



The Impact of the Pre-Employment Card Program on Job Search Duration in Semarang City

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment issues arise due to an imbalance between the labor force and available job opportunities, as well as a mismatch of skills. This situation prompted the government to introduce the Pre-Employment Card Program, aimed at enhancing skills through job training and incentives. This study seeks to analyze the influence of variables such as training programs and incentives under the Pre-Employment Card Program, educational level, work experience, reservation wage, age, and gender on the duration of job searching in Semarang City. The research adopts a quantitative approach, focusing on respondents who have participated in the Pre-Employment Card Program in Semarang City. The analytical method employed is multiple linear regression analysis (Ordinary Least Squares). The findings indicate that the training programs and incentives from the Pre-Employment Card Program, educational level, and reservation wage have a significant impact on the duration of job searching in Semarang City. Conversely, work experience, age, and gender do not significantly influence the job search duration. The independent variables collectively explain 43.32% of the variation in job search duration, while the remaining 56.68% is attributed to other variables outside the research model.

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INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is a complex issue as it is closely related to fundamental macroeconomic aspects such as poverty, inflation, growth, and national development. Since this study focuses on the supply side of the labor market, government intervention is necessary to address these problems. One such intervention is the Pre-Employment Card Program. Semarang City has the highest number of Pre-Employment Card recipients in Central Java Province; however, its unemployment rate remains high. This issue is critical for economic recovery and

development during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in Semarang City, where the open unemployment rate reached 9.54%, with 329,978 workers affected by the pandemic.

In addition to the impact of COVID-19, unemployment in the city is also caused by a skills mismatch between job seekers and employer demands, commonly referred to as a "skill gap." This prompted the government to launch the Pre-Employment Card Program to enhance the skills and competencies of unemployed individuals through job training and incentives provided upon completion of the program. Furthermore, an individual's educational attainment is expected to serve as a capital for securing employment more quickly.

The Pre-Employment Card's training programs and incentives were designed by the government to improve workforce skills, thereby reducing the duration of job searching. According to Indrayanti, participation in vocational/job training significantly affects the time spent searching for a job, with individuals who undergo such training obtaining employment faster than others (Indrayanti, 2018). Similarly, Katz and Meyer found that extending unemployment benefits or incentives by one week increases the average duration of unemployment. This is because recipients tend to use these benefits for consumption, which prolongs their job search. A similar phenomenon may occur with the incentives provided by the Pre-Employment Card Program, which are intended to support job searches or serve as startup capital (Katz and Meyer, 1990).

In addition to the Pre-Employment Card Program and educational attainment, factors such as work experience, reservation wages, age, and gender are also believed to influence the duration of job searches. Hartoko found that higher education levels negatively correlate with job search duration, meaning that individuals with higher education levels spend less time searching for employment (Hartoko, 2018). Naureen and Lodhi suggested that gender impacts unemployment (Naureen & Lodhi, 2014), while Bloom and Freeman highlighted that age differences can affect wage offers due to the large proportion of the productive-age population (Bloom & Freeman, 2014). Hartoko also noted that gender and age positively affect job search duration, with older individuals, particularly those with limited work experience, facing greater difficulties in securing employment (Hartoko, 2018).

Wages, defined as compensation in cash or goods received by workers for their services, are regulated by the government through minimum wage policies. According to Kaufman and Hotchkiss, the minimum wage represents the lowest wage job seekers are willing to accept (Kaufman & Hotchkiss, 1999). Suroso observed that wages influence individuals to remain unemployed for a certain period in anticipation of higher-paying jobs (Suroso, 2012). Saddiyah further demonstrated that work experience significantly reduces job search duration, as experienced workers secure employment faster than those without prior experience (Saddiyah, 2021). Klein also emphasized that more extensive work experience shortens the time needed to find a job (Klein, 2015). Naureen and Lodhi found that high unemployment rates in Pakistan were largely due to employers' preference for experienced candidates, creating challenges for fresh graduates with no prior experience and resulting in longer job search durations (Naureen & Lodhi, 2014). While the program aims to address unemployment in Semarang City, its implementation over the past two years has not significantly reduced the unemployment rate. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the influence of the Pre-Employment Card's training programs and incentives, education level, work experience, reservation wages, age, and gender on job search duration in Semarang City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Labor Supply

Labor supply refers to the amount of labor that workers are willing to provide at various wage levels within a given time period. An individual's choice to work or enjoy leisure time is explored in the theory of labor/leisure choice. This theory assumes two possible uses of free time: work and leisure. The second assumption is that leisure is considered a normal good, meaning that as income rises, leisure time also increases. This concept relates to utility or satisfaction, where consumers choose products that offer the highest level of satisfaction. This utility theory can be used to analyze an individual's decision on how much leisure time is desired.

Labor Market Analysis

The process of job placement or employment relationships through the supply and demand for labor is known as the labor market. The labor market encompasses all activities by participants aimed at matching job seekers with job vacancies (Lumapelumey et al., 2019).

Job Search Theory

Job Search Theory is a model that explains unemployment from the perspective of labor supply, focusing on an individual's decision to participate in the labor market based on the characteristics of the job seeker. The Search Theory model includes several assumptions (Indrayanti, 2018). The first assumption is that laborers search in an imperfect information labor market. The second assumption is that each worker incurs certain costs during the job search period, including expenditures and forgone opportunities. The third assumption states that workers have specific criteria for accepting or rejecting job offers, based on a reservation wage that aligns with their expectations.

Human Capital

The human capital theory views individuals as a form of capital or resource, much like other forms of capital. According to Romer, the quality of human capital consists of a person's abilities, skills, and knowledge (worker). Human capital theory is based on the assumption that formal education plays a crucial role in enhancing the productive capacity of a population (Romer, 1996).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to analyze the impact of the Pre-Employment Card, represented by the variables of training and incentives, along with education level, work experience, reservation wage, age, and gender, on the duration of job seeking in Semarang City. The sampling method used is Nonprobability Sampling with a purposive random sampling technique. Nonprobability Sampling refers to a sampling technique where not all elements or members of the population have an equal chance of being selected as a sample. Purposive random sampling, on the other hand, involves the researcher deliberately selecting population members based on specific considerations deemed capable of providing the required information or meeting particular characteristics that represent the key features of the population (Suroso, 2012). In this study, respondents who had previously received the Pre-Employment Card in Semarang City were selected based on these characteristics.

The data required for this research are sourced from primary data obtained directly and supported by secondary data acquired indirectly. Primary data serves as the main source, as the study focuses on the influence of the Pre-Employment Card training and incentive program on the duration of job seeking. Primary data were collected through questionnaires completed by 105 respondents, who were Pre-Employment Card recipients in Semarang City in 2020 and had successfully found jobs. The primary data collected include information on training and incentives from the Pre-Employment Card, education level, work experience, wages, age, gender, and job-seeking duration.

The data collection method employed in this research is through interviews using questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed directly to respondents who had received the Pre-Employment Card via Google Forms. Interviews were also conducted with related parties, such as the Semarang City Manpower Office, which oversees the implementation of the Pre-Employment Card program. Additionally, the library research method was used to collect data from literature, including books, journals, reports, and official websites of relevant institutions. The analysis method applied in this study is multiple regression analysis with dummy variables. This method is used to determine the extent to which changes in one variable affect related variables and to test the model of job-seeking duration. The regression equation in this research aims to measure the influence of independent variables, including Training (X_1), Incentives (X_2), Education (X_3), Work Experience (X_4), Wages (X_5), Age (X_6), and Gender (X_7), on the dependent variable, Job-Seeking Duration (Y). The model used in this research is as follows:

$$Y = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \mu$$

Description:

- Y = Duration of Job Seeking
- X_1 = Pre-Employment Card Training
- X_2 = Pre-Employment Card Incentive
- X_3 = Education Level
- X_4 = Work Experience
- X_5 = Reservation Wage
- X_6 = Age
- X_7 = Gender
- α = Constant

In addition to multiple linear regression analysis, this study also conducts classical assumption tests, hypothesis testing, and determination coefficient analysis. The classical assumption tests include normality test, multicollinearity test, and heteroscedasticity test. Hypothesis testing consists of the T-test and F-test. Furthermore, the determination coefficient is used to measure the extent to which the variation in independent variables explains the variation in the dependent variable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Semarang City is the city/region with the highest number of Pre-Employment Card recipients in Central Java Province. Between 2020 and 2022 (waves 1–25), the number of Pre-Employment Card recipients in Semarang reached 62,962 individuals. This study involved 105 respondents, predominantly female (68%), while males made up 32%. Based on age, 83% of the Pre-Employment Card recipients were young, ranging from 19 to 28 years old.

Meanwhile, 14% were aged between 29 and 38 years, 2% were aged between 39 and 48 years, and the remaining 1% were aged between 49 and 58 years. Education level is one of the independent variables in this study. The respondents were predominantly university graduates, with 62 holding a bachelor's degree (S1). Additionally, 18 respondents were high school (SMA) graduates, 17 were vocational high school (SMK) graduates, while the remaining respondents held associate degrees (D3), applied bachelor's degrees (D4), or one respondent held a master's degree (S2). Based on respondents' employment status, 57% were employed, while 43% were unemployed. Work experience is another independent variable in this study. Among the respondents, 73% had prior work experience, while the remaining 27% had no previous work experience.

Table 1 Number of Respondents Based on Training Expenditure and Number of Trainings in Relation to Job-Seeking Duration

Training Expenditure (Rp)	Job-Seeking Duration			Total
	< 6 months	6-12 months	13-24 months	
0 - 250,000	1	1	1	3
250,001 - 500,000	11	7	4	22
500,001 - 750,000	7	9	1	17
750,001 - 1,000,000	45	13	5	63

Number of Trainings	Job-Seeking Duration			Total
	< 6 months	6-12 months	13-24 months	
1	11	8	5	24
2	31	15	3	49
3	16	4	2	22
4	5	2	2	7
5	1	1	1	3
Total	64	30	11	

Source: Data Processed by author, 2024

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of respondents based on training expenditures and the number of training sessions in relation to the duration of job seeking. A total of 63 respondents spent between Rp750,000 and Rp1,000,000 on training, with 45 of them securing jobs in less than six months. This indicates that approximately 71% of respondents experienced shorter job-seeking durations when they invested more in training. Conversely, among those who spent between Rp0 and Rp250,000, only 1 out of 3 respondents (33%) found a job within six months, suggesting that lower expenditures are associated with longer job-seeking durations. This implies that the higher the investment in training, the shorter the duration of job seeking.

The number of training sessions attended also varied. Of the 64 respondents who secured jobs in less than six months, 31 were those who attended two training sessions. This suggests that an optimal number of training sessions can reduce the duration of job seeking compared to respondents who attended fewer or more sessions. This is likely because the training period is limited to four months, making time efficiency a critical factor. Additionally, the number of training sessions does not necessarily reflect the quality of the training, as the platforms offer various training packages. Higher-priced training sessions tend to be of better quality.

Table 2 Number of Respondents Based on Reservation Wage and Education Level

		Job-Seeking Duration			Total
		< 6 months	6-12 months	13-24 months	
Reservation Wage	< 5 million/month	45	10	4	59
	5-10 million/month	19	20	7	46
Education Level	SMA/SMK	17	13	6	36
	750,001 - 1,000,000	2	2	1	5
	S1	44	15	4	63
	S2	1	0	0	1

Source: Data Processed by author, 2024

Table 2 explains the number of respondents based on reservation wage and education level in relation to the duration of job search. Among the respondents, 76% with a reservation wage of less than 5 million/month fall into the category of a short job search duration, which is less than 6 months, while only 41% of those with a reservation wage of 5-10 million/month have a job search duration of less than 6 months. This suggests that the higher the expected wage, the longer the job search duration, and vice versa. Education level also shows a negative correlation with job search duration. Among respondents with a high school/vocational school diploma, 47% fall within the category of a job search duration of less than 6 months, while 100% of those with a master's degree have a job search duration of less than 6 months. This indicates that higher education is associated with a shorter unemployment duration.

Table 3 Number of Respondents Based on Work Experience and Age

		Job-Seeking Duration			Total
		< 6 months	6-12 months	13-24 months	
Work Experience	Yes	50	19	8	77
	No	14	11	3	28
Age	19-28	53	24	10	87
	29-38	9	5	1	15
	39-48	2	0	0	2
	49-58	0	1	0	1
Total		64	30	11	

Source: Data Processed by author, 2024

Work experience and age have an impact on the duration of job search, where individuals with work experience tend to have a shorter job search duration compared to those without work experience. Age also plays a role in influencing job search duration. The older a person is, the longer it takes to find a job compared to younger job seekers, as shown in Table 3. However, this does not rule out the possibility that older individuals may secure employment more quickly, provided they have sufficient work experience beforehand. This study is quantitative in nature and is analyzed using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) model. The OLS model in this research aims to determine the extent of the influence of independent variables—such as the Kartu Prakerja training, Kartu Prakerja incentives, education level, work experience, reservation wage, age, and gender—on the duration of job search in Semarang. Data management is carried out using the Eviews 10 statistical application program. The results of the OLS regression model in Table 4 show the following regression equation:

Table 4 Results of the Multiple Linear Regression Test

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	19,07439	4,265650	4,471625	0,0000
Pre-Employment Card Training (X ₁)	-4,49827	1,915261	-2,348989	0,0209
Pre-Employment Card Incentive (X ₂)	-3,159097	0,870364	-3,629629	0,0005
Education Level (X ₃)	-0,918160	0,231656	-3,963461	0,0001
Work Experience (X ₄)	-1,579024	0,989478	-1,595816	0,1138
Reservation Wage (X ₅)	1,656306	0,296934	5,578036	0,0000
Age (X ₆)	-0,027837	0,092813	-0,299923	0,7649
Gender (X ₇)	-1,417953	0,919429	-1,542211	0,1263
R-squared	0,433224	F-statistic		10,5913
Adjusted R-squared	0,392323	Prob(F-statistic)		0,00000

Source: Data Processed by author, 2024

This study uses a quantitative analysis method with multiple linear regression based on Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), requiring classical assumption tests as statistical prerequisites to perform subsequent tests, such as hypothesis testing. The classical assumption tests used in this study include normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. The research has been tested and found to be free from classical assumption violations. The coefficient of determination (R^2) in this study is 0.433224, meaning that the variables (Kartu Prakerja training and incentives, education level, work experience, reservation wage, gender, and age) in the model explain 43.32% of the variation in job search duration. The remaining 56.68% is explained by other variables outside the model that were not studied.

The F-statistic test essentially shows whether all the independent variables in the model collectively have an impact on the dependent variable. The value is compared to the F-table value of 2.105. Since the calculated F-value (10.5913) is greater than the F-table value (2.105), it indicates that the model is valid. This is also evident from the significance value of the Prob (F-statistic) of 0.000000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) in this study is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. The t-statistic test shows the individual influence of each explanatory variable on the dependent variable. The t-test is performed by comparing the calculated t-value with the t-table value.

1. H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted, meaning the first hypothesis, which states that Kartu Prakerja training has a negative and significant effect on job search duration, is accepted.
2. H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted, meaning the second hypothesis, stating that Kartu Prakerja incentives to help find a job have a negative and significant effect on job search duration, is accepted.
3. H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted, meaning the third hypothesis, stating that education level has a negative and significant effect on job search duration, is accepted.
4. H_a is rejected, and H_0 is accepted, meaning the fourth hypothesis, stating that work experience has a negative and significant effect on job search duration, is rejected.
5. H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted, meaning the fifth hypothesis, stating that reservation wage has a positive and significant effect on job search duration, is accepted.
6. H_a is rejected, and H_0 is accepted, meaning the sixth hypothesis, stating that the age of job seekers has a positive and significant effect on job search duration, is rejected.

7. H_a is rejected, and H_0 is accepted, meaning the seventh hypothesis, stating that males have a negative and significant effect on job search duration, is rejected.

The results of the study indicate that the Kartu Prakerja training variable has a negative and significant effect on the duration of job search in Semarang. The training referred to in this variable is the total amount of money spent to participate in the training. The coefficient value for the Kartu Prakerja training variable is -4.49, which means that for every increase of Rp 100,000 in training expenditures, the job search duration is reduced by 4.49 months. This finding is supported by the human capital theory developed by Borjas, which states that job training is a key component of the human capital stock that forms at least half of the worker's human capital, ultimately improving productivity and skills in a uniform manner ([George J. Borjas, 2016](#)). The results of this study align with those of [Indrayanti \(2018\)](#), [Zatzah et al. \(2021\)](#), and [Khan & Yousaf \(2013\)](#), which suggest that individuals who possess skills and have participated in training are more likely to experience a shorter unemployment duration.

Based on the analysis, the Kartu Prakerja Incentive variable has a significant effect on the duration of job search with a regression coefficient of -3.16. This indicates that using incentives to help find a job will result in a 3.16-month longer job search duration compared to using incentives for living expenses. This is consistent with the research of Katz & Meyer (1990), which estimated that an increase of one week in the potential benefit duration or incentive for Unemployment Insurance would increase the average unemployment duration for recipients. The education level variable has a significant negative effect on the duration of job search with a regression coefficient of -0.918160. This means that for every additional year of schooling, the job search duration decreases by 0.92 months or approximately 28 days. This suggests that the higher the education level, the shorter the time required to find a job.

The results of the study show that the work experience variable does not have a significant effect at the 5% significance level. In other words, whether or not an individual has previous work experience does not significantly explain the duration of job search. The analysis shows that the reservation wage variable has a positive and significant effect on the duration of job search in Semarang. The regression coefficient for the reservation wage variable is 1.66, which means that for every increase of Rp 100,000 in reservation wage, the job search duration increases by 1.66 months. This finding aligns with one of the assumptions of the "Job Search Theory," which states that workers have criteria for accepting or rejecting a job offer based on the minimum wage level that meets their expectations (reservation wage).

The age variable is not significant with respect to the duration of job search in Semarang at the 5% significance level. In other words, whether the Kartu Prakerja recipient is younger or older, their job search duration is relatively the same. The insignificant result in this study may be due to the fact that certain companies tend to seek workers who are still considered productive, where productivity is influenced by both age and work experience ([Zatzah et al., 2021](#)). The study also shows that the gender variable does not significantly affect the duration of job search in Semarang at the 5% significance level. However, the coefficient estimate for the male dummy variable is negative, which suggests that men experience a shorter unemployment duration or are able to find a job more quickly compared to women.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that the variables of Kartu Prakerja training, Kartu Prakerja incentives, education level, and reservation wage significantly affect the duration of job search. Kartu Prakerja training has a negative and significant impact on the

duration of job search in Semarang. This means that the higher the amount of money spent on training, the shorter the job search duration will be. Kartu Prakerja incentives also have a negative and significant effect on the job search duration in Semarang, indicating that incentives used to help find a job tend to shorten the duration of the job search. Similarly, the education level variable has a negative and significant effect on the duration of job search in Semarang. This means that the higher the level of education, the quicker an individual will find a job, or in other words, the shorter the job search time. Meanwhile, reservation wage has a positive and significant effect on the job search duration in Semarang. This indicates that the higher the expected wage, the longer the job search duration will be. On the other hand, there is no significant effect from the work experience, age, and gender variables on the job search duration in Semarang.

Based on the interpretation of the results and conclusions, the following recommendations can be made to help address labor market issues, particularly unemployment, in Semarang, as well as suggestions for future research:

1. The government is recommended to improve access to suitable job opportunities for Kartu Prakerja recipients who have completed the program, such as by providing a more efficient labor market system.
2. Kartu Prakerja should add a selection scheme by conducting aptitude tests tailored to the skills and abilities of participants to determine the type of training that is most suitable. Additionally, Kartu Prakerja should hold reporting sessions for incentive recipients to discuss what they plan to do after receiving the training.
3. There is a need to increase the determination and awareness of the importance of training and higher education to support career development. Job seekers should consider the expected wage level alongside their skills and abilities.
4. For future research, it is recommended to further develop the study by determining more measurable benchmarks, such as focusing on Kartu Prakerja recipients from the same year, with respondents who have already found employment, where the job is their first job after completing Kartu Prakerja training.

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