Southeast Asian Journal of Global Trends and Issues in Education
E-ISSN 3110-6714 | Print ISSN 3110-679X, Volume 2, Issue 3 (2026), DOI: 10.64420/sajgtie.v2i3
Journal homepage: https://ojs.aeducia.org/index.php/sajgtie



An Analysis of Interest and Perception Gaps Regarding the Librarianship Profession Among Female Students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah

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This article is available online via the following issue link:
https://doi.org/10.64420/sajgtie.v2i3

How to Cite this Article:

Najiha, G. P., & Rachmayanti, N. (2026). An Analysis of Interest and Perception Gaps Regarding the Librarianship Profession Among Female Students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah. *Southeast Asian Journal of Global Trends and Issues in Education*, 2(3), 134-141. https://doi.org/10.64420/sajgtie.v2i3.638

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First Publication Right:
Southeast Asian Journal of Global Trends and Issues in Education

Article info:
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64420/sajgtie.v2i3.638

Word Count: 7948

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Contents lists available at ojs.aeducia.org
Southeast Asian J. Glob. Trends IssuesQ Educ.
Volume 2, Issue 3 (2026), DOI: 10.64420/sajgtie.v2i3
Journal homepage: https://ojs.aeducia.org/index.php/sajgtie

SAJGTIE
E-ISSN 3110-6714
P-ISSN 3110-679X

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An Analysis of Interest and Perception Gaps Regarding the Librarianship Profession Among Female Students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: July 12, 2026
Revised: November 10, 2026
Accepted: November 13, 2026
Published: November 19, 2026

KEYWORDS

Career Interest;
Perception Gap;
Librarianship Profession;
Students

ABSTRACT

Background: Persistent societal stereotypes portray librarianship as a monotonous occupation with limited financial prospects, causing low career interest among secondary school students. **Objective:** This study aims to analyze the career interest levels and identify intrinsic and extrinsic perception gaps regarding the librarianship profession among tenth-grade female students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. **Method:** A descriptive qualitative design was employed from November 2024 to February 2025, involving 17 purposively selected tenth-grade female informants. Data were collected through an online questionnaire and analyzed interactively through data reduction, display, and verification, validated via member checking and an audit trail. **Result:** Overall student interest in becoming a librarian was low or undecided, marked by minimal personal enthusiasm (23.5%), reluctance to seek career information (70.6%), doubts regarding financial prospects (64.7%), and perceived adaptation difficulties (53%). Nevertheless, 88.2% demonstrated strong idealism to transform negative public perceptions of the profession. **Conclusion:** While financial concerns, passive exploration behavior, and limited understanding of modern librarianship competencies inhibit career choice, students possess substantial social idealism. **Contribution:** This research enriches interest gap literature within secondary Islamic education contexts and provides empirical baseline data for designing targeted career guidance and youth literacy ambassador programs.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term *library* is already widely familiar; however, public understanding of libraries often remains conventional (Romadhoni et al., 2015). Some members of the public still perceive a library merely as a place to store books or a "book warehouse," even though its roles and functions have evolved alongside advancements in information technology, encompassing the provision of information resources ranging from manual to electronic formats. Nevertheless, the librarianship profession has not yet been fully accepted on an equal footing with other established professions recognized by society (Restanti, 2018). Negative perceptions are frequently attached to this profession, such as viewing it as a monotonous job confined to working among stacks of books and requiring no higher education background (Mayesti, 2023). These negative stereotypes adversely affect the standing of the librarianship profession, which is often treated as a last resort in career selection. In fact, the majority of university graduates in library science prefer to pursue careers outside their field because the librarianship profession is perceived as lacking social status in society and being financially unpromising.

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Every student inherently possesses an interest in pursuing a career aligned with their field of study or aspirations. Theoretically, interest is defined as a tendency to consistently pay attention to and recall certain activities, serving as a highly influential driving factor that plays a crucial role in career choice (Dalimunthe, 2020). This perspective aligns with the theory that interest is a strong inclination of the heart toward something, represents a relatively stable trait, and exerts a significant influence on an individual's activities (Adhisya et al., 2026). Interest can also be expressed through statements of preference or manifested in the form of active participation in an activity (Cahyati & Muchtar, 2019).

Unfortunately, this ideal condition stands in sharp contrast to empirical realities in the field, which demonstrate low student interest in this profession. A survey published in the daily newspaper *Kompas* in 2013 involving 5,614 high school students in Indonesia found that only one female student expressed interest in becoming a librarian (Sayekti & Usiono, 2018; Wicaksono, 2021). This finding underscores the tangible challenges facing the sustainability of the profession. Furthermore, data from the Center for Librarian Development of the National Library of Indonesia (PNRI, 2005) indicate that the educational background of librarians in Indonesia is still dominated by high school graduates (1,034 individuals out of a total of 2,867 librarians) (Henriyani & Hidayat, 2019; Saputro & Amir, 2018), highlighting a persistent gap in attracting university graduates into the librarianship profession.

Research on interest in the librarianship profession has been extensively conducted by previous scholars. Studies examining the nationally low levels of student interest highlight regeneration challenges at the secondary school level (Delmo et al., 2026; Gresko, 2019; Wijonarko, 2020). Other studies regarding the predominance of non-specific educational backgrounds reported by PNRI (2005) reveal significant workforce qualification gaps (Fitri & Afdal, 2025; Wulani et al., 2025). Additionally, research addressing negative stereotypes and social status confirms that public perception of this profession remains low, thereby impacting the willingness of library science graduates to build careers within their academic discipline (Restanti, 2018; Rifai & Ismayati, 2024). These findings indicate the need for more targeted investigations to identify the factors that encourage or inhibit students' interest in choosing the librarianship profession, particularly within underexplored local contexts.

Despite these contributions, several research gaps remain from prior studies. An empirical gap exists because, although the profession is known to suffer from negative stereotypes and low interest (Usiono & Sayekti, 2018), specific empirical evidence regarding the intrinsic and extrinsic interest factors influencing female students in senior-high-level madrasah environments is still needed, as existing data are largely general and drawn from different time periods. In terms of a population gap, previous studies have predominantly focused on university students (Wiranti & Santoso, 2021), creating a need for a specialized analysis of female students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, which possesses a distinct educational and cultural environment.

Conducting this research is highly urgent to obtain specific baseline data on the career interests of tenth-grade female students at the Islamic senior high school (MA/SMA) level for career guidance programs, while simultaneously identifying inhibiting factors to overcome negative stereotypes. The novelty of this recent study (2024/2025) among female students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta demonstrates that although overall career interest falls into the low or undecided category, there is a strong idealism (88.2%) among the students to transform society's negative perceptions of this profession, representing valuable social capital among the younger generation.

The significance of this research encompasses both theoretical and practical contributions. The findings are expected to provide an empirical overview of student interest in the librarianship profession, contribute to enriching the existing body of knowledge, and serve as a source of motivation and reference for readers and relevant stakeholders in advancing future librarian career development.

This study aims to analyze and describe the interest in pursuing the librarianship profession among tenth-grade female students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. Specifically, the research focuses on mapping the level of career interest and identifying both intrinsic and extrinsic driving and inhibiting factors that influence students' interest in the librarianship profession.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. This design was selected because it aims to analyze and describe in depth the interest in pursuing the librarianship profession among tenth-grade female students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta during the 2024/2025 academic year. A descriptive qualitative approach is highly appropriate for holistically understanding social and psychological phenomena from

the perspectives of the research subjects at the study site Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta conducted from November 2024 to February 2025.

2.2 Participant

The subjects of this study consisted of 17 informants (respondents) selected from tenth-grade female students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. The determination of this sample size was grounded in the characteristics of qualitative research, which prioritizes depth and comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon rather than broad statistical representation (Arianto & Handayani, 2024). A total of 17 informants was deemed sufficient to reach the point of data saturation, a condition in which no new information emerges. Subjects were recruited using a non-probability sampling technique with a purposive sampling approach, which involves selecting participants who are most relevant to the research topic and possess knowledge or experience related to higher education pathways and future career opportunities, such as having attended workshops and seminars on further studies.

2.3 Instruments and Data Collection

Data collection in this study was carried out through several systematic stages and instruments, comprising: (1) designing and developing a questionnaire using Google Forms; (2) distributing the questionnaire to tenth-grade female students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta for the 2024/2025 academic year; and (3) reviewing and analyzing the responses obtained from the distributed questionnaire.

Furthermore, to ensure data credibility, *member checking* was conducted by involving the research subjects to verify the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations of the data they provided. The researcher also maintained an *audit trail* by documenting all research procedures in detail including field notes, transcripts, and analytical processes so that external parties, such as academic research advisors, could review and audit the study to achieve high validity and reliability (Afiyanti, 2008).

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis in this descriptive qualitative study was conducted interactively and continuously until completion, reaching data saturation. The analytical process began with reducing the collected questionnaire data, displaying the data in systematic descriptive narratives, and drawing conclusions or verification. The entire analytical sequence was directed toward answering the research questions regarding the profile of students' career interest and the factors influencing their attitudes toward the librarianship profession, while consistently upholding data trustworthiness established through *member checking* and the *audit trail*.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The overall findings indicate that most female students remain undecided about whether to pursue a career as a librarian after graduation. Below is the tabulation of the percentage of respondent answers from the distributed questionnaire.

Table 1. Tabulation of respondent response percentages

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Total
1.	The librarianship profession is financially and otherwise promising.	6 (35.3%)	11 (64.7%)	100% (17)
2.	I want to change public perceptions regarding the librarianship profession.	15 (88.2%)	2 (11.8%)	100% (17)
3.	I have a high level of enthusiasm for working as a librarian.	4 (23.5%)	13 (76.4%)	100% (17)
4.	I enjoy attending discussion forums or seminars about the librarianship profession.	5 (29.4%)	12 (70.5%)	100% (17)
5.	I enjoy seeking information about the librarianship profession to stay informed about career opportunities and professional developments.	5 (29.4%)	12 (70.6%)	100% (17)
6.	I reach out to librarians to obtain information.	7 (41.2%)	10 (58.8%)	100% (17)
7.	The people around me do not discourage my desire to work as a librarian.	11 (64.7%)	6 (35.5%)	100% (17)

8.	The people around me provide support when they learn of my interest in becoming a librarian after graduation.	8 (47.1%)	9 (53%)	100% (17)
9.	I could easily adapt if I were to work as a librarian.	8 (47.1%)	9 (53%)	100% (17)
10.	Working as a librarian allows me to be easily recognized by the community.	12 (70.6%)	5 (29.4%)	100% (17)

Based on the data in Table 1, the survey results indicate that the interest of tenth-grade female students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta in becoming librarians is generally low, as reflected in their minimal personal enthusiasm (23.5%), lack of interest in attending related discussion forums or seminars (29.4%), and low initiative in seeking information about library careers (29.4%). This low intrinsic interest also aligns with the perception of the majority of respondents (64.7%), who view the librarianship profession as financially unpromising. Nevertheless, notable findings reveal strong social capital and a transformative drive among the students, with 88.2% expressing a desire to change negative public perceptions of the librarianship profession and 70.6% believing that the profession enables individuals to become well known within the community. Furthermore, external factors appear relatively conducive, as the majority of their immediate social circles do not discourage this career path (64.7%), and a considerable proportion of students feel reasonably capable of approaching librarians (41.2%) and adapting should they pursue the profession in the future (47.1%). Thus, this pattern of indecision actually harbors substantial youthful idealism that can be optimized through targeted career guidance programs.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 Analysis of Intrinsic Interest: Enthusiasm and Active Engagement

Interest serves as a fundamental foundation for an individual to perform an activity effectively, acting as an internal drive to take action. Interest is defined as a tendency to consistently pay attention to and recall certain activities (Hidi, 1990, as cited in MacKinnon, 2013). When individuals possess interest, they will engage in what appeals to them; conversely, without interest, they are unlikely to take initiative. The key findings reveal that: 1) A total of 76.4% of female students do not possess high enthusiasm for working as librarians (Question 3); 2) A total of 70.5% of female students do not enjoy attending discussion forums or seminars regarding the librarianship profession (Question 4); 3) A total of 70.6% of female students do not enjoy seeking information regarding developmental issues in the librarianship profession (Question 5).

These empirical findings point to a significant and concerning trend regarding low student interest in the librarianship profession. Grounded in the theoretical framework that interest is a vital foundation for action and operates as an internal drive (76.4%), the data indicate a serious disconnect between the librarianship profession and students' intrinsic motivation, which potentially hinders future workforce regeneration and professional development. Intrinsic interest, as defined by Sardiman (2001), refers to motives that become active without requiring external stimulation because they stem from a pure internal drive within the individual. In this context, pure internal drives such as a passion for information, literacy, or community service should serve as the primary catalyst for choosing the librarianship profession.

Defining interest as "a tendency to consistently pay attention to and recall certain activities" positioning interest as a driver of attention and engagement (Hidi, 1990, as cited in MacKinnon, 2013) carries clear behavioral implications. When interest is low, it manifests as minimal selective attention toward issues concerning the profession. The key findings from Questions 4 and 5 showing high percentages of students who dislike attending discussion forums or seminars (70.5%) and dislike seeking information (70.6%) empirically demonstrate that the cognitive and affective filters normally activated by interest have failed to function. Students proactively avoid stimulation and knowledge related to the profession, indicating avoidance behavior rather than active engagement.

Extremely low intrinsic interest, as evidenced by students' lack of high enthusiasm (Question 3), aligns with the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT posits that intrinsic motivation emerges when an activity satisfies basic psychological needs, such as competence (feeling capable) and autonomy (feeling self-directed and responsible). When the librarianship profession is perceived as monotonous due to negative stereotypes, it fails to offer opportunities to fulfill the need for dynamic competence, preventing intrinsic drive from developing. The absence of this internal drive confirms that the librarianship profession currently lies outside the value internalization circle of most students.

This low intrinsic enthusiasm is further reinforced by the observation that such attitudes are likely rooted in deeply ingrained negative stereotypes, wherein librarians are viewed as boring and confined to working among stacks of books. In relation to this, Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997) notes that stereotypes act as determi-

nants of self-efficacy. When a profession is perceived as static and lacking challenge, students are unable to envision themselves as capable of achieving or innovating within it, resulting in low expectations of success and diminished interest. Consequently, concerns over professional regeneration consistent with the *Kompas* survey demonstrate that this lack of interest creates an image crisis for the profession. Modern librarians, who are required to serve as information managers, technology facilitators, and media literacy educators, stand in sharp contrast to this outdated, passive image. The failure to convey this modern identity to students leads to the devaluation of the profession and minimal interest in pursuing a career in the field.

These empirical findings consistently demonstrate that students' intrinsic interest in the librarianship profession is at a critically low level. This issue is not merely a matter of personal preference, but rather a reflection of the profession's failure to establish itself as an attractive, challenging, and relevant career choice in the eyes of the younger generation. Efforts to enhance the profession's public image by highlighting the dynamic and technological dimensions of modern librarianship represent a crucial step toward rekindling the internal drive (intrinsic interest) that is currently nearly absent among the majority of respondents.

3.2.2 Analysis of Extrinsic Interest: Financial Rewards and Social Support

Extrinsic interest refers to motives that become active and functional due to external stimulation (Sardiman, 2001). In the context of career selection, these external stimuli include financial rewards, social status, and environmental support (Nirmala & Elvira, 2024). The key findings regarding financial rewards and social status reveal that: 1) A total of 64.7% of female students disagree that the librarianship profession is financially and otherwise promising (Question 1); 2) A total of 70.6% of female students agree that working as a librarian allows them to be easily recognized by the community (Question 10).

The finding that the majority of students doubt the financial prospects of the librarianship profession (64.7%) serves as a strong validation of the issue outlined in the background of this study namely, that the profession is perceived as financially unpromising. Internal driving factors (physical and psychological needs) alongside social motive factors (the need for recognition) form the underlying basis for the emergence of an individual's interest. When physical or material needs (financial stability) are perceived as unaccommodated, negative extrinsic motives dominate and act as the primary barrier to extrinsic interest.

This finding can be analyzed through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). Physiological and safety needs which encompass financial and job security occupy the foundational tiers of the pyramid. When these basic financial needs are perceived as unmet or inadequate, individuals focus primarily on fulfilling them and tend to overlook career choices deemed incapable of providing such security. In the students' perception, the librarianship profession fails to satisfy these foundational financial needs, thereby generating dominant negative extrinsic motives that impede the development of positive extrinsic interest, regardless of the profession's potential to fulfill higher-level psychological needs.

A paradox emerges in Question 10, where students feel that this profession actually makes them easily recognized by the community (70.6% Agree). This can be interpreted to mean that, in the eyes of the students, the librarianship profession still holds a certain degree of visibility or distinction within the Muhammadiyah community, despite doubts regarding its material rewards. The need to be known or gain recognition can be linked to social motive factors. This phenomenon is explained through the lens of esteem needs in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy, as well as the concept of social motives proposed by Crow and Crow (1960). Students may view this profession as an essential functional role within the madrasah environment, even if it does not yield substantial financial wealth. Meanwhile, the key findings regarding social support show that: 1) A total of 53% of female students stated that the people around them do not provide support when they express interest in becoming a librarian after graduation (Question 8); 2) A total of 64.7% of female students stated that the people around them do not discourage their desire (Question 7).

These patterns highlight two dynamics: first, recognition and visibility, wherein students perceive the librarianship profession as a functional role carrying distinct visibility within their community (such as within the madrasah or Muhammadiyah charitable enterprises), thereby accommodating their need to be recognized (status); and second, a disconnect between status and reward. Although visibility exists, low financial expectations suggest that this status is merely functional valued for its utility without being accompanied by adequate material compensation. Individuals generally gravitate toward professions that offer a combination of both high status and substantial financial rewards. When basic material needs (income) remain unfulfilled, the need for recognition alone is rarely strong enough to drive overall career choice.

Furthermore, the percentage distribution above demonstrates a passive-neutral attitude from the students' social environment. Their social circles tend not to obstruct their aspirations (tolerant), yet they also fail to offer active encouragement (apathetic). According to Social Learning Theory, as cited by Bandura (1972), interest develops through identification, wherein individuals seek attention from admired figures (such as parents and teachers) and strive to emulate them. The lack of active support from their surrounding environment can inhibit this role-modeling process and hinder the growth of interest in new career roles, ultimately fostering hesitation and indecision.

3.2.3 Interest Gap Analysis

The findings of this study reveal three primary gaps that explain the female students' indecision in choosing the librarianship profession: (a) the gap between idealism and financial reality, (b) the gap between active and passive behavior, and (c) the gap in adaptation difficulties.

a) The Gap Between Idealism and Financial Reality

There is a notable gap between idealism and financial reality, wherein: (1) students possess high idealism to transform public perceptions (88.2% Agree); (2) however, this idealism conflicts with the reality of financial prospects (64.7% Disagree); and (3) this discrepancy creates a dilemma in career selection: whether to choose a profession aligned with social values (changing public perceptions) or one that satisfies material needs (financial security). The empirical finding that students demonstrate strong idealism to reshape societal perceptions of the librarianship profession (88.2% agree), yet face the contrasting perception of unpromising financial prospects (64.7% disagree), reflects a fundamental dilemma in the career decision-making process. This gap generates tension between intrinsic motivation (social values and meaningful work) and extrinsic motivation (material and financial needs).

John Holland's theory emphasizes that career choice is an expression of an individual's personality and that maximum job satisfaction is achieved when the work environment aligns with one's personality type (Holland, 1997, as cited in Wijk & Fourie (2017). The librarianship profession generally falls under the *social* type, characterized by an inclination toward helping, teaching, and serving others, as well as an orientation toward social and humanitarian values. Here, a clear gap emerges between students' idealism and financial reality. The high percentage (88.2%) agreeing to change public perceptions aligns with this social personality type and reflects strong intrinsic values such as altruism, service, and social impact. Conversely, the disagreement (64.7%) regarding financial prospects indicates that despite personality congruence (social alignment), the anticipated work environment fails to fulfill extrinsic needs (financial compensation). This ultimately leads to a career dilemma: students find themselves drawn to an environment that fits their social values yet falls short of meeting their financial needs, potentially causing dissatisfaction even when the work is socially meaningful.

Meanwhile, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) distinguishes between two primary types of motivation: (1) *intrinsic motivation*, which involves engaging in an activity because it is inherently interesting and satisfying (e.g., serving the community and making an impact, consistent with students' idealism); and (2) *extrinsic motivation*, which involves performing an activity to attain a separable outcome (e.g., salary, status, or rewards, tied to financial reality). The identified gap demonstrates a direct conflict between sustaining strong intrinsic motivation (social idealism) and confronting low extrinsic motivation (unattractive financial prospects). In the long term, career choices that overlook foundational extrinsic needs such as financial stability can erode intrinsic motivation and lead to burnout or job dissatisfaction, regardless of the profession's high social value.

This value conflict frequently arises during students' career transitions and is characteristic of the shift from formal education to the workforce, where individuals are compelled to test the idealism formed in school against labor market realities (Super, 1957). For aspiring librarians, the idealism of transforming the image and function of libraries into vibrant social hubs (high social value) clashes with the reality that socially valuable occupations are often undervalued economically (low pay). This conflict can result in: (1) *career indecision*, marked by prolonged hesitation due to the fear of sacrificing either social values or financial security; and (2) *compromise choices*, where students either opt for non-librarianship careers that offer financial stability or choose librarianship hoping that idealism will compensate for financial shortfalls a path that risks future job dissatisfaction. Consequently, this dynamic reinforces occupational stigma against librarians. Social stigmas surrounding the librarianship profession (e.g., being perceived as monotonous, outdated, or insignificant) are compounded by poor financial realities, creating a negative cycle:

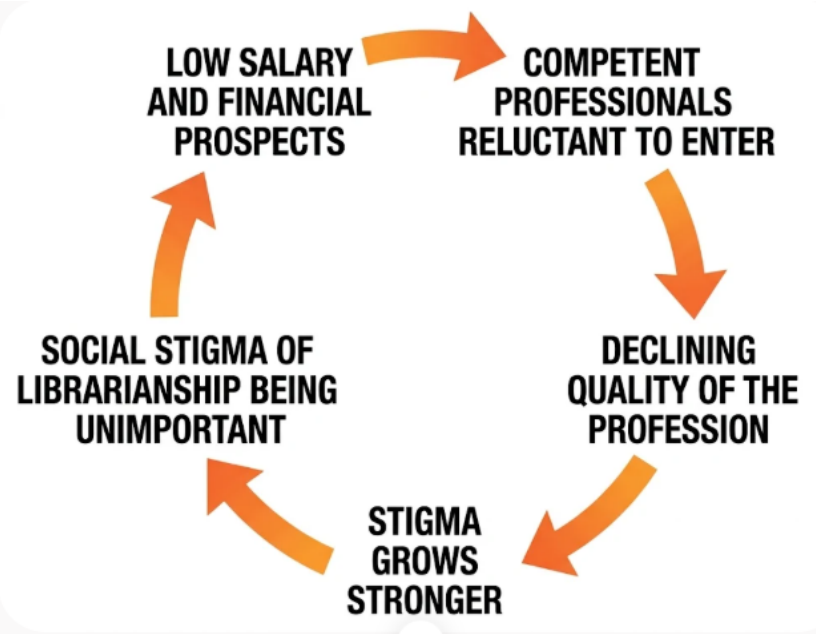


Figure 1. Negative cycle of the librarianship profession.

The female students' idealism (88.2% wishing to change public perceptions) represents an effort to break this negative cycle by focusing on the *meaningful work* dimension of the profession. However, the majority of students recognize that attempting to "change perceptions" entails significant financial sacrifices, which are unrealistic within the context of modern living needs. Therefore, a balance of motivation is required to bridge this gap. The academic solution proposed to address this dilemma does not lie in sacrificing one side for the other, but rather in finding a middle ground (resolving the *passion vs. paycheck* dilemma), specifically through:

a) For female students: Developing career intelligence that enables them to seek librarianship positions in sectors offering better compensation (such as special librarians in corporations or research institutions) or integrating librarianship idealism with complementary skill sets (such as becoming content creators or EdTech specialists grounded in library science) to enhance their market value.
b) For professional associations and institutions: Conducting stronger advocacy directed toward the government and relevant stakeholders to improve the financial compensation of the librarianship profession in alignment with its high social value. Promotional efforts for the profession must emphasize not only its *social value* but also its competitive *market value*.

Ultimately, the gap between idealism and financial reality is a manifestation of the conflict between intrinsic values (the need for meaning and social impact) and extrinsic values (the need for security and material compensation) in career selection. Grounded in Holland's Theory of Career Choice and work value theory, aspiring female librarians are drawn to the core essence of the profession (the *social* type) yet remain constrained by extrinsic realities. Overcoming this indecision requires targeted interventions focused on: (1) structurally enhancing the financial prospects of librarians, and (2) cultivating individual career strategies that empower students to find an intersection between social meaning and material security.

b) The Gap Between Active and Passive Behavior

The findings indicating that female students do not actively seek information (70.6% Dislike) and lack enthusiasm (76.4% Unenthusiastic), despite demonstrating positive passive behavior (not being discouraged by their environment, 64.7% Agree), reveal a dissonance between *declarative interest* (expressed verbally) and *behavioral interest* (manifested in concrete action). This gap demonstrates that existing interest is not yet strong enough to trigger *career exploration behavior*, which represents a crucial milestone in career maturity. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent et al., 1994) explains the relationship between interest and behavior. This theory posits that career choice results from the interplay among four core variables: (1) *self-efficacy*, an individual's belief in their capability to successfully perform specific tasks; (2) *outcome expectations*, beliefs regarding the anticipated consequences of performing a given behavior (e.g., "If I actively seek information about librarianship, I will secure a good

job"); (3) *interests*, which develop from successful experiences and positive outcome expectations, driving career goal-setting; and (4) *choice behavior*, the concrete actions taken to achieve those career goals.

While initial interest in the librarianship profession may have formed, low financial outcome expectations (stemming from the gap between idealism and financial reality) can significantly diminish students' self-efficacy in engaging in exploratory behaviors. After all, why exert effort to seek information (active exploration) when confidence in a positive outcome (a financially rewarding career) remains low? The lack of active information-seeking and enthusiasm (70.6% and 76.4%, respectively) reflects a failure to transition from passive interest to active career exploration goals. This occurs because the self-efficacy and outcome expectation components are insufficiently robust to catalyze tangible action (Lent et al., 1994).

Ultimately, the disconnect between passive interest and the absence of active exploration among aspiring librarians highlights underlying issues in motivational dynamics and psychological readiness, manifesting in two primary areas:

a) Motivational and self-efficacy barriers: Interest will not translate into exploratory behavior without the conviction (self-efficacy) that exploratory actions will yield desirable results (outcome expectations), particularly in the face of perceived low financial prospects. To stimulate active engagement, interventions are needed to strengthen exploration-specific self-efficacy such as providing hands-on experiences (e.g., brief, structured *job shadowing*) that make the benefits of career exploration tangible.
b) The need for targeted career interventions: The positive passive response ("not discouraged by the environment") indicates that while the social environment does not erect barriers, it also fails to provide strong encouragement. Career guidance must therefore go beyond merely "introducing" the profession; it must emphasize developing active exploration skills and cultivating realistic, adaptive outcome expectations.

Overall, these findings underscore that interest alone is insufficient; it must be reinforced by self-belief and positive outcome expectations to empower individuals to engage in the active exploratory behaviors necessary for making mature, well-informed career decisions.

c) The Gap in Adaptation Difficulties

The finding that 53% of female students feel they could not easily adapt to working as librarians (Question 9) linked to their limited understanding of modern professional competencies (analytical, technological, and communication skills) resulting from a lack of active exploration (not participating in discussions or seeking information) represents a classic manifestation of the correlation between *self-efficacy* and *informational deficit* in career decision-making. This lack of confidence in their ability to adapt stems directly from an unfamiliarity with modern librarianship skills, such as data analytics, information technology, and public communication. When students do not engage in discussion forums or actively seek career information (Questions 4 and 5), their understanding of modern librarians' duties and competencies (managing, organizing, providing information services, and educating users) remains superficial, leading to low confidence in their adaptability.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent et al., 1994) positions *self-efficacy* an individual's belief in their capability to successfully perform a specific behavior or task as a primary predictor of career interests, goals, and behaviors. Within this context, three key dynamics emerge:

a) Lack of mastery experiences: Students who do not actively seek information, engage in discussions, or participate in career exploration (as highlighted in the previous gap) lack the adequate learning experiences necessary to build self-efficacy.
b) Low self-efficacy regarding modern skills: A superficial grasp of modern librarianship duties (analytical, technological, and communication tasks) translates into low task-specific Career Self-Efficacy (CSE). Students do not believe they are capable of managing digital repositories or conducting user education because they have never tested or observed these competencies in action.
c) Impact of low self-efficacy on adaptation: Self-efficacy is a prerequisite for effective Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE) and the resilience to overcome occupational challenges. A lack of confidence in adapting (53% reporting inability to adapt) directly reflects low CSE. Individuals with low CSE tend to avoid tasks perceived as difficult and exhibit lower perseverance when confronting professional challenges.

Furthermore, Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2013) introduces the concept of *career adaptability*, defined as an individual's readiness and psychosocial resources for coping with current and anticipated vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas. Career adaptability comprises four dimensions (the 4Cs): (1) *Concern* (focusing on the future and career planning), (2) *Control* (feeling personal agency over one's career), (3) *Curiosity* (actively exploring oneself and the surrounding environment), and (4) *Confidence* (self-assurance

in achieving career goals). The findings indicate that among the 53% of students experiencing adaptation doubts, three mechanisms are at play:

a) Deficit in curiosity: The absence of active exploration (failing to seek information) signals a breakdown in the *curiosity* dimension. Individuals who lack curiosity tend to hold inaccurate or outdated perceptions of actual job demands.
b) Erosion of confidence: The data showing students' perceived inability to adapt serve as a direct indicator of low *confidence*, which correlates strongly with self-efficacy. When students are unaware of what modern librarianship entails, they cannot feel confident in their ability to adapt to its requirements.
c) Causal relationship: Within the career adaptability model, *curiosity* (enacted through exploration) generates the information needed to build *confidence*. Consequently, a lack of exploration (low curiosity) causally contributes to low self-assurance in adapting (low confidence).

This stigma and misconception regarding competencies are further exacerbated by persistent societal stereotypes that still frame librarians as "book keepers" rather than "information architects" (Kurniawati et al., 2025). This misconception creates a substantial knowledge gap, wherein students evaluate their adaptability against the traditional image of a librarian (passive cataloging), whereas real-world demands center on *information literacy*, *digital curation*, and *community engagement*. To address this issue, career guidance interventions must shift from merely providing passive information (which students do not actively seek) to facilitating *guided exploratory experiences* through two core strategies:

1. Vicarious learning: Students should be introduced to successful role models (modern librarians proficient in advanced technologies) to strengthen their CSE through *vicarious learning* (Bandura, 1997).
2. Performance accomplishment: Structured internships, *job shadowing*, or simulation projects that require students to perform analytical and technological tasks (e.g., designing databases or managing library social media) can foster *performance accomplishment* the strongest source of self-efficacy. By structuring experiences that explicitly demonstrate their capacity to master modern librarianship skills, students' CSE will grow, thereby strengthening their *confidence* to adapt to future career demands.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study offer several important theoretical and practical implications regarding female students' low interest in the librarianship profession:

a) Implications for Career Guidance Programs: The high level of student hesitation (76.4% lacking enthusiasm) underscores the need for more targeted career guidance programs to introduce the modern and dynamic facets of the librarianship profession, thereby dismantling persistent negative stereotypes.
b) Leveraging Student Idealism: The strong idealism demonstrated by 88.2% of female students to reshape public perceptions represents substantial social capital. Madrasahs can harness this potential to motivate students by engaging them in roles such as literacy ambassadors or junior librarians.
c) Reframing Financial Perceptions: Given that 64.7% of students doubt the financial prospects of this profession, concerted efforts are needed to showcase real-world career opportunities for librarians in corporate sectors or as information specialists, where compensation standards are significantly more competitive.
d) Fostering Social Environmental Support: The passive-neutral attitude of the surrounding social environment which neither discourages nor actively supports this career path highlights the importance of educating parents and teachers on the vital role of librarians in the information age so they can offer active encouragement to students.

4.2 Research Contributions

This study makes significant contributions to the fields of library science and guidance and counseling, including:

a) Empirical Contribution: Providing up-to-date empirical evidence on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing career interest in librarianship among a specific population female students in a secondary-level madrasah environment where prior data have remained largely generalized.
b) Population Contribution: Addressing an existing population gap by focusing specifically on female students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, who possess a distinct cultural and educational background.

c) Advancement of Interest Theory: Enriching the scholarly literature on *Interest Gap Analysis*, particularly concerning the tension between the idealism of transforming social perceptions and the economic realities that shape adolescents' career decision-making.
d) Institutional Policy Reference: Serving as an empirical database for madrasahs to design library development programs and future librarian recruitment strategies that are more appealing to the younger generation.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

Although this study provides an in-depth overview of female students' career interests, several limitations should be acknowledged:

a) Limited Number of Informants: This study involved only 17 female students as informants. While this sample size achieved data saturation for a qualitative inquiry, it cannot be used for broader statistical generalization across all madrasah students nationwide.
b) Data Collection Method: Primary data were collected via an online questionnaire (Google Forms), which may limit the depth of emotional expression and nuanced reasoning compared to face-to-face interviews.
c) Population Focus: The study was restricted to tenth-grade female students at a single educational institution, Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. Consequently, findings may exhibit different dynamics if examined in public high schools or non-religious educational settings.
d) Study Timeframe: Data collection took place over a relatively short period (November 2024 to February 2025). Students' career perspectives may still be tentative given that they are in the early stages of secondary education (tenth grade).

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research

This study establishes a foundational understanding of female students' low interest in the librarianship profession driven by perception gaps and financial considerations. To deepen scholarly inquiry in this area, future researchers are recommended to:

a) Conduct Comparative Studies Across Educational Institutions: Future studies could compare interest in the librarianship profession between female students at faith-based madrasahs and students at public senior high schools (SMA) to examine whether cultural factors and school curricula influence occupational perceptions.
b) Employ a Mixed-Methods Approach: Utilizing a mixed-methods research design is recommended so that qualitative insights regarding student idealism can be quantitatively verified across a larger, more representative population.
c) Develop Experimental or Intervention Studies: Given the low levels of career exploration behavior, future researchers could test the effectiveness of targeted interventions such as *job shadowing* programs or modern librarianship seminars in enhancing students' self-efficacy and career interest.
d) Analyze the Impact of Role Models: In-depth investigations are needed to examine how the presence of inspiring, tech-savvy librarians can influence intrinsic motivation and dismantle negative stereotypes among adolescents.
e) Conduct Longitudinal Studies Across Transition Phases: Tracking the evolution of student interest from tenth grade through twelfth grade and into higher education is recommended to pinpoint when shifts from idealism toward labor market realities significantly occur.
f) Explore Specialized Librarianship Sectors: Future research could focus on students' perceptions of librarianship roles in non-traditional sectors—such as corporate librarians, data curators, or research assistants—which may offer more attractive financial prospects.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion presented above, it can be concluded that the overall interest in pursuing the librarianship profession among tenth-grade female students at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta for the 2024/2025 academic year falls into the low-interest or undecided category. This is evidenced by the majority of students lacking a high level of enthusiasm (76.4% Disagree). The dominant inhibiting factors comprise: (1) Financial factors: The primary concern is that the librarianship profession is not financially promising (64.7% Disagree), which aligns with broader societal views regarding the profession's limited financial prospects; (2) Active behavioral factors: Low interest is manifested through minimal initiative in seeking career information (70.6% Dislike) and a lack of interaction with librarians (58.8% Do Not Reach Out); and (3) Adaptation factors:

Students feel they could not easily adapt to the librarianship profession (53% Disagree), indicating an informational gap concerning the competencies and roles of modern librarians. Nevertheless, a notable potential for development lies in the fact that, despite low overall interest, students possess strong idealism to transform public perceptions of the librarianship profession (88.2% Agree). This represents valuable social capital and motivational potential that can be harnessed through targeted career guidance programs.

Acknowledgments

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Leadership Board of Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta for providing continuous support throughout the research process, from the initial stages to the completion of this research report.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Geubrina Putri Najiha: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft. Naura Rachmayanti: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Writing - Review & Editing.

Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

The authors utilized OpenAI during the [specify stage, e.g., language editing and translation] stage to support the preparation of this study. The authors have thoroughly verified all outputs generated by the tool and take full responsibility for the authenticity of the data, methodology, and interpretation of the findings in this manuscript. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the SAJGTIE GenAI Tool Usage Policy, with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding Statement

This research was self-funded by the authors and received no specific grant or financial support from any funding agency.

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