

Project-Based Integrative Career Guidance: A Model for Islamic Boarding School Students

Sakila Azizah¹, Rara Talitha Nayyara², Aulia Nabila³, Rizal Saifullah⁴, Imam Bakti Saputra⁵, Syarifan Nurjan⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5,6} Pendidikan Agama Islam, Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, Indonesia

correspondence: billa050823@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the implementation of project-based career guidance in helping students explore interests and aptitudes, develop career plans, and strengthen soft skills in an Islamic boarding school-based senior high school. Using a descriptive qualitative approach within an interpretive paradigm, the study involved two guidance and counseling teachers, the principal, three boarding school mentors, and eight Grade XI-XII students at Ar-Rosyidah Senior High School, Magetan. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis covering career portfolios, guidance modules, interest-aptitude assessments, and program records for 45 students. Percentage data were used only as supporting descriptive evidence. Data analysis included condensation, display, conclusion drawing, triangulation, and informant confirmation. The findings show that the Who I Am Project helped students connect assessment results with self-reflection and occupational information. Program documentation showed a decline in students who did not yet understand their interests and aptitudes from 55% to 8%. The Career Road Map also supported more structured educational and occupational planning, while group projects strengthened communication, leadership, teamwork, responsibility, and ukhuwah. The study proposes an Integrative Career Guidance Model combining assessment, experiential exploration, planning, soft-skills development, and Islamic boarding school values within one service cycle for future-oriented contextual career guidance practices.



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INTRODUCTION

Changes in occupational structures, the expansion of the digital economy, and the growing diversity of educational pathways after secondary school have made adolescent career decision-making increasingly complex. At the secondary-school level, students are required not only to decide whether to pursue further study or enter the workforce, but also to understand the relationships among their personal characteristics, academic abilities, interests, values, study-program choices, occupational opportunities, and continually changing competency requirements. From a career-development perspective, adolescence is a critical period for exploration and the crystallization of choices. Super (1980) conceptualizes exploration as a process through which individuals seek to understand themselves and the world of work before moving toward more specific choices. Accordingly, sound career decisions should not emerge as momentary preferences, but as the outcome of continuous reflection, information seeking, experience, and self-evaluation.

This need gives career guidance and counseling a strategic role in schools. Career guidance is not merely the delivery of information about university majors or lists of occupations; rather, it is an educational process that assists students in recognizing their potential, understanding alternatives, assessing the consequences of their choices, and planning steps for self-development. Hidayati (2015) showed that career information services can improve students' understanding of future choices, while Juwitaningrum (2013) emphasized the importance of career guidance programs in supporting students' career maturity. These findings indicate that the quality of career decisions is influenced by the systematic nature of the guidance process, not merely by the availability of information.

In practice, many students continue to encounter barriers when developing career plans. These barriers may arise from limited information, uncertainty about personal abilities, peer influence, family

expectations, and a tendency to choose on the basis of trends. Aminnurrohim, Saraswati, and Kurniawan (2014) identified various factors that hinder students' career planning, whereas Widyastuti (2013) demonstrated that self-efficacy and family social support are associated with greater certainty in career decision-making. Ardiyanti and Alsa (2015) further emphasized that career decision-making self-efficacy can be strengthened through structured interventions. Students therefore require learning spaces in which they can practice making decisions, receive feedback, revise their plans, and develop confidence in their own abilities.

Career guidance delivered only through lectures tends to provide students with limited authentic experience. A project-based approach is therefore relevant because it shifts students from passive recipients of information to active participants in career exploration. In project-based learning, students work toward specific goals, produce tangible outputs, seek information, collaborate, and reflect on the process. In a career-guidance context, such outputs may include self-profiles, interest-aptitude portfolios, occupational maps, alumni interviews, study plans, business simulations, and Career Road Maps. Handayani (2022) showed that project-based career-guidance modules can support students' readiness for occupational choices. This finding reinforces the assumption that projects can bridge career knowledge and more authentic learning experiences.

The relevance of a project-based approach becomes even more pronounced in Islamic boarding school settings. Students in residential schools experience both academic life and communal life shaped by a value system, religious routines, discipline, relationships with boarding school mentors, and a culture of independence. This context allows career guidance to extend beyond labor-market competencies by incorporating ethical considerations, responsibility, social usefulness, and Islamic values. Nuroniah, Fitriani, Sundari, and Saputra (2025) showed that career information services in Islamic boarding schools can support students' career exploration. Meanwhile, demonstrated the relevance of counseling services in helping madrasah students address career anxiety. Together, these findings suggest that Islamic educational settings require career-guidance models that do not simply replicate approaches used in mainstream schools, but adapt them to institutional characteristics and the values embedded in students' everyday environments.

Ar-Rosyidah Senior High School, Magetan, combines secondary education with the culture of an Islamic boarding school. An initial evaluation documented by the guidance and counseling team indicated that, before a more structured career-guidance project was implemented, approximately 35% of Grade XI and XII students reported uncertainty about their occupational or educational direction after graduation. These data were not intended as population-survey results for statistical generalization; rather, they served as a practical indicator that the school required a more active form of career guidance. The guidance and counseling teachers subsequently developed a sequence of activities comprising interest-aptitude assessment, the Who I Am Project, occupational exploration, alumni interviews, Career Day, Career Road Map development, and group projects related to employment and entrepreneurship.

Previous studies have extensively addressed career maturity, career planning, information services, decision-making self-efficacy, and work readiness. Atmaja (2014) showed that module-based career guidance can support students' career planning; Lestari (2017) linked life-skills-based career guidance with adolescent career maturity; and Latif, Yusuf, and Efendi (2017) demonstrated relationships among career planning, self-efficacy, and work readiness. Nevertheless, relatively few studies have positioned career projects as a unified service cycle that simultaneously integrates self-assessment, exploratory experience, long-term planning, soft-skills development, and Islamic boarding school values. This gap provides the rationale for the present study.

The novelty of this study does not rest on the claim that project-based career guidance is entirely new, but on the way its service elements are assembled into an Integrative Career Guidance Model contextualized for Islamic residential schools. The model is based on the premise that students' career decisions become more meaningful when self-understanding is connected with authentic experience, dialogue with reference figures, strategic planning, group collaboration, and value reflection. Within this framework, career readiness and character development are not treated as competing objectives.

Against this background, the study aims to: (1) describe the process through which students explore their interests and aptitudes via career-guidance projects; (2) analyze how the Career Road Map supports planning for further study and occupations; (3) identify forms of soft-skills

development that emerge during group projects; and (4) formulate a project-based Integrative Career Guidance Model aligned with the characteristics of Islamic boarding school education. The study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching perspectives on contextual career guidance and practically by offering a framework for school counselors, schools, and Islamic boarding school administrators in designing career guidance that is more active, reflective, and relevant to students' future needs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach within an interpretive paradigm. The approach was selected because the study was not designed to test causal relationships among variables, but to understand the processes, experiences, and meanings that emerged during the implementation of project-based career guidance in an Islamic boarding school-based educational setting. Fadli (2021) explains that qualitative research enables researchers to develop an in-depth understanding of phenomena as they occur in natural contexts. Quantitative percentage data contained in the program documentation were used solely as supporting descriptive evidence to clarify trends in program outcomes; these data were not analyzed using inferential statistics and were not used to claim causal effectiveness.

The study was conducted at Ar-Rosyidah Senior High School, Magetan. The site was selected because the school had implemented a sequence of project-based career-guidance activities integrated with Islamic boarding school programs. Informants were selected purposively on the basis of their direct involvement in planning, implementing, facilitating, or experiencing the program. The key informants comprised two guidance and counseling teachers, one principal, three Islamic boarding school mentors, and eight Grade XI and XII students. Thus, the in-depth interviews involved 14 informants. In addition, the study used aggregated program documentation covering 45 students to examine patterns in interest-aptitude understanding and the distribution of educational and career plans. Distinguishing between interview informants and the coverage of documentary data was essential so that the two data units were not treated as if they represented the same type of sample.

Data were collected using three techniques. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' experiences of participating in the projects, the strategies used by guidance and counseling teachers, school-level considerations, and the involvement of boarding school mentors. The interview guide covered self-understanding, the process of selecting educational or occupational alternatives, experiences of receiving feedback, changes in perceptions of the future, experiences of group work, and the relationship between career choices and Islamic boarding school values. The semi-structured format allowed the researchers to probe relevant responses while maintaining focus on the research objectives.

Second, participant observation was conducted during Career Day, career-profile presentations, Career Road Map preparation, and group projects such as Mini Enterprise and industrial case analyses. Observation focused on student engagement, role distribution, quality of communication, the ability to justify choices, responses to disagreement, initiative, responsibility, and patterns of interaction among students, guidance and counseling teachers, and boarding school mentors. The observations were not intended to generate psychometric scores, but to obtain behavioral evidence that could be compared with interview and documentary data.

Third, document analysis was conducted on students' career portfolios, project-based career-guidance modules, the interest-aptitude assessment results used by the school, reflection sheets, Career Day records, and program recapitulations. The aggregated documentation provided pre-program and post-program data on categories of interest-aptitude understanding among 45 students, as well as data on the distribution of their post-program planning preferences. Because these data were drawn from school program records, they were treated as supporting evidence. The study does not claim that the observed percentage changes were caused entirely by the project, because other influencing factors cannot be ruled out.

Data analysis followed an interactive logic. Interview, observational, and documentary data were first condensed by selecting information relevant to the research objectives. The data were then grouped into themes of self-exploration, career planning, soft skills, value integration, and environmental support. Findings were subsequently presented in narrative form, matrices, and tables to make relationships across data sources explicit. Conclusions were drawn iteratively by repeatedly

checking the alignment between themes and evidence. This procedure is consistent with Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013), who conceptualize data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification as interrelated analytical processes.

Data trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Students' statements were compared with explanations from guidance and counseling teachers and boarding school mentors, while interview data were compared with observation notes and documentation. Key findings were also reconfirmed with school representatives to ensure that the researchers' interpretations did not diverge from the actual program experience. During manuscript preparation, students' identities were withheld, and quotations or descriptions of experience were presented in aggregate form. Assessment documentation was used only to the extent relevant to the research objectives.

Analytically, the study established four categories of findings. First, the quality of self-exploration was examined through students' ability to connect assessment results with their experiences and occupational choices. Second, the quality of planning was examined through the presence of goals, alternatives, stages, resources, and anticipatory strategies in the Career Road Map. Third, soft-skills development was identified through behaviors related to communication, leadership, collaboration, responsibility, and conflict resolution. Fourth, the integration of Islamic boarding school values was identified through connections between career choices and the values of trustworthiness (*amanah*), discipline, independence, social responsibility, and *ukhuwah*. These categories served as an organizational framework for the data rather than as standardized quantitative instruments.

Table 1. Data Sources and Their Analytical Functions

Data source	Number/scope	Technique	Analytical function
Guidance and counseling teachers	2 individuals	Interview	Program strategy, assessment, guidance, and evaluation
School principal	1 individual	Interview	Policy, institutional support, and program objectives
Islamic boarding school mentors	3 individuals	Interview/observation	Integration of values, discipline, and habituation
Grade XI-XII students	8 individuals	Interview	Experiences of exploration, planning, and project participation
Student program documents	45 students	Documentation	Descriptive data on interest-aptitude understanding and career plans

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Project-Based Career-Guidance Cycle

The findings show that career guidance at Ar-Rosyidah Senior High School, Magetan, was implemented as a sequence of interconnected activities rather than as isolated information sessions. The cycle began with an initial assessment, followed by self-reflection, occupational exploration, interaction with alumni or practitioners, planning, group projects, and final reflection. This structure allowed students to experience career development as a recursive learning process: understanding themselves, obtaining information, testing choices, receiving feedback, and then revising their plans. This pattern is consistent with Super (1980) career-development framework, particularly the exploration and crystallization stages, in which adolescents begin to narrow multiple possibilities into more realistic options.

The initial stage was implemented through the Who I Am Project. In this activity, students prepared autobiographical accounts of their personal development, mapped experiences they considered meaningful, reviewed their interest-aptitude assessment results, and identified activities that made them feel challenged or enabled them to grow. Guidance and counseling teachers did not immediately assign students to particular occupational labels; instead, they helped students identify patterns. For example, students who showed an interest in social and communicative activities were encouraged to explore several occupational alternatives rather than being directed toward a single job. This approach is

important because psychological assessment results should function as a basis for dialogue, not as definitive labels that restrict future development.

The second stage involved information exploration. Students were asked to investigate the characteristics of study programs, occupational competency requirements, university admission pathways, scholarship opportunities, and the nature of different work environments. Some students also conducted simple interviews with alumni. These activities shifted career understanding from abstract impressions to verifiable information. Hidayati (2015) emphasizes the importance of career information in improving students' understanding, while Latif et al. (2017) show that career planning and self-efficacy are associated with readiness to transition into the workforce. In the present study, information became more meaningful because students obtained it through exploratory assignments that they were required to present to others.

The third stage consisted of presenting an ideal career profile. The presentation functioned as a form of public accountability because students had to explain why a particular choice was consistent with their own characteristics. When the reasons provided were overly general, teachers and peers asked follow-up questions. This process encouraged students to distinguish spontaneous preferences from choices supported by evidence. At this point, the project became a reflective tool: students not only gathered information but also learned to defend their choices using reasons that could be examined and challenged.

The fourth stage connected individual planning with social learning. Mini Enterprise activities or industrial case-study projects placed students in groups that had to distribute tasks, solve problems, communicate ideas, and complete work within specified deadlines. These experiences introduced an aspect of career readiness often overlooked in information-based services: the workplace requires collaboration and responsibility. Handayani (2022) demonstrated the value of project-based approaches in career guidance, and the present findings extend this approach to an Islamic boarding school context by incorporating value reflection and the role of boarding school mentors.

At the institutional level, the involvement of boarding school mentors provided a reinforcing function that is not always available in non-residential schools. Guidance and counseling teachers focused on assessment, information, and planning, whereas boarding school mentors connected students' choices and behavior with the values of trustworthiness, discipline, hard work, independence, and responsibility. This integration meant that career issues were not framed solely in terms of occupational status or income. For students, future choices were also understood as part of their responsibilities toward themselves, their families, and society.

Table 2. Stages of the Project-Based Career Guidance Model

Stage	Main activity	Student output	Pedagogical meaning
Self-understanding	Interest-aptitude assessment and autobiography	Personal potential profile	Builds awareness of strengths, interests, and limitations
Exploration	Occupational research, study-program investigation, alumni interviews	Map of career alternatives	Tests choices against external information
Articulation of choices	Presentation of an ideal career profile	Rationale for choices	Develops reasoning, communication, and reflection
Planning	Ten-year Career Road Map	Study/career pathway map	Translates aspirations into measurable steps
Project experience	Mini Enterprise/case study	Group product/report	Develops soft skills in authentic situations
Value reflection	Discussion among counselor, boarding school mentor, and student	Reflection notes	Integrates career choices with Islamic boarding school values

Exploring Interests and Aptitudes: From Assessment Results to Self-Understanding

The second finding concerns a visible change in the way students explained the relationship between themselves and their career choices. At the beginning of the program, some students mentioned

occupations or study programs without providing specific reasons. Choices were often based on popular occupations, peers' preferences, or broad family expectations. After completing the Who I Am Project and occupational exploration activities, students began to use more reflective language, for example by linking field preferences to learning experiences, communication abilities, interest in particular activities, or assessment results. This change in how students articulated their choices is important because it indicates the emergence of a more developed career self-concept.

Program documentation covering 45 students showed changes in the distribution of categories describing students' understanding of their interests and aptitudes. Before the project sequence, 12% were categorized as having a very high level of understanding, 33% as having a moderate level of understanding, and 55% as not yet understanding. After the program, the very-high-understanding category increased to 68%, the moderate-understanding category was 24%, and the not-yet-understanding category declined to 8%. These data must be interpreted descriptively. Because the study did not employ an experimental design, did not include a control group, and did not conduct inferential statistical tests, the percentage changes cannot be used to claim that the project was the sole cause of the change. Nevertheless, the pattern was consistent with interview and observational evidence showing students' improved ability to explain the reasons underlying their choices more specifically.

This finding is consistent with Atmaja (2014), who showed that structured career guidance can support students' career planning, and with Lestari (2017), who emphasized that life-skills-based career guidance can foster adolescent career maturity. The common element across these findings is the importance of activities that require students to process information and experience rather than simply listen to explanations. The present study, however, adds value reflection and authentic projects as components of exploration. Self-understanding is therefore connected with how students imagine themselves navigating academic life, employment, and social responsibility.

From a psychological perspective, the exploration process also helped reduce the tendency to make reactive decisions. Widyastuti (2013) demonstrated the role of self-efficacy in strengthening career decision-making. When students have opportunities to gather information, discuss options, present their choices, and receive feedback, they gain small mastery experiences that can reinforce confidence in decision-making. Ardiyanti and Alsa (2015) similarly showed that career decision-making self-efficacy can be improved through systematic programs. In the present study, project activities functioned as a learning context that provided these experiences progressively.

It is important to emphasize that interest-aptitude assessment did not stand alone. Guidance and counseling teachers avoided treating test results as final labels. Assessment results were integrated with students' experiential histories, achievements, current interests, behavioral observations, and dialogue with the students themselves. This approach helped prevent oversimplification, such as assuming that one interest type is compatible with only one occupation. In this way, assessment served as an entry point for exploration rather than as a mechanism for predetermining students' career trajectories.

Table 3. Descriptive Changes in Students' Understanding of Interests and Aptitudes (Program Documentation, N = 45)

Category	Before the program	After the program	Descriptive interpretation
Very high understanding	12%	68%	The proportion increased markedly in the program documentation
Moderate understanding	33%	24%	Some students moved into the very-high-understanding category
Not yet understanding	55%	8%	The proportion declined after the project sequence

Note: The data in the table were derived from the school's program records and are used as supporting descriptive evidence; this study did not conduct causal tests or inferential statistical analyses.

The Career Road Map as an Instrument for Future Planning

Following the exploration phase, students were guided to develop a Career Road Map covering approximately ten years. The document included preferred study programs or employment pathways, target institutions, admission strategies, funding alternatives, skills to be developed, experiences to be pursued, and contingency plans. Planning was structured in stages so that students did not stop at

statements such as 'I want to become a doctor,' 'I want to study at a public university,' or 'I want to become an entrepreneur.' Aspirations had to be translated into observable and evaluable steps.

This principle is consistent with Denney, Williams, Dietz, and Gray (2024), who emphasize the importance of strategic thinking frameworks during academic and workplace transitions. For senior high school students, strategic thinking means linking long-term goals with short-term actions. Students need to understand that particular study programs require specific academic preparation, higher education institutions use selection mechanisms, scholarships have eligibility requirements, and occupations demand competencies that must be continually developed. The Career Road Map helps transform an abstract future into a more concrete sequence of decisions.

Post-program documentation showed that students' preferences were distributed across three main pathways: general higher education (44.4%), State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) (33.3%), and employment/entrepreneurship (22.2%). This distribution suggests that the program did not direct all students toward a single uniform pathway. Instead, students were encouraged to assess the suitability of options in relation to their interests, abilities, family support, economic circumstances, and personal goals. In the context of an Islamic boarding school, the presence of both general higher education and PTKIN options also indicates that integrating religion and career development need not create a dichotomy between general and religious knowledge.

For students who chose employment or entrepreneurship, the program included an introduction to santri-preneurship and group projects. This step was important so that entrepreneurship was not perceived merely as an option for students who did not continue to higher education. Entrepreneurship was positioned as a career pathway that likewise requires market knowledge, communication skills, financial management, responsibility, and resilience. During interviews, students reported that developing a planning map helped them recognize prerequisites they had not previously considered, such as improving language proficiency, building a portfolio, or seeking scholarship information earlier. These results reinforce the findings of Juwitaningrum (2013) and Atmaja (2014) concerning the importance of structured career guidance. The distinction is that the Career Road Map in this study functioned not only as a planning tool, but also as a point of integration among assessment results, occupational information, values, and self-development strategies. Accordingly, the quality of planning was not judged by how ambitious students' aspirations were, but by how clearly goals, reasons, steps, alternatives, and available resources were connected.

Table 4. Distribution of Postsecondary Study and Career Plans after the Program

Planned pathway	Proportion	Development focus
General higher education	44.4%	Academic readiness, selection, portfolio development, and funding
State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN)	33.3%	Integration of knowledge, selection readiness, and occupational orientation
Employment/entrepreneurship	22.2%	Work skills, entrepreneurship, communication, and practical experience

Soft-Skills Development through Group Projects

The third finding concerns soft-skills development observed during group projects. Unlike the interest-aptitude understanding data, for which percentage summaries were available, soft-skills data were derived primarily from observations and interviews. Accordingly, this study does not report percentage achievements for communication or teamwork that are unsupported by quantitative instruments. The analysis focuses instead on observed behavioral changes and their consistency across multiple data sources.

In communication, students who had initially tended to remain passive began to participate more actively in presenting ideas and delivering presentations. This development does not imply that all students attained the same level of communication competence; rather, indicators emerged such as greater confidence in expressing opinions, the ability to explain reasons, willingness to listen to group members, and the capacity to respond to differences without immediately escalating conflict. Career-profile presentations also helped students practice more coherent argumentation. This soft skill is

directly related to career readiness because nearly all higher-education and workplace environments require individuals to communicate ideas and interact effectively with others.

In leadership, the projects created opportunities for students to assume roles that rarely emerged in conventional classroom settings. Leadership was not always expressed through holding the position of group leader, but through behaviors such as initiating task distribution, reminding peers of deadlines, resolving impasses, and assisting other members. This pattern is important because it shifts the meaning of leadership from status to behavior. In several groups, guidance and counseling teachers observed that students who were not academically prominent nevertheless demonstrated strong organizational ability when given contextualized projects.

In teamwork, the requirement to produce a shared output forced students to establish coordination. Conflict emerged when task distribution was perceived as unequal or when members held different standards of work. However, these conflicts themselves became learning opportunities. Guidance and counseling teachers and boarding school mentors did not always resolve problems immediately; instead, they encouraged groups to negotiate. As a result, students learned that group success requires managing ego, accepting criticism, and taking responsibility for agreed-upon tasks.

The Islamic boarding school context added another dimension to this process. Collaboration was understood not only as a strategy for obtaining good project results, but also in relation to *ukhuwah*, *amanah*, and responsibility. These values were already familiar to students through residential life. Their integration constituted an important distinction from career programs oriented solely toward competency development. In this study, values were not treated as supplementary content added after project completion; rather, they were used to interpret experiences of conflict, division of labor, punctuality, and honesty throughout the process.

These findings support the view that career guidance should develop social readiness in addition to decision readiness. Lestari (2017) emphasizes the relationship between career guidance and life skills, while Handayani (2022) demonstrate the potential of project-based approaches to prepare students for the workplace. The present study extends these findings by showing that soft skills can develop as process outcomes when students are required to produce work, justify decisions, and interact within groups.

Table 5. Matrix of Soft-Skills Findings

Dimension	Observed behavioral indicators	Relevance to career readiness
Communication	Expressing ideas, presenting plans, listening, and responding	Supports the ability to explain choices and interact professionally
Leadership	Taking initiative, distributing tasks, meeting deadlines, and supporting the group	Develops responsibility and decision-making
Teamwork	Sharing roles, negotiating, resolving differences, and helping one another	Prepares students for collaborative work
Responsibility	Completing agreed tasks and accepting evaluation	Develops work discipline and accountability
Value reflection	Relating actions to <i>amanah</i> , <i>ukhuwah</i> , and social benefit	Keeps career orientation aligned with personal and institutional values

Integrating Islamic Boarding School Values into Career Decision-Making

One of the defining characteristics of the program at Ar-Rosyidah Senior High School was its effort to connect career choices with the values embedded in Islamic boarding school life. In interviews, guidance and counseling teachers and boarding school mentors emphasized that career goals should be realistic but should not be detached from considerations of social benefit, ethics, and responsibility. During the reflection stage, students were encouraged to assess whether their choices merely followed prestige or genuinely aligned with their potential and life goals. This process added a moral dimension to career decision-making without reducing students' need for objective information about education and employment.

This finding is relevant to the context examined by Nuroniah et al. (2025), who positioned career exploration in Islamic boarding schools as an important educational need. The present study

however, extends beyond information services. Value integration occurred at multiple points: when students interpreted their potential as an amanah, when they developed plans as a form of responsibility, when they worked in groups as an exercise in ukhuwah, and when they evaluated choices according to their potential benefits. These values functioned as interpretive frameworks for experience rather than as a separate list of moral instructions.

This approach also helps avoid two extremes. The first is career guidance oriented solely toward the market, in which success is reduced to obtaining high-income employment. The second is an overly abstract normative approach that fails to provide students with practical information about study programs, costs, selection processes, competencies, and the world of work. The model identified in this study seeks to bridge these extremes: students are still required to develop concrete career strategies, but the process is framed by the values they live within the Islamic boarding school environment.

Pedagogically, value integration also makes the role of boarding school mentors significant. Because mentors know students' behavior in everyday residential life, they can provide perspectives that may not be visible during formal guidance and counseling sessions. For example, a student interested in a particular occupation can be encouraged to reflect on whether that aspiration is consistent with current habits of discipline, time management, and responsibility for assigned tasks. In this way, career information, self-assessment, and character formation become more closely connected.

Formulation of the Integrative Career Guidance Model and the Study's Novelty

On the basis of the overall findings, the study formulates a project-based Integrative Career Guidance Model comprising five major components: self-understanding, career exploration, strategic planning, collaborative experience, and value reflection. These five components do not operate in a rigid linear sequence but form a cycle. Students may return to self-understanding when they encounter new information, revise plans after receiving feedback, or change choices after experiencing particular projects. This flexibility is important because adolescent career development is dynamic.

The first component, self-understanding, ensures that career choices are grounded in an understanding of interests, aptitudes, values, experience, and limitations. The second, career exploration, broadens students' perspectives through occupational research, study-program information, alumni engagement, and Career Day activities. The third, strategic planning, translates choices into a Career Road Map containing goals, stages, resources, and alternatives. The fourth, collaborative experience, provides authentic experience through group projects. The fifth, value reflection, ensures that the entire process is connected with the values of amanah, independence, discipline, ukhuwah, and social benefit.

The model's novelty lies in its integration rather than in any single component considered separately. Previous studies have examined career information services, planning, maturity, decision-making self-efficacy, and project-based activities. In the context of this study, however, career assessment does not stop at diagnosis, projects do not stop at products, planning does not stop at targets, and Islamic boarding school values do not stop at advice. All elements are situated within a single service cycle. Through this design, students learn that career choice is a process combining knowledge of the self, knowledge of the world, social experience, strategy, and value orientation.

The model also clarifies the study's theoretical contribution to the discourse on career development. Super (1980) theory emphasizes the dynamics of self-concept development and exploration, while the present findings illustrate how these processes can be operationalized through projects in an Islamic residential-school context. In other words, the study does not propose a new theory of career development; rather, it offers a contextual adaptation of how exploration and crystallization can be facilitated in schools. This contribution is more proportionate to the evidence than a claim that the program 'proves' universal effectiveness.

Practically, the model can serve as a framework for developing an annual guidance and counseling program. Schools may begin the semester with assessment and self-reflection, continue with occupational exploration, invite alumni or practitioners, ask students to prepare Career Road Maps, provide collaborative projects, and conclude with evaluation and value reflection. Each stage can be modified according to school resources. Schools with limited access to practitioners may use online interviews or occupational-profile studies, while schools with limited access to assessment instruments may begin with simple interest inventories administered professionally by guidance and counseling teachers.

The model should not, however, be understood as a formula that automatically produces the 'correct' career decision. Students' choices remain influenced by family, economic circumstances, achievement, health, educational opportunities, and changing interests. The function of the model is therefore to improve the quality of the decision-making process, not to guarantee particular career outcomes. This principle is essential to ensure that guidance and counseling does not become a mechanism for imposing choices on students.

Table 6. Project-Based Integrative Career Guidance Model Integrating Islamic Boarding School Values

Component	Key question	Activity	Output	Values reinforced
Self-understanding	Who am I?	Assessment, autobiography, reflection	Potential profile	Gratitude, amanah
Career exploration	What options are available?	Occupational research, alumni engagement, Career Day	Map of alternatives	Openness, purposeful effort (ikhtiar)
Strategic planning	How can I achieve it?	Career Road Map	Staged plan	Discipline, responsibility
Collaborative experience	What skills do I need to develop?	Group project/Mini Enterprise	Product and experience	Ukhuwah, leadership
Value reflection	Is my choice meaningful and responsible?	Joint reflection with counselor and boarding school mentor	Revised/reaffirmed plan	Social benefit, integrity

Implications, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

The first implication concerns guidance and counseling teachers. The findings suggest that projects can be used not merely as supplementary activities, but as a core strategy for making career guidance more active. Guidance and counseling teachers need to design clear project outputs, simple reflection rubrics or criteria, feedback schedules, and documentation of student development. Project quality is determined not by the complexity of the product but by the extent to which the activity encourages students to connect self-knowledge, information, choices, and plans.

The second implication concerns school leaders and Islamic boarding school administrators. Career guidance requires support across roles. Guidance and counseling teachers cannot work effectively in isolation when relevant student information is distributed among homeroom teachers, subject teachers, boarding school mentors, and families. Collaboration enables schools to develop a more comprehensive understanding of student development. However, such collaboration must continue to respect students' privacy and autonomy; assessment information should not become a public label that constrains students' options.

The third implication concerns program evaluation. The pre-post documentation used by the school in this study is useful as an initial indicator, but it is insufficient to establish causal effectiveness. Schools seeking stronger impact evaluation could use validated instruments, a clearly defined pretest-posttest design, comparison groups where feasible, and longitudinal follow-up after graduation. Program data would then move beyond describing satisfaction or changes in perception to assessing decision quality and the durability of career plans over time.

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted at a single school; therefore, the findings are contextual and cannot be statistically generalized to all Islamic boarding schools. Second, only eight students participated as interview informants, whereas the data covering 45 students were derived from aggregated program documentation; the difference between these data sources limits the depth of individual-level analysis of percentage changes. Third, the study did not trace the continuity of students' plans after graduation. Fourth, soft-skills indicators were derived from observations and

interviews rather than from standardized quantitative scales. These limitations are stated explicitly to keep interpretation of the findings proportionate to the available evidence.

Future research could test the model across multiple schools with different characteristics, employ stronger mixed-methods designs, and track graduates longitudinally. Researchers could also explore differences in student needs by grade level, gender, socioeconomic background, or intended study pathway, provided that ethical considerations and data adequacy are addressed. Developing instruments to assess the quality of Career Road Maps and value reflection could also constitute a useful agenda for subsequent studies.

Synthesis of Findings and the Study's Position in Relation to Previous Research

When considered as a whole, the findings indicate that the program's strength lies not simply in the presence of interest-aptitude tests, Career Day, or a Career Road Map, but in the connections among these activities. Career-guidance programs often fail to produce meaningful change when activities are implemented separately and are not followed by reflection. In the program examined here, assessment results became material for exploration; exploration informed the development of alternatives; alternatives were tested through information and discussion; and plans were subsequently translated into a Career Road Map. Group projects then provided opportunities for students to experience social-competency demands relevant to further study and employment. This structure shifted career guidance from one-way information provision toward a continuous process of career learning.

Compared with the studies of Atmaja (2014), Juwitaningrum (2013) and Hidayati (2015), the present study retains the central importance of information and planning while adding a project-based experiential dimension. Compared with Lestari (2017), this study converges on the development of life skills, but the Islamic boarding school context provides a more explicit value framework. Meanwhile, the finding regarding the importance of students' confidence in decision-making is consistent with Widyastuti (2013) and Ardiyanti and Alsa (2015). The distinction is that decision-making self-efficacy in the present study was not addressed through a specific training intervention, but developed through repeated opportunities to choose, explain reasons, receive feedback, and revise plans.

Handayani (2022) provide a basis for applying project-based approaches within career-guidance services. The present study extends that idea by positioning projects as one component within a broader cycle. Projects do not stand alone because the quality of project experience depends heavily on students' readiness to understand themselves and the goals they wish to pursue. Conversely, planning without experience risks becoming a list of aspirations that are never tested. The relationship among self-understanding, career exploration, strategic planning, collaborative experience, and value reflection therefore forms the conceptual core of the proposed model.

The Islamic boarding school context further shows that career development need not reproduce a logic of individual competition. The values of *amanah* and *ukhuwah* can instead strengthen professional competence, for example through respect for deadlines, honesty in completing tasks, responsibility for assigned roles, and the ability to work in teams. In this way, religious values are not positioned in opposition to work readiness, but as sources of behavioral orientation. This finding is important because career discourse in Islamic schools often oscillates between two poles: overly normative approaches and overly instrumental ones. The Integrative Career Guidance Model offers a more operational middle position.

In practical terms, the synthesis of findings yields three principles for implementation. First, each activity should produce an artifact that can be revisited, such as a self-profile, an alternatives map, or a Career Road Map, so that student development is documented. Second, students should receive feedback from more than one party so that decisions are not shaped solely by the perspective of the guidance and counseling teacher. Third, evaluation should distinguish process indicators from outcome indicators. Active participation in projects is a process indicator, whereas clarity of reasons for choices, consistency of plans, the ability to adjust alternatives, and continuation of plans after graduation are closer to outcome indicators. This distinction is important so that schools do not infer success merely from completion of program activities.

Accordingly, the present study occupies an integrative and contextual position in relation to previous research. It does not reject established career-guidance models, but reorganizes familiar elements into a single cycle suited to the characteristics of Islamic residential schools. This formulation also clarifies the limits of the study's claims: the available data are sufficient to describe processes and

patterns of change, but not to establish causal effectiveness or cross-school generalizability. Carefully delimiting these claims strengthens the article's credibility by aligning its scientific contribution with the research design and the evidence available

CONCLUSION

This study shows that project-based career guidance at Ar-Rosyidah Senior High School, Magetan, can be understood as a guidance process that connects self-understanding, information exploration, strategic planning, collaborative experience, and reflection on Islamic boarding school values. The Who I Am Project helped students recognize relationships among interests, aptitudes, experiences, and occupational alternatives. Program documentation covering 45 students showed descriptive changes in categories of interest-aptitude understanding, most notably a decline in the 'not yet understanding' category from 55% to 8%; however, these data were not interpreted as causal evidence because the study did not employ an experimental design. The Career Road Map helped students translate aspirations into more concrete educational or career steps, while group projects provided authentic contexts for practicing communication, leadership, collaboration, responsibility, and value reflection. The novelty of the study lies in the formulation of a project-based Integrative Career Guidance Model that unifies five components: self-understanding, career exploration, strategic planning, collaborative experience, and value reflection. The model can serve as a practical framework for Islamic boarding schools seeking to develop more active and contextual career-guidance services, provided that implementation is adapted to school resources and does not constrain students' autonomy in making choices.

The study recommends that schools strengthen evaluation documentation using more standardized instruments, systematically involve families and alumni, and conduct follow-up with graduates to assess the continuity of career plans. Future studies should test the model in more than one school using mixed-methods or longitudinal designs so that relationships among the guidance process, decision maturity, soft skills, and post-graduation transition outcomes can be analyzed more robustly.

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