

Career Fantasies of the Alpha Generation: The Influence of Digital Technology and Parental Guidance in Shaping Future Career Aspirations

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Abstrack

Every individual has future career aspirations but often faces challenges in realising them. Early career awareness and planning through career exploration is an important factor in their achievement. In elementary school-aged children, this exploration is still at the fantasy stage, where they are interested in professions that they often see. This study examines the career fantasies of Generation Alpha and the factors that influence them. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, this study involved 100 students in grades 3-6 in a remote school in Lampung, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire related to professional interests, reasons for choosing a profession, and sources of information that influence career fantasies. The results showed that doctors, teachers, police, and soldiers were the most frequently chosen professions by students. Gender, family, school, and digital media influence career fantasies. The findings have implications for career education and guidance, supporting children's early career development.

Keywords: career fantasies, alpha generation, digital technology, career development

Abstrak

Setiap individu memiliki aspirasi karir masa depan, tetapi sering menghadapi tantangan dalam mewujudkannya. Kesadaran dan perencanaan karir sejak dini melalui eksplorasi karir merupakan faktor penting dalam pencapaiannya. Pada anak usia sekolah dasar, eksplorasi ini masih berada pada tahap fantasi, di mana mereka tertarik pada profesi yang sering mereka lihat. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi fantasi karir Generasi Alpha dan faktor-faktor yang memengaruhinya. Dengan pendekatan deskriptif kuantitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan 100 siswa kelas 3-6 di sekolah terpencil di Lampung yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terbuka terkait minat profesi, alasan memilih profesi, dan sumber informasi yang memengaruhi fantasi karir. Hasil menunjukkan profesi dokter, guru, polisi, dan tentara mendominasi pilihan siswa. Fantasi karir dipengaruhi oleh gender, keluarga, sekolah, dan media digital. Temuan ini berimplikasi pada pendidikan dan bimbingan karir untuk mendukung perkembangan karir anak sejak dini.

Kata Kunci: fantasi karir; generasi alfa; teknologi digital; pengembangan karier

Article info

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INTRODUCTION

Every individual must have high aspirations regarding their future career. A career is an individual's achievement in a field of work, which encompasses job titles, high salaries, and roles that meet expectations (Prescod et al., 2019). However, it is not uncommon for individuals to still have difficulty in achieving their hopes, especially hopes in the field of career. In order to achieve the desired career, individuals need various things, especially in terms of readiness and awareness of the importance of career planning through the career exploration stage (Astuti et al., 2022). Career exploration is an activity that can be done by individuals to help increase knowledge and awareness in themselves in developing careers (Purwanta, 2012). To facilitate the initiation of exploration and career planning activities from the most basic level of education, namely at the Elementary School (SD) level.

The career development phase for individuals at the Elementary School (SD) level is in the fantasy phase. Fantasy is a structured image in an individual, such as a concept formed by thoughts and feelings about something they have seen, which is then depicted in their imagination (Glynos, 2021). Ginzberg et al (Patton & McMahon, 2014) said that in the career development of students at the elementary school level, they will pay more attention to the work done by adults that they often see, so that the type of work or career expected in this fantasy phase is also not realistic. Ginzberg et al (Sharf, 2013) stated that every individual is in the fantasy phase from birth to the age of 9 years, during which they engage in play with the work they imagine, and have no connection to the real world of work. The real field of work or career requires thorough preparation to achieve it. In the 21st century, there have been significant life changes. The rapid spread of information marks a significant change and can be accessed even in remote areas due to the ever-evolving technology (Sudrajat, 2017). So that it can have a big impact on future career planning.

There are two generations born in the 21st century, namely Generation Z and Generation Alpha. Generation Z is the term for individuals born between 1995 and 2010 (McCrindle, 2014). Generation Z has experienced two different phases as a result of technological advances. Meanwhile, Generation Alpha was born after 2010 and continues to grow, namely in the digital era, where screens serve as a medium for accessing various content that is kinesthetic, visual, interactive, internet-connected, and portable or easily carried (McCrindle, 2018). Generation Alpha is often referred to as the smartest generation compared to previous generations, as this generation is the most familiar with technology (Kuswanto et al., 2022). The characteristics of these two generations include closeness and skill in using technology that can transform all aspects of life (Putri et al., 2022). However, Generation Alpha is the one that has the greatest possibility of becoming a critical generation, growing up in an environment heavily influenced by digital technology.

Generation Alpha is often considered the most connected, informed, and innovative generation compared to previous generations (McCrindle, 2018; McCrindle & Fell, 2020; Ziatdinov & Cilliers, 2021). With easy access to information and various learning resources, Generation Alpha has the opportunity to develop various career fantasies that may differ from those of previous generations. However, the understanding of how Generation Alpha views their future careers is still minimal. Many previous studies have focused more on Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z, resulting in a lack of data on the career aspirations and fantasies of Generation Alpha. This lack of understanding can result in the inaccurate development of education programs and career



guidance that fail in meet their needs and expectations. Therefore, it is essential to conduct in-depth research on Generation Alpha's career aspirations to gain a deeper understanding of how to support their career development effectively.

Several studies have shown that technology plays a major role in shaping the career aspirations of the younger generation. For example, research conducted by Dolot (2018) indicates that Generation Z is the most critical element because the latest technology is a natural environment for them. Meanwhile, research conducted by Twenge (2017) states that Generation Z is more likely to choose a flexible and technology-oriented career. However, there is still very little research that examines Generation Alpha explicitly and how technology influences their career fantasies. Although there have been many studies examining the influence of technology on the career aspirations of the younger generation, there are still many significant gaps in the literature regarding Generation Alpha. Most existing research focuses solely on the older generation, failing to reflect the reality and needs of Generation Alpha. In addition, most studies are still descriptive and lack depth in exploring how technology shapes the career fantasies of this generation.

This research is important to conduct because it can provide significant contributions in the field of education and career guidance, in particular. By understanding the career fantasies of the Alpha generation, educators, counsellors, and policymakers can design more appropriate and effective programs to support their career development. In addition, this research can also help parents and communities understand their children's career aspirations and how they can support the achievement of these goals. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand career fantasies, as well as the most influential influences on the career fantasies of the Alpha generation. This study will examine the career fantasies of the Alpha generation, identify the most influential people for the Alpha generation to fantasise about in their careers, and investigate how digital technology influences the Alpha generation's views on future careers. Thus, this study is expected to provide comprehensive insights into the career fantasies of the Alpha generation and provide relevant recommendations for educators, counsellors, and policymakers in developing effective career guidance programs. Thus, this study not only contributes to the theoretical understanding of the Alpha generation's career fantasies but also has important practical implications in supporting their future career development through the planning of career guidance programs integrated with digital technology and collaboration with parents and professionals.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive quantitative approach. This approach was chosen because it allows for the collection and analysis of data in numerical form, thereby providing an objective picture of the extent of career fantasies among Alpha generation students in the 21st century (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). This method also facilitates the identification of patterns and trends that emerge in the career fantasies of Alpha generation students, based on the factors that influence them. The population in this study was elementary school students in one of the remote schools in Lampung Province, with a total of 184 students. The purposive sampling technique was used to obtain a sample that could provide more in-depth information about the career fantasies of Alpha generation students and the factors that play a role in their formation (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). The selected sample consisted of students in 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, totalling 100 students. Grade 3 students were selected because at this age students



have begun to fantasise about their future career interests. Meanwhile, students in grades 4 to 6 were selected because they began to have more complex thoughts, so their career fantasies became more concrete and reflected more specific interests in certain professions.

The instrument used in this study was an open-ended questionnaire, designed to allow Alpha generation students to express their career fantasies (Valencia & Shodiq, 2024). The questionnaire covered three main aspects: interest in a particular occupation, reasons for choosing that occupation, and sources of information that influenced their career fantasies. The questionnaire was pilot-tested to ensure the clarity of questions and ease of understanding. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed by descriptive analysis. Students' qualitative answers were coded into certain categories. This coding process was carried out by labelling each category of answers with a number to facilitate the calculation of the number and percentage. After the data were coded, the results were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to identify the dominant patterns in the career fantasies of Alpha generation students. The data was then interpreted to understand the professions that Alpha generation students are most interested in and the factors that play a role in shaping their career fantasies (Bauer et al., 2021).

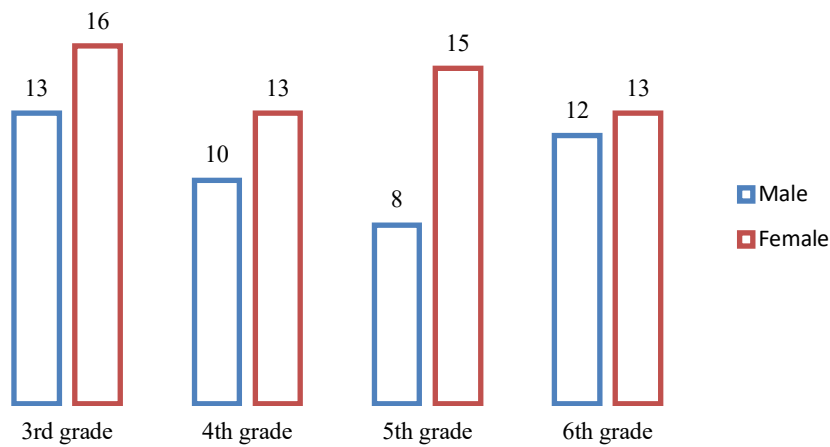
This research was conducted with ethical considerations in mind, including obtaining participant consent, maintaining data confidentiality, and respecting participants' right to decline answering specific questions or withdraw from the study without consequences. To ensure the accuracy of the research results, a pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted before the main research on a small group of Alpha Generation students to verify the clarity and content validity of the questions. Furthermore, data triangulation was conducted to compare the results from the questionnaire with brief interviews with teachers and parents, ensuring data consistency. Then, a reliability check is undertaken to ensure that the answer categories created have a high level of consistency. With this approach, the research is expected to provide an accurate picture of how the Alpha generation forms their career fantasies and the factors that influence them in today's digital era.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Fantasy is an image as if the world is one's own, a world filled with all the wonders, and a world that exists in one's own imagination (Karimova, 2023). In other words, fantasy is an ability possessed by every individual to be able to imagine everything in their dreams, especially fantasies in their future careers. This is what underlies the need to explore the career fantasies of elementary school students to guide and direct them to fantasies that can be realised. This study focuses on the career fantasies of the Alpha generation, identifying who is most influential in shaping their career aspirations, and how digital technology affects the Alpha generation's views on future careers. Based on the focus of the problem, which is the formulation of the problem and the objectives of this study, to answer it, the researcher has conducted research by giving a questionnaire to the research sample, namely students from grades 3 to 6 at the Elementary School (SD) level, with the following sample size.



Graph 1.
 Number of Samples



Career Fantasy of the Alpha Generation

The questionnaire contains open-ended questions to obtain results in the form of career fantasies owned by students at the elementary school level. The first question concerns the ideals they dream of and aspire to achieve in the future. The results are presented in Figure 1 below.

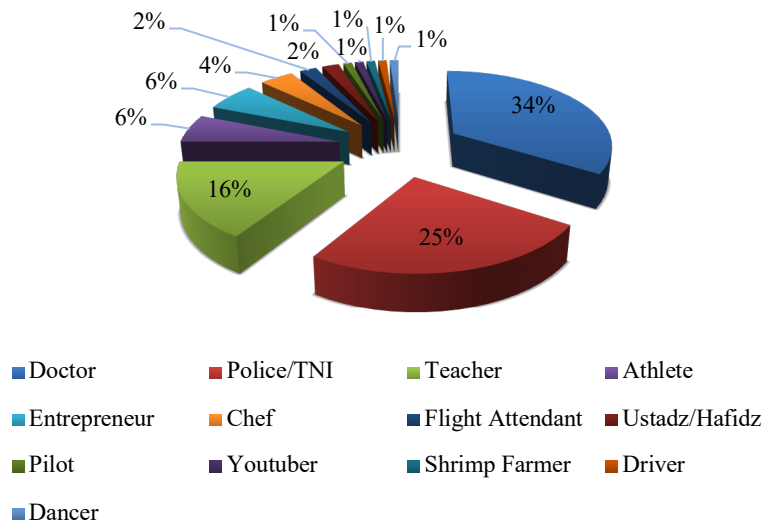
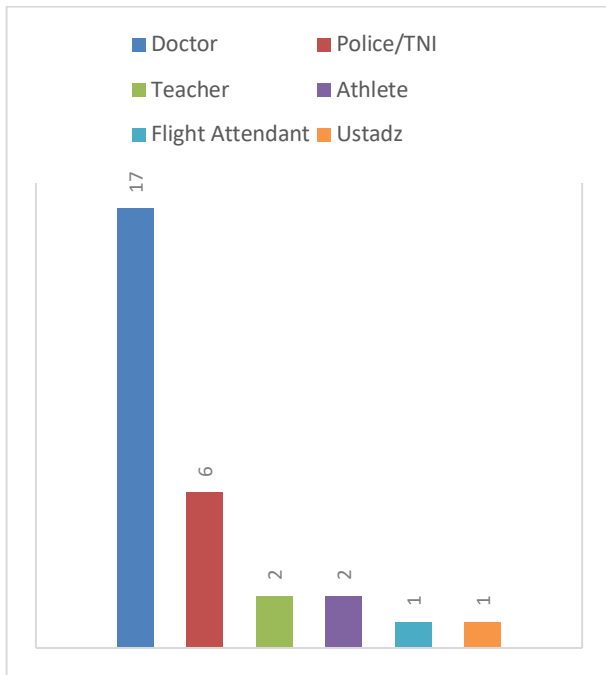


Figure 1. Career Fantasy/Ambition

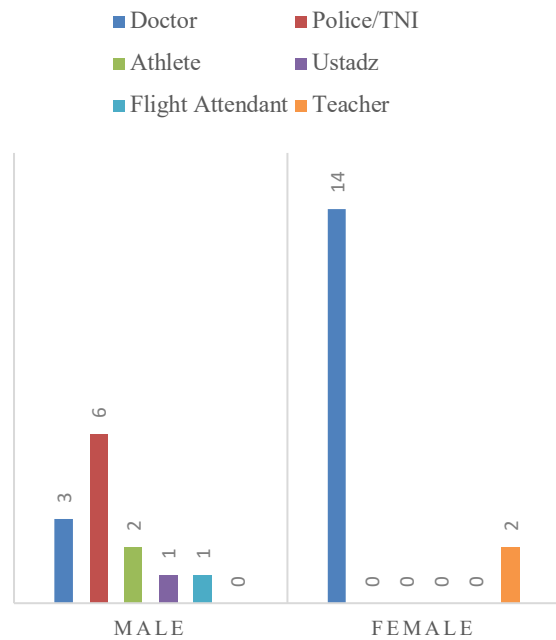
Graphs 2 to 10 below provide more specific results to better understand the career fantasies of elementary school students, categorised by grade level and gender.



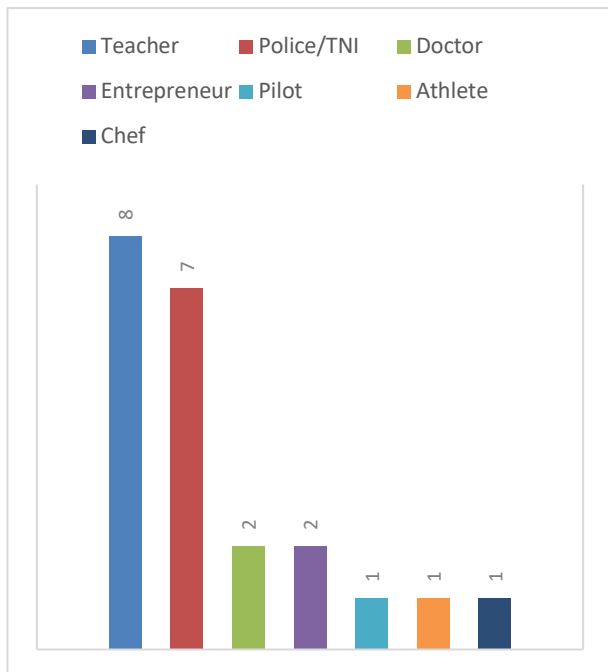
Graph 2.
 Career Fantasies/Ambition of Grade 3 Students



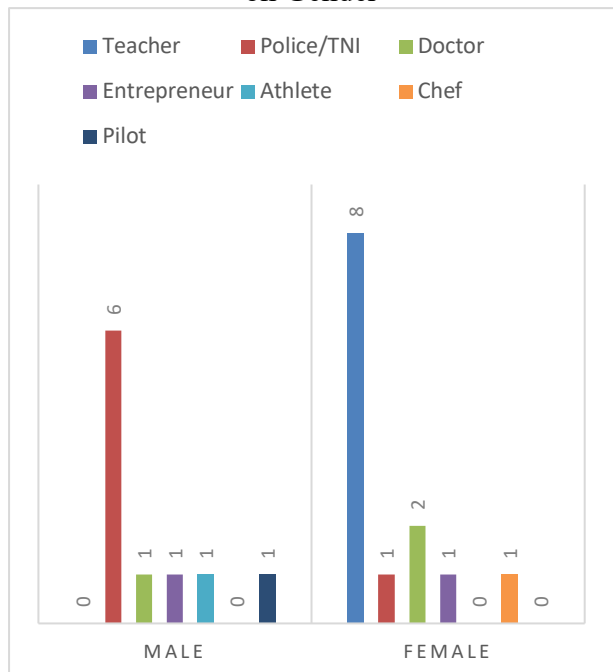
Graph 3.
 Differences in Grade 3 Career Fantasies Based on Gender



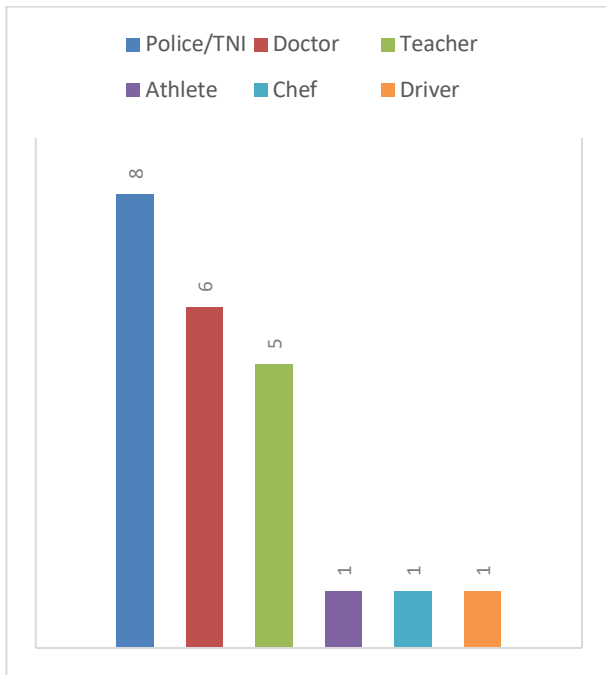
Graph 4.
 Career Fantasies/Ambition of Grade 4 Students



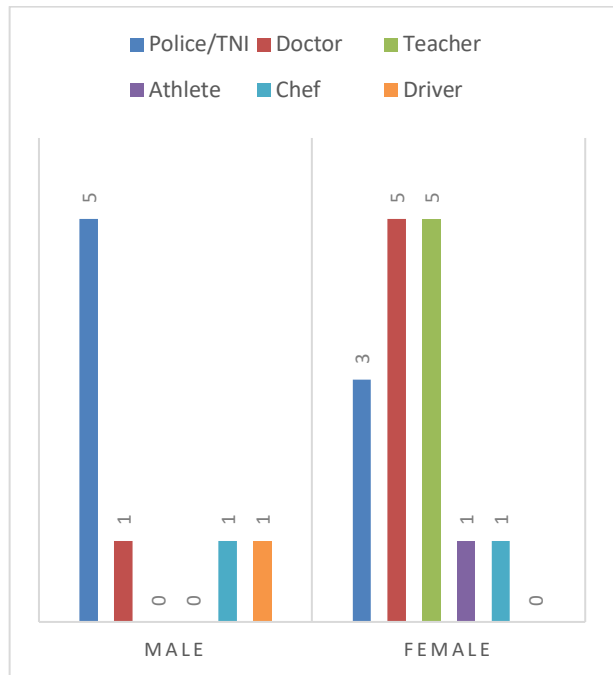
Graph 5.
 Differences in Grade 4 Career Fantasies Based on Gender



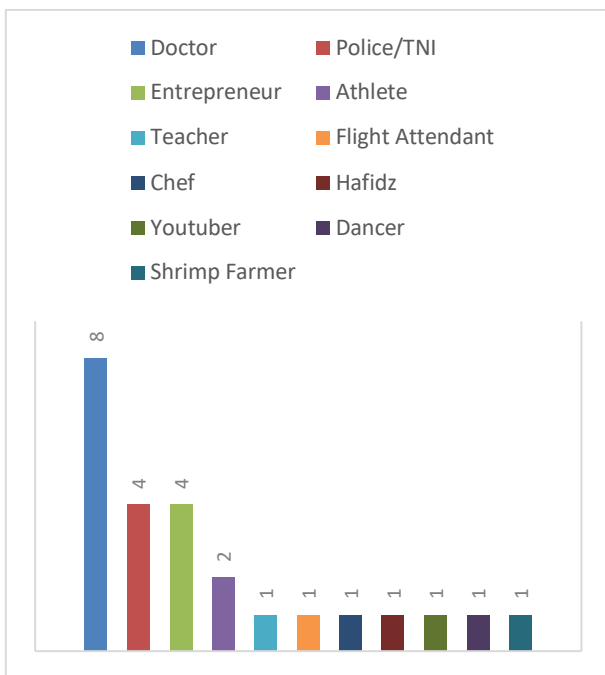
Graph 6.
 Career Fantasies/Ambition of Grade 5 Students



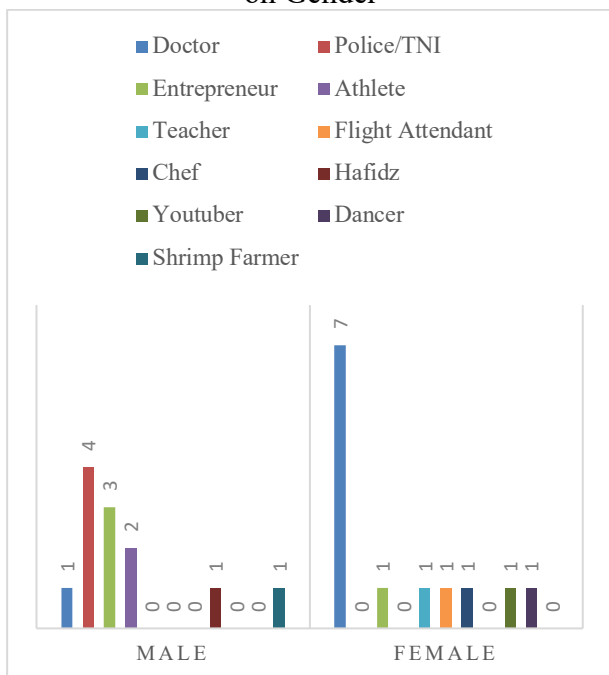
Graph 7.
 Differences in Grade 5 Career Fantasies Based on Gender



Graph 8.
 Career Fantasies/Ambition of Grade 6 Students



Graph 9.
 Differences in Grade 6 Career Fantasies Based on Gender



Graphs 2 to 9 show different career fantasy results in each class, and different results are also obtained in career fantasies based on gender differences. This suggests



that students at the elementary school level have their own fantasies, particularly in the career field. Professions such as doctor, teacher, policeman and soldier dominate their aspirations, indicating that they are still in the imagination-based career exploration stage (Super, 1990). The results also reveal significant differences in career fantasies by gender, as illustrated in Graphs 5, 7, 8 and 9.

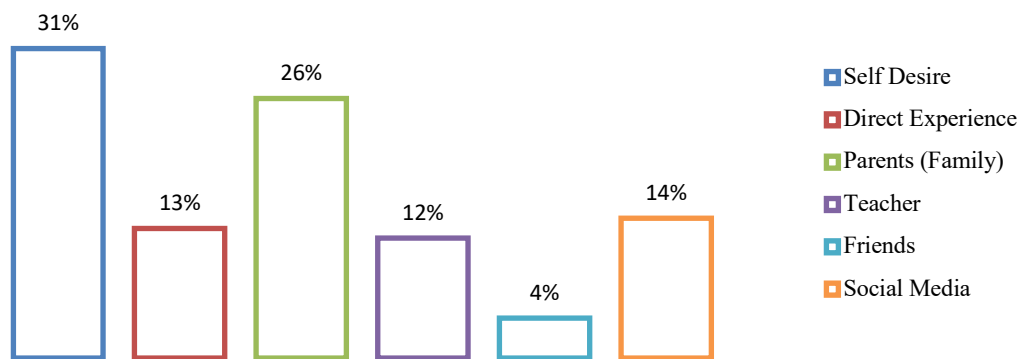
Male students showed more interest in careers in security and technology, such as police, the military, engineering, and professional sports. These choices reflect the enduring influence of traditional gender roles, which continue to shape children's career aspirations (Sonnenschein, 2024). Meanwhile, female students are more likely to choose careers in education, health and the arts, such as doctors, teachers, nurses and designers. However, recent trends indicate that an increasing number of female students are interested in technology and digital fields, including professions such as YouTubers and digital content creators (Pattier, 2021).

This finding supports Gottfredson's (2002) theory, which posits that children develop career preferences based on social perceptions and gender stereotypes. However, this shift in aspirations indicates an increase in gender awareness and access to more career options, enabling girls to explore previously male-dominated fields.

The Role and Influence of Information Sources on Career Fantasy

Alpha generation students' career fantasies about future employment are influenced by various sources of information that can be easily accessed in everyday life. These sources of information can come from family, school, digital media and other social experiences. Graph 10 presents data on the various sources that contribute to shaping the career fantasies of Alpha generation students.

Graph 10.
Sources of Students' Career Fantasies



Graph 10 illustrates that the career fantasies of primary school students originate from various sources of information that influence their interests and aspirations in a profession. Everyone has different experiences and exposure to information, so the possibility of variation in career fantasies is very high. These differences can be attributed to both internal factors, such as personal interests and aptitude, as well as external factors, including family environment, digital media, and social interactions at school (Sasmita et al, 2021).

Career fantasy is essential for development in every individual from an early age, with guidance from various parties, especially parents (Capranica et al., 2018). This is because childhood fantasy is a broad image, so that the good and bad fantasies about the



career must be accompanied in every process (Manlove, 2020). For some individuals, the career fantasy they have may stem from themselves and may not be achievable (Rogiers et al, 2022). In contrast, career fantasies directed by parents, family, teachers, or professionals can lead the individual to achieve success in their career, where career success is critical and closely related to various aspects of everyone's life (Gao & Ding, 2022; Zhan, 2020). However, in the 21st century, technological developments cannot be ignored.

The new generation has different personality characteristics from the previous generation, and this generation is also more adaptive to technology (Malinauskiene, 2020). This proves that technological advances can no longer be prevented from influencing various aspects of life in the 21st century (Söderholm, 2020; Volti & Croissant, 2024). Digital or electronic media is also one of the media that influences students' career fantasies (Ding, 2020; Paasonen, 2021; Sebre & Miltuze, 2021). Thus, the sophistication of this technology must be used and utilized as well as possible in various aspects of life, one of which is in the aspect of education (Haleem et al, 2022) and especially in the implementation of career guidance and counseling services in schools in helping students to be able to develop and realize their fantasy careers (Herath et al, 2024).

This study shares similarities with Chang & Ju (2014) in its discussion of children's careers. However, this study focuses on career fantasies held by individuals at the elementary school level, while Chank & Ju (2014) focus on career expectations held by individuals at the kindergarten level. Research conducted by Cheng, Wang, Wang, & Chiang (2024) also has similarities related to the influence of parents on their children's careers. The difference between this study and the Cheng et al (2024) study lies in the variables discussed regarding career decision-making, as well as the research subjects who are at the stage of making decisions about their careers. Other studies with similarities to this study include those conducted by Halim et al (2018), which state that parents play an essential role in their children's careers. Meanwhile, the difference between this study and the study conducted by Halim et al (2018) lies in the subjects in the study.

For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct more in-depth research related to the development of more interactive media to support the realisation of students' career fantasies at the elementary school level. Technology-based interactive media, such as educational games, virtual reality (VR), or augmented reality (AR), can be an effective tool in providing more in-depth and engaging career exploration experiences for students (Hooley, 2023). In addition, the strategic use of technology-based media in classroom learning is an important aspect that must be optimised. With the integration of technology in learning, students can more easily explore various career options, understand the skills required in different professions, and develop more concrete interests in occupations that match their talents and aspirations (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Further research could also investigate how digital media can be utilised as a tool to enhance career awareness and aid students in making more informed decisions about their future. Thus, they not only have career fantasies but also gain a more realistic understanding of how to achieve them through appropriate learning and skill development (Brown & Lent, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The research found that Alpha generation children have a variety of career fantasies, with professions such as doctor, police/army and teacher being the most popular choices. These career fantasies are heavily influenced by digital technology, including



social media and educational games, as well as the role of parents in introducing children to various job types. In addition, Alpha generation children are now more familiar with many professions than previous generations, although their understanding still tends to be idealistic and influenced by trends and public figures. Based on the results of this study, schools and counseling teachers need to develop career guidance programs that are more in line with technological developments. One way is to utilise digital platforms, career simulations, and involve parents in helping Alpha generation children recognise their interests and potential. In this way, Alpha generation children can understand the world of work more realistically, rather than just based on images from the media. For future research, it is recommended to employ interview methods or in-depth studies to gain a clearer understanding of how digital technology influences the career fantasies of Alpha generation children. In addition, research across different regions or cultures could also be conducted to see if this pattern applies everywhere or if there are differences based on social and economic environments.

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