



## Analysis of the Relationship between Field Work Practice and Self-Efficacy in Forming Career Decisions of Vocational High School Students

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**Abstract.** This study aims to determine the effect of Internship and self-efficacy in shaping student career decisions, partially or simultaneously. The method used in this research is a quantitative method with a correlational approach. The research was conducted on 150 students at SMK Kota and Pasuruan Regency in the competence of mechanical engineering expertise. Data collection techniques using a closed questionnaire. Data were analyzed using simple and multiple linear regression tests. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between Internship and career decision making with a correlation value ( $r$ ) of 0.52 and a significance level ( $p$ )  $< 0.05$ . These results indicate that students who have a better Internship experience tend to be more confident in determining their career path. Self-efficacy was found to have a stronger correlation with career decision making than Internship, with a value ( $r$ ) of 0.61 and a significance level ( $p$ )  $< 0.05$ . This indicates that the higher the students' self-efficacy, the greater their confidence in making career-related decisions after graduation. The results of multiple regression analysis showed that Internship and self-efficacy simultaneously contributed 47% ( $R^2 = 0.47$ ) to students' career decision making. These results indicate that in addition to work experience through Internship, psychological factors such as self-efficacy also play an important role in shaping vocational students' career decisions.

**Keywords ;** Career Decisions, Internship, Self-efficacy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary context of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the labor market is undergoing substantial and transformative changes. The competencies required for the workforce are evolving, especially in the domains of technical acumen and psychological readiness to make informed career choices. Vocational education, especially within the framework of Vocational High Schools (SMK), plays a crucial role in equipping graduates with the skills necessary to transition effectively into the workforce. An essential element of vocational education is Field Work Practice (PKL), which seeks to provide students with authentic experiences in an industrial setting, enabling them to understand the needs of the professional world firsthand (Alifa, 2020; Yuliyanto et al., 2024).

PKL is designed not only to improve technical competencies but also to facilitate the development of self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their capacity to perform tasks and face challenges (Otto & Preus, 2024). Increased levels of self-efficacy correlate with students' aptitude to make more informed career decisions and enhance their readiness for work (Maulidy et al., 2022; Zhou, 2023). Several studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between self-efficacy and career decision-making processes (Chuang et al., 2022).

Research conducted by Rahmayanti et al. (2019) showed that vocational high school students who demonstrated high self-efficacy were more adept at independently describing their career trajectories. In addition, additional research shows that students who have participated in internships are better prepared to navigate the professional landscape due to their practical experience and increased understanding of industry dynamics (Latifah & Basyirun, 2024).

Despite the many studies that illustrate the beneficial relationship between internships and self-efficacy in the context of career decision-making, several challenges require further examination. Not all vocational high school students undergo optimal internship experiences; some are given assignments that do not reflect the reality of the labor market (Habibah & Dwijayanti, 2023). Furthermore, variations in individual self-efficacy result in certain students experiencing uncertainty and decreased confidence when choosing a career path after graduation (Kartika et al., 2021). A visible disconnect persists between vocational high school curricula and industry requirements, leading to a reduced competitive advantage for vocational high school graduates in the job market (Nurhayati, 2024).

This study plays a significant role in explaining the interaction between internship and self-efficacy in shaping vocational high school students' career decisions. The findings of this study will enable educational institutions and policymakers to design improved strategies for the implementation of internship, making it more effective and aligned with industry demands. In addition, initiatives aimed at strengthening students' self-efficacy can be formulated through comprehensive career counseling and the development of soft skill programs. Consequently, this study will contribute significantly to the advancement of vocational education while assisting vocational high school students in cultivating a more deliberate career trajectory that matches their competencies..

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Internships (PKL) are a mandatory component of vocational education, designed to provide students with practical exposure to the industrial sector. The program has the potential to enhance technical and non-technical competencies, including communication, problem-solving, and discipline, which serve as important determinants of work readiness (Rahmayanti et al., 2019). Additional research has shown that experiences gained from PKL significantly contribute to improving students' work readiness, especially with regard to understanding workplace culture and the ability to adapt in professional settings (Habibah & Dwijayanti, 2023).

Despite these benefits, the efficacy of PKL faces many challenges, especially regarding the disparity between experiential learning acquired in a professional environment and the requisite skills demanded by the industrial domain. Several investigations have revealed that PKL experiences that are not aligned with industry requirements can hinder graduates' work readiness (N. Sari & Munawaroh, 2021). Consequently, it is imperative to assess the extent to which PKL can enhance career readiness and facilitate students in making informed decisions regarding their future trajectories.

Self-efficacy, conceptualized as an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute actions aimed at achieving specific goals, is an important element in the field of career decision-making (Bandura, 1997). In relation to work readiness, self-efficacy influences students' confidence in choosing a career path that matches their interests and competencies (Riyanti & Rustiana, 2017).

Empirical evidence suggests that students who demonstrate high levels of self-efficacy are more adept at navigating uncertainties in the employment landscape and demonstrate increased confidence in their career decision-making process (Saraswati & Ratnaningsih, 2016). In contrast, individuals with reduced self-efficacy tend to experience worry and uncertainty in their career choices, which may result in delays in their transition to the workforce. Therefore, elucidating the factors that shape self-efficacy, including the experiences gained through internships, emerges as an important component in fostering the work readiness of vocational students.

The interaction between internship experiences and self-efficacy in relation to career readiness has been the subject of investigation in various scientific studies. Findings show a positive correlation between internship experience and self-efficacy, where students who gain extensive experience during internship tend to have high self-efficacy in making career choices (Febriana & Masykur, 2022).

In addition, the interaction of internship experience, self-efficacy, and environmental support significantly impacts the work readiness of vocational students (Habibah & Dwijayanti, 2023). However, existing research has not rigorously examined the influence of self-efficacy in the career decision-making framework following internship experience. Thus, further investigation is needed to achieve a deeper and quantitative understanding of the interrelationship between these three variables.

This study aspires to produce a more holistic understanding of how internship experience shapes vocational students' self-efficacy in their career decision-making process. Furthermore, this study aims to provide valuable insights into strategies that can be

implemented in vocational education to improve students' work readiness through educational and training interventions both within academic institutions and the industrial sector.

### **3. METHODS**

This study uses a quantitative research design characterized by correlational methodology. This methodological framework was chosen because the purpose of the study was to assess the relationship and impact of the variables of Field Work Practice (PKL) and self-efficacy on the career decision-making process of vocational high school (SMK) students. The correlational design facilitates the examination of the relationship between several variables, thus enabling an understanding of the extent to which PKL and self-efficacy, both independently and collectively, influence students' career decisions.

In the context of this study, the survey method was utilized as a data collection technique by administering questionnaires to vocational high school students who had participated in PKL, consisting of 150 respondents. The questionnaire was compiled using a Likert scale to assess the level of self-efficacy, PKL experience, and career decision-making. The data obtained were then subjected to analysis using simple and multiple linear regression techniques to ensure the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable.

The study applied a closed questionnaire based on a Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to evaluate students' perceptions of Field Work Practice (PKL), self-efficacy, and career decision-making. The questionnaire is divided into three main sections, namely PKL, which evaluates the quality of students' work experience; self-efficacy, which measures students' confidence in facing challenges and making decisions; and career decision-making, which identifies the clarity and factors that influence students' career path selection. The instrument was developed based on previous theoretical frameworks and empirical research, followed by validation through expert evaluation and item-total correlation analysis (Pearson Product-Moment), along with reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha methodology to ensure internal consistency.

Data were collected from vocational high school students who had completed PKL through online (Google Forms) and offline (printed questionnaire) surveys through purposive sampling techniques. After completing the data collection process, a thorough check for completeness was conducted to reduce non-response bias, followed by analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics, including simple and multiple linear regression, to evaluate the effect of independent variables on dependent variables. To ensure the reliability of the data, the study implemented an assessment of the validity and reliability of the

instrument, using appropriate statistical methodology, while also ensuring that respondents met the criteria set for the study. Through this rigorous process, this study aims to produce valid, reliable, and accountable findings in explaining the relationship between PKL, self-efficacy, and career decision making among vocational high school students.

#### **4. RESULTS**

The results of the simple linear regression analysis showed a significant positive correlation between PKL and career decision making, with a correlation coefficient of 0.52 and a significance level of less than 0.05. This finding suggests that students who have superior PKL experiences are more likely to demonstrate confidence in determining their career paths. In addition, self-efficacy showed a stronger correlation with career decision making than PKL, with a correlation value of 0.61 and a significance level of less than 0.05. This implies that an increase in students' self-efficacy corresponds to an increase in confidence in making career decisions after graduating from vocational high school.

Furthermore, the results obtained from the multiple regression analysis revealed that PKL and self-efficacy collectively accounted for 47% ( $R^2 = 0.47$ ) of the variance in students' career decision making. Among the two variables, self-efficacy exerted a clearer influence than PKL; however, both variables significantly contributed to improving students' readiness in determining their career trajectories. These results indicate that in addition to work experience through PKL, psychological factors such as self-efficacy also play an important role in shaping vocational high school students' career decisions.

#### **5. DISCUSSION**

This scientific investigation aims to examine the impact of Internship (PKL) and self-efficacy on the vocational decision-making process of students enrolled in Vocational High Schools (SMK). The findings indicate that self-efficacy has a greater influence than PKL in shaping students' career choices. This observation is in accordance with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which states that individuals who have high levels of self-efficacy are generally more confident in their decision-making, especially regarding their career trajectories (Rahmayanti et al., 2019). In contrast, while PKL offers experiential learning in the professional realm, its influence on career decision-making is relatively less clear than self-efficacy. This implies that work experience alone is not enough to foster students' confidence in their career decisions, as additional elements such as social support, access to

career information, and reflective practice regarding PKL experiences also contribute significantly to the decision-making framework (Latifah & Basyirun, 2024).

The analytical results related to the initial hypothesis (H1) revealed a positive correlation between PKL and career decision-making of vocational high school students, with the correlation coefficient recorded at  $r = 0.52$  and  $p < 0.05$ . This indicates that students who experience superior PKL involvement are more likely to show increased self-confidence in navigating their career paths. However, the effect of PKL on career decision-making is not very strong, leading to the conclusion that work experience alone does not have efficacy in strengthening students' confidence in determining their career trajectories (Nurhayati, 2024). In parallel, the second hypothesis (H2), which postulates a positive correlation between self-efficacy and career decision-making of vocational high school students, was also validated. The results of the regression analysis showed that self-efficacy had a clearer correlation ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) compared to PKL, indicating that an increase in the level of self-efficacy corresponds to an increase in confidence in choosing a post-graduation career path. These results are in line with previous research showing that self-efficacy is an important factor in the career readiness of junior high school students (Maulidy et al., 2022). In essence, students who demonstrate a high level of confidence in their competence are more likely to explore a variety of career options and make more sophisticated decisions than their peers with lower self-efficacy.

The third hypothesis (H3), which asserts that internship and self-efficacy collectively influence vocational high school students' career decision-making, was also confirmed. The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that internship and self-efficacy simultaneously accounted for 47% ( $R^2 = 0.47$ ) of the variance in students' career decisions. Although self-efficacy was the more dominant factor, both elements substantially contributed to students' readiness in navigating career choices. Therefore, it is imperative that effective internship programs be integrated with psychological interventions, such as career counseling and self-efficacy enhancement strategies, to optimize the resulting impact (Kartika et al., 2021).

Several variables may have influenced the results of this investigation. One such variable is the difference in the quality of the Internship (PKL) experience that students encounter. Not all students gain work experience related to their field of study, with some being assigned solely to administrative tasks, which is less conducive to enhancing their understanding of the professional landscape (Habibah & Dwijayanti, 2023). In addition, the level of career awareness possessed by students also significantly influences their ability to

utilize the Internship experience effectively. Students who have an initial understanding of their career trajectory are more likely to utilize their Internship experience to validate or assess their professional choices, in contrast to students who remain uncertain and continue to experience difficulties despite participating in the Internship (Latifah & Basyirun, 2024). Additional determinants that influence students' career decision-making include support from family figures, educational instructors, and access to career-related information. Students who receive enhanced guidance from their environment tend to demonstrate greater confidence in their career decision-making process (Nurhayati, 2024).

The results of the study carry several significant implications. From an academic perspective, these findings support the assertion that self-efficacy plays a significant role in students' career decision-making process in Vocational High Schools (SMK). Consequently, future research efforts may benefit from a concentrated exploration of psychological interventions, such as self-efficacy-oriented career skills training or coaching and mentoring initiatives provided by industry professionals. From a practical perspective, educational institutions and career counselors should prioritize the incorporation of psychological skills training and self-efficacy enhancement in career guidance programs, rather than concentrating exclusively on the implementation of internships. Schools may also consider implementing project-based learning methodologies to enhance students' confidence in their competencies. For the industry sector and internship providers, it is imperative that organizations provide more substantive and comprehensive internship experiences, rather than simply assigning administrative tasks. In addition, the establishment of an evaluative framework for students to reflect on their internship experiences is necessary to enhance self-efficacy in career determination (D. P. Sari & Rahdiyanta, 2023). Meanwhile, it is important for government agencies and policymakers to enforce stricter standardization protocols in the administration of internships, ensuring that every student gains relevant and rewarding experiences that positively influence their career choices. Furthermore, career guidance initiatives in educational institutions should be strengthened with psychological methodologies and guidance from industry professionals to ensure that students are optimally prepared to engage with the professional world.

In summary, this study suggests that self-efficacy exerts a more significant influence than internships in shaping vocational high school students' career decisions. While internships continue to make beneficial contributions, their primary function tends to revolve around job readiness rather than certainty in the career decision-making process. Therefore, interventions aimed at strengthening students' self-efficacy are likely to prove more

efficacious in helping them make informed and informed career decisions. Collaborative efforts between educational institutions, the industry sector, and government agencies are essential to enhance the efficacy of internship programs and the development of students' self-efficacy, thereby ensuring that they are better prepared to navigate their career paths.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The results of this study indicate that self-efficacy has a greater influence than Field Work Practice (PKL) on career decision-making of vocational high school students. Although PKL provides direct experience in the world of work, its impact on career decisions is not as strong as self-efficacy. The results of the regression analysis showed that PKL and self-efficacy simultaneously contributed 47% ( $R^2 = 0.47$ ) to students' career decisions, with self-efficacy having a stronger correlation ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) than PKL ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These results indicate that students' self-confidence in facing career challenges is more important than work experience alone. Therefore, educational interventions that focus on strengthening self-efficacy through career guidance and industry mentoring can be more effective in helping vocational high school students make mature career decisions.

## **LIMITATION**

This study has several limitations that need to be considered so that the results obtained can be interpreted more comprehensively and contextually. One of the main limitations lies in the data collection method which only uses a questionnaire as the main instrument. Although the questionnaire has been tested for validity and reliability, this method tends to be quantitative and is not fully capable of exploring students' subjective experiences in depth. This study did not include interviews or direct observations that could potentially provide a richer understanding of how students experience Field Work Practice (PKL) and how their self-efficacy is formed and developed in a real work environment.

In addition, the correlational research design limits the ability to draw conclusions about the cause-and-effect relationships between variables. Although the results of the regression analysis indicate that PKL and self-efficacy contribute to students' career decision-making, this study cannot definitively conclude that these two variables directly cause increased student readiness in making career decisions. It is possible that other factors, such as family support, career guidance, economic conditions, and social environment, also influence career decision-making but are not analyzed specifically in this study. In addition, limitations in the sampling technique using purposive sampling can also affect the generalization of findings, because it



only involves vocational high school students who have undergone PKL in a certain context. Therefore, to provide a more holistic understanding, further research is recommended to adopt a mixed methods approach by combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, such as in-depth interviews or longitudinal studies, in order to gain more comprehensive insights into the dynamics of vocational high school students' career decision-making.

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