interest means a high tendency of the heart towards something, Uno defines interest as a motive that causes individuals to be actively related to something that attracts them, and according to Muhibbinsyah interest means a high tendency and passion or a great desire for something (Aulia et al., 2021). The conclusion from the opinions of Poerwanto, Uno, and Muhibbinsyah is that interest is a solid psychological tendency and intrinsic motivation that encourages a person to be involved or interested in a specific object, activity, or field. This interest is characterized by passion, great desire, and active interaction with the subject of interest. That suggests that interest is not just a like, but also involves emotional involvement and personal commitment to something that attracts the individual's attention and energy.

The positive relationship between interests and chosen jobs has significantly impacted productivity and job satisfaction. Various studies, including research by Sumiwi in 2016 and Telvisia & Suyasa in 2008, show that matching interests to work can improve efficiency and work outcomes (Ghassani et al., 2020). This opinion is reinforced by Hurlock, who emphasizes the importance of choosing the right job with his interests and talents (Kusni, 2019). Holland's theory also supports this idea, stating that work that aligns with one's interests and talents will contribute to career satisfaction

and success (Mudhar et al., 2023). Therefore, choosing a job based on interest is personally and professionally beneficial, as it can lead to a more stable and fulfilling career.

The career interests of deaf students are complex and influenced by various factors. Internal factors such as curiosity and motivation from students play an important role in determining their career interests. However, external factors also have a significant influence. Support or barriers from family, school, and community can affect the career interests of deaf students (Yunanda, 2019).

Research conducted by Weni Winarti and Imas Diana Aprilia has shown that external factors often hinder deaf students' career interests. Schools and teachers, for example, often plan programs without considering students' interests and talents (Winarti & Aprilia, 2021). To ensure that deaf students can make independent and responsive career decisions, teachers, psychologists, and counselors need to work together to develop an assessment of interests and talents that are appropriate to the characteristics of children with special needs. With this approach, it can help deaf students to plan and pursue careers that suit their interests.

*Substantial Interest Inventory* (SII) is a tool used to measure the level of career interest in Deaf students. This instrument consists of 18 aspects that include 291 types of interests, which are compiled based on the theory of job choice from John Holland. This theory categorizes individual interests into six career areas: *Realistic*, *Investigative*, *Artistic*, *Social*, *Enterprising*, and *Conventional* (Fikriyani et al., 2020). Using SII, students' career interests can be identified and developed according to the field that best suits them.

According to Jo-Ida C. Hansen in Steven D. Brown and Robert W. Lent (2013), SII was first published in 1927 under the title *Vocational Interest Blank* by Strong. Currently, the SII includes 291 items divided into six content areas: job titles, school subjects, work activities, leisure activities, personal characteristics, and preferences in the world of work (Brown & Lent, 2013). Hansen also emphasized that the SII is the oldest inventory of interests still in use today, demonstrating its relevance and reliability in helping individuals understand and develop their career interests.

The results of research conducted by Nadia Azmi Harahap, Restu Amalianingsih, and Dede Rahmat Hidayat (2020) show that Holland's theory pays attention to behavioral characteristics or personality types as the main cause of individual career choices and development (Harahap et al., 2020). This suggests that the SII, as a tool based on Holland's theory, is highly relevant in helping individuals make fulfilling career choices.

The six content areas in the SII are as follows: First, the job title, which contains questions covering a specific job or profession. Respondents were asked to vote for the one that interests them. Secondly, school subjects include interest questions that cover the academic field to broaden intellectual horizons or learning tendencies. Third, work activities include questions that include activities or tasks in the context of work to identify the type of interest of the job. Fourth, recreational activities contain questions that include recreational activities or hobbies that are fun outside the work environment. Fifth, self-characteristics includes questions that address aspects of personality and personal traits to provide additional understanding of personal characteristics that influence career choices or interests. Sixth, preferences in the world of work are assessed in terms of the work environment that individuals want. For example, they like to work independently or in a team, work indoors or outdoors. Holland said The six types were pure types, often called the RIASEC model type (Singing, 2019).

Jo-Ida C. Hansen, in the work of Steven D. Brown and Robert W. Lent (2013), explains that the SII is a comprehensive survey, providing an in-depth analysis of a person's interests. At the most general level, there are six General Occupational Themes (GOTs) designed to measure the six types of vocational RIASEC proposed by Holland. In the context of career counseling, these scales answer the question, "What am I like?" Strong Interest Inventory (SII) (Brown & Lent, 2013), also known as strong career interest, is an assessment that groups an individual's interests in leisure and work arrangements. Individual interests are grouped into six career areas and a list of career interests (Singing, 2019).

Based on this description, the Strong Interest Inventory (SII) is a career interest measurement tool used to help individuals understand their career interests and tendencies. This instrument is often used at various levels of education, including for Deaf learners. SII is designed to help individuals explore their interests in the context of work and education. That can provide valuable information to deaf learners about the type of work or field of study that suits their interests and tendencies. The use of SII in Deaf learners can help develop their self-understanding, guide the selection of extracurricular subjects or activities, and plan for the future of education, filling their leisure time and career.

Deaf students in the adult age range often face problems related to careers, and they need serious guidance. Age and job needs for deaf people are important in career guidance services. One form of career guidance service is a device that can be a model, namely the Career Guidance Program, which explores the career interests of deaf students.

Mega Iswari (2017) explained that the Career Guidance Model implemented for independent deaf children has proven to improve their ability to perform various skills according to their abilities after graduating from Special High School (Iswari, 2017). Career guidance is an effort to know and understand, as well as understand the job well. Career planning is a process in which individuals can identify and try to achieve their career goals. Through career planning, each individual can evaluate his or her abilities and interests, consider career opportunities, formulate career goals, and plan practical development activities (Lika et al., 2022). Mawardi & Syuhada N. (2023) conveyed the development of career guidance and counseling services based on the concept for people with disabilities that can be programmed in guidance and counseling services.

Furthermore, Lika, Mega Iswari, & Daharnis (2022) explained that the career guidance program is a design of activities that are carried out in a directional and focused manner based on the potential (interests, talents, beliefs, values) possessed to obtain a source of income that allows them to develop and advance both in terms of quality (life) and quantity (welfare) (Lika et al., 2022). In research conducted by Itsna Safira, Galih Fajar Fadillah, and Farah Nilawati (2023), it was explained that the career development services provided include orientation services, information services, and placement services (Safira et al., 2023). The goal of a career guidance program is for learners to identify their skills and proceed to assess their needs, and this should be considered on an ongoing basis. The goals of career planning are as follows: 1) Assessment and understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses, 2) Achieving personal career satisfaction, and 3) Preparing to earn an appropriate income. Mau, W.C. (2008) emphasized that when students enter high school, they begin to focus more on tasks to identify job preferences and clarify career choices.

Thus, based on this description, the career guidance program aims to provide an overview of the importance of career guidance programs for Deaf students and how the program is directed to help students realize their interests, abilities, and courage to make career choices based on their self-awareness. Deaf students can have the opportunity to achieve success in their education and careers, which leads to life satisfaction.

With a clear legal basis, such as the Regulation of the Minister of Education and the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Guidance and Counseling, the career guidance program for the exploration of career interests of deaf students aims to be a prominent supporter in the development and welfare of deaf children. Through an inclusive approach involving all stakeholders, the program seeks to ensure that every learner can explore their full potential in life.

## METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the career interests of special needs students at SMALB Pangudi Luhur, Jakarta. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the interests and needs of students in the context of special education. Data was collected through several methods: questionnaires using the Strong Interest

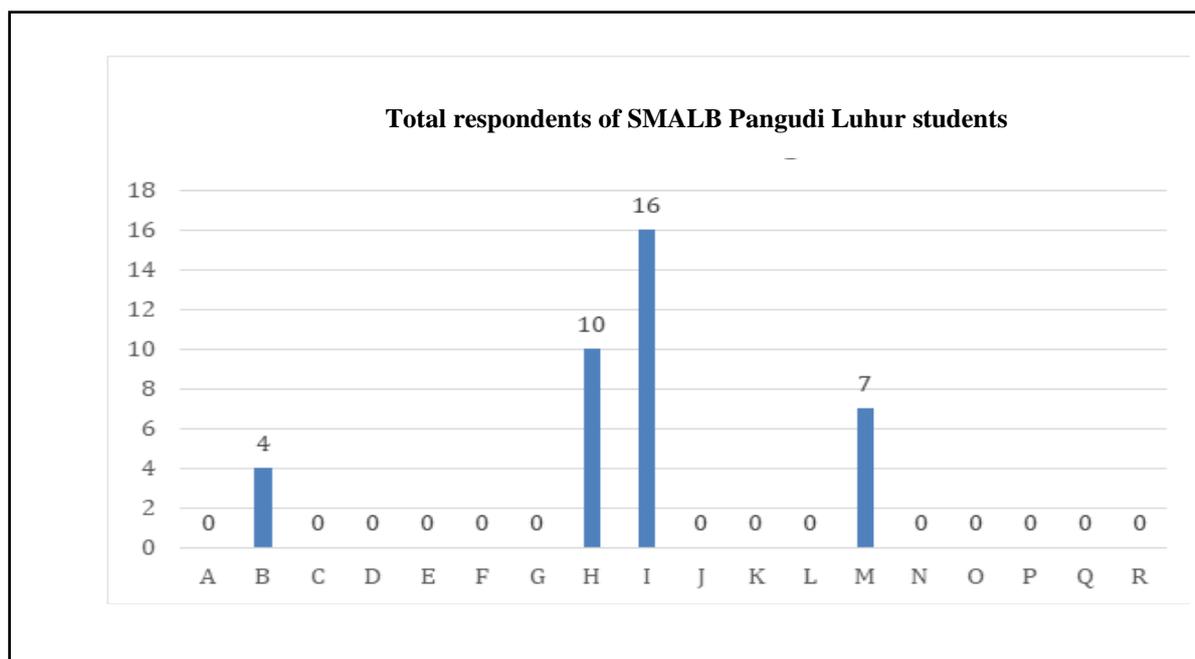
Inventory (SII) to identify students' interests in various fields such as STEM, Marketing, Sales and Services, Hospitality and Tourism, and Education and Training; in-depth interviews with students, teachers, and counselors to gain further insights into students' career interests and needs; and observations of students' interactions in the learning environment to understand how they participate in career-related activities.

To ensure data validity, this study uses triangulation techniques, namely source triangulation by comparing data obtained from various sources (students, teachers, counselors) to ensure information consistency; method triangulation by using various data collection methods (questionnaires, interviews, observations) to obtain a more comprehensive picture; and member checking by involving participants in the data verification process to ensure that the researchers' interpretations align with their experiences and views. Data was analyzed using a thematic approach, which involves steps of initial coding to identify early themes from interview transcripts, questionnaire results, and observation notes; theme grouping to find patterns and relationships between themes; interpretation of the identified themes to understand students' career interests and their implications for appropriate career guidance programs; and reporting the research findings, including main findings, discussions, and recommendations for developing inclusive and culturally relevant career counseling programs.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This is based on the RIASEC test for 30 students of Class X of SMALB Pangudi Luhur Jakarta, which consisted of 16 males and 14 females with a student age of 17-21, as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Total respondents of SMALB Pangudi Luhur students



The interest of SMALB Pangudi Luhur Jakarta students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (B) reflects their interest in problem-solving and information analysis and the tendency to engage in work that requires critical thinking and strong analytical skills. These interests can be categorized into *Investigative* and *Realistic* types, where the *Investigative* type includes individuals who like to work with ideas and concepts through theory, research, and intellectual investigation, while the *Realistic* type includes individuals who like to work with honest and practical things that require motor coordination, skills, and strength. In-demand career options include

chemists, earth scientists, electrical and electronics engineers, safety engineers, biologists, mechanical engineers, meteorologists, and petroleum engineers.

Meanwhile, students' interest in Marketing, Sales, and Service (H) shows their ability to communicate and persuade and their desire to interact with others. These interests can be categorized into *Enterprising* and *Social* types; where *the Enterprising* type includes individuals who like to lead and influence others through persuasion and promotion, while the *Social* type includes individuals who like to help and serve others and enjoy social interaction and building relationships. In-demand career options include market research analysts, buyers and purchasing agents, sales managers, public relations specialists, customer service officers, advertising salespeople, flower arrangers, telemarketers, real estate agents, and sales managers.

Students' interest in Hospitality and Tourism (I) reflects their desire to work in an industry that focuses on customer service and satisfaction and their ability to work in a dynamic and diverse environment. These interests can be categorized into *Social* and *Encouraging* types; where *the Social* type includes individuals who like to help and serve others and enjoy social interaction and building relationships, while the *Entrepreneurial* type includes individuals who like to lead and influence others. In-demand career options include tour guides, food service, chefs and cooks, travel agents, hotel managers, housekeepers/housekeepers, and restaurant managers.

Learners' interest in the field of Education and Training (M) demonstrates their commitment to contributing to the development and education of others, as well as their ability to work in an environment that supports learning and growth. These interests can be categorized into *Social* and *Conventional* types; where *The social* type includes individuals who like to help and serve others and enjoy social interaction and building relationships, while the *Conventional* type includes individuals who like to work with data and details and enjoy activities that involve organizing and managing information. In-demand career options include college/university administrators, teachers/professors, audio/visual specialists, librarians, public health educators, sports coaches and instructors, speech pathologists, and special education teachers (Reyes et al, 2021).

Based on the SII instrument and data collection from the SMALB B Pangudi Luhur Jakarta respondents, this study shows that students' interests are spread across various fields that reflect the types of Investigative, Realistic, Enterprising, Social, and Conventional. In Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, their interests reflect the Investigative and Practical types, which show an interest in problem-solving, information analysis, and practical work. Their interests in Marketing, Sales, and Service reflect the Entrepreneurial and Social types, which demonstrate communication, persuasion, and social interaction abilities. Interest in Hospitality and Tourism reflects the Social and Engaging type, which indicates a desire to work in the hospitality industry and customer satisfaction. Finally, an interest in Education and Training reflects the Social and Conventional types, which demonstrate a commitment to contributing to the development and education of others and the ability to work with data and detail. The career choices of interest in each field reflect the unique tendencies and abilities corresponding to the respective type of RIASEC.

The results of this study have several important implications for the career guidance approach at SMALB Pangudi Luhur Jakarta. First, by understanding the interests and types of RIASEC students, career guidance can be more personalized, such as providing more information and career-related opportunities in the field of Investigative and Realistic for students interested in the field of Science and Technology. Second, knowing the dominant type of RIASEC can help design appropriate skill development programs, such as training Enterprising students in leadership and persuasion skills and focusing on communication and service skills for Social type students. Third, schools can provide resources and information relevant to student's career interests, including books, seminars, and workshops appropriate for their type of RIASEC. Fourth, forging partnerships with relevant industries can provide students with practical experience and hands-on insights into the careers they are interested in, such as partnerships with technology companies for students interested in STEM fields or hotels and travel agencies for students interested in Hospitality and Tourism.

The vision and mission of SMALB B Pangudi Luhur Guidance and Counseling are very relevant and support the results of RIASEC research in helping deaf children find career paths that suit their interests and personalities. First, their vision to be a key advocate in the development and well-being of deaf children aligns with RIASEC's goal of focusing on understanding individual interests. Second, their mission is to provide guidance and counseling services tailored to the communication needs of deaf children, which ensures that each child gets the right and personalized approach. In addition, support for holistic development through appropriate mentoring programs allows deaf children to explore their interests in depth, which is at the core of the RIASEC method. Integrating deaf children into educational and social settings with an inclusive approach also strengthens the results of the RIASEC test, as these children will more easily adapt to an environment that supports their interests and personality.

The career guidance program for deaf students at SMALB Pangudi Luhur Jakarta should be designed to meet their specific needs in developing career interests and skills. Based on *the results of the Strong Interest Inventory (SII)*, the program includes several key components. These components include essential services such as classical and group guidance, specialization and individual planning services, responsive services in individual counseling, and system support using SII instruments.

Designing a curriculum following the results of the RIASEC specialization for deaf students is a crucial step to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the educational program. This curriculum should be designed based on the needs and objectives of the service that have been formulated, covering various aspects such as the exploration of interests and talents, the assessment of strengths and skills, and the demands of globalization on the careers of the younger generation. In the social sphere, topics such as accountability and understanding workplace bullying must also be discussed. Areas of study include career interests in science, technology, marketing, hospitality, and education. In contrast, career areas include a recapitulation of SII test results and internships in the business world, such as culinary and graphic design.

One example of a curriculum that successfully integrates the results of RIASEC specialization for deaf students is *the Expanded Core Curriculum for Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (ECC-DHH)* developed in Iowa, United States. The curriculum covers various aspects, such as career education, communication skills, and technology, all of which are tailored to the needs of deaf students. The ECC-DHH curriculum helps students explore different career paths and develop the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce, including job skills training, career exploration, and internships.

Adequate facilities and infrastructure are necessary to support the implementation of this program. A comfortable guidance and counseling room equipped with data collection tools, such as instruments for student needs, is necessary. In addition, a cost budget that includes stationery equipment, technical support, transportation, and accommodation for visits to the industrial world must also be prepared. The provision of projectors and display boards for the B.K. program is also part of the budget charged to the RAPBS (BOSS/Foundation).

Involving parents and families in the guidance and counseling process provides additional support critical in career decision-making based on RIASEC results. In a study conducted by Farisah Fadia Syarafina and Riska Andriani (2023), social support from parents was proven to have a significant influence on students' career planning, which showed that parental involvement can increase students' confidence and steadiness in choosing a career (Hosted by Angela (2023)). RIASEC-based group guidance has also been proven effective in improving students' career choices. Research conducted by Siti Nur Mahmudah and Ayong Lianawati (2020) shows that this method can help students better understand and explore their career choices (Mahmudah & Ayong, 2020). Thus, the involvement of parents and families in the guidance and counseling process of SMALB B Pangudi Luhur not only supports but also strengthens the application of RIASEC research results. The involvement of parents and families in this process is essential to provide the emotional and practical support deaf children need to achieve their career goals. With this more targeted and data-driven

approach, career guidance at SMALB B Pangudi Luhur Jakarta can be more effective in helping students achieve their career goals and prepare them for a successful future.

Some specific challenges exist in helping deaf students explore their interests and talents. In addition to the main challenge of communication, information accessibility is also a challenge, as learning materials and career guidance must be adjusted so that deaf students can easily access them. Another challenge is social stigma and a lack of understanding of the surrounding environment, which can affect the confidence of deaf students in exploring their interests and talents. Therefore, creating an inclusive and supportive environment is essential where deaf students feel welcome and encouraged to develop their potential. To address these challenges, schools can provide specialized training for teaching staff, use appropriate assistive technology, and hold inclusion programs that engage the entire school community. With the right approach, deaf students can explore and develop their interests and talents more efficiently.

Evaluation of career guidance programs for deaf students at SMALB Pangudi Luhur Jakarta is essential to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the program. Measuring the success of an inclusive career guidance program can be done through several comprehensive approaches. First, the evaluation of career maturity using measuring tools such as the Career Maturity Inventory can assess aspects of career planning, exploration, and student career decision-making. Second, monitoring students' individual development, participation, and involvement in career guidance activities such as workshops, seminars, and industry visits shows how exciting and beneficial the program is for students. Third, post-school outcomes such as employment acceptance rates, success in further education, and long-term career satisfaction provide an overview of the program's effectiveness in preparing students for the workforce. Finally, feedback from various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and industry partners, helps evaluate and improve career guidance programs.

These evaluations should include formative and summative assessments, satisfaction surveys, analysis of Strong Interest Inventory (SII) data, observations, and interviews. Formative assessments are conducted periodically to identify areas that need improvement during the program. In contrast, summative assessments are conducted at the end of the program to measure the achievement of overall goals. Satisfaction surveys from students, parents, and teachers provide valuable feedback regarding the program's effectiveness. In addition, analysis of SII data before and after the program can show students' interests and career skills development. Observations and interviews provide in-depth insight into the student's experience during the program. With this comprehensive evaluation approach, programs can continue to be tailored and improved to meet the needs of deaf students better so that they can develop career interests and skills that match their potential.

Research conducted by Dudi Gunawan shows that a comprehensive career guidance model is adequate for deaf students at the Bandung Special School (SLB) (Dudi Gunawan, 2016). Indicators of this effectiveness include self-awareness, education, career, economics, decision-making, work skills, and a realistic view of the world of work. Other research also shows that career guidance through extracurricular activities helps deaf students develop soft skills, especially intrapersonal ones. These studies support the idea that comprehensive and ongoing evaluation is essential to ensure that career guidance programs can meet the specific needs of deaf students and help them reach their full potential in the workforce.

## CONCLUSION

The study results show that the concept of job choice theory from John Holland, RIASEC, with the *Strong Interest Inventory* (SII) instrument, has proven effective in helping SMALB Pangudi Luhur Jakarta students identify their interests and talents. The results of SII show that students' interests are spread across various fields that reflect the types of *Investigative*, *Realistic*, *Enterprising*, *Social*, and *Conventional*; by understanding the dominant type of RIASEC, career guidance programs can be personalized to provide relevant information, and opportunities and design appropriate skill

development programs. However, challenges such as communication, information accessibility, and social stigma must be addressed through concrete strategies such as using assistive technology, specialized training for teachers and counselors, and creating an inclusive learning environment. With the right approach, deaf students can more easily overcome challenges and optimally develop their interests and talents. Measuring the success of a career guidance program can be done by evaluating career maturity and monitoring individual development, participation, and engagement rates. This approach ensures that career guidance programs can continue to be improved to meet the needs of deaf students.

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