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Article

Factors Affecting Work Readiness of Vocational School Graduates: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: This study aims to identify and classify factors that influence the work readiness of vocational school graduates, analyze the contribution of each factor, and provide evidence-based recommendations for policy development and learning practices in vocational schools. The method used in this study is Systematic Literature Review (SLR), which analyzes articles related to factors affecting the work readiness of vocational school graduates from ScienceDirect. The results of the review show that the Work Readiness of vocational school graduates is influenced by three main categories of factors: individual (technical competence, soft skills, self-efficacy), institutional (curriculum, industrial practice experience), and external (industrial environment, local job opportunities, government policies). All three interact with each other and contribute significantly to work readiness. Strengthening work readiness can be achieved by adapting the curriculum that is relevant to labor market needs, increasing industrial practice experience, and strengthening institutional support and cooperation with the business world. Recommendations for vocational education policy development include improving curriculum quality, strengthening soft skills, and providing wider internship and career development opportunities.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Technical Competence, Vocational Education, Vocational School, work Readiness

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1. INTRODUCTION

Work readiness of vocational school graduates is an important concern in developing competitive human resources in the era of globalization. The industrialized world requires a workforce that not only has technical skills, but also 21st century competencies such as critical thinking and collaboration (Saleem et al., 2024; Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023). Vocational school graduates are expected to be able to adjust to the changing dynamics of the world of work. Therefore, a study of the factors that influence work readiness is very relevant.

Previous research has shown that strong technical competence is a key prerequisite for the Work Readiness of vocational graduates (Kain et al., 2024; Poláková et al., 2023). However, success in the world of work is not only determined by technical skills. Aspects of soft skills such as communication, cooperation, and problem-solving also contribute greatly to Work Readiness (Kaya et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024). This emphasizes the importance of vocational education to integrate the development of hard skills and soft skills in a balanced manner.

In addition to competency factors, work practice experiences such as internships or internships have a crucial role in shaping students' work readiness (Marsono et al., 2020). Direct involvement in the world of work allows students to apply the theory obtained at school into a real context. An effective internship program can increase graduates' confidence, self-efficacy, and adaptability (Wong et al., 2024). Therefore, close partnerships between schools and industries are of key importance in improving work readiness.

Self-efficacy has also been identified as a psychological factor that affects the Work Readiness of vocational graduates. Students who have high levels of self-efficacy tend to be more confident in their ability to enter the world of work (Choy & Yeung, 2022). These internal factors need attention in the vocational education curriculum.

The contribution of educational institutions in supporting work readiness cannot be ignored. Curricula that are relevant to industry needs and adequate training facilities play a major role in equipping students with the necessary skills (Simarasl et al., 2024). In addition, the role of teachers who are able to adapt to technological changes and labor market needs is also an important factor (Blömeke et al., 2022). Vocational education must continuously update its curriculum and teaching methods to stay in tune with the demands of the world of work.

Contextual factors such as labor market conditions, family support, and government policies also shape graduates' work readiness (Chauhan et al., 2024). A supportive social and economic environment can expand employment opportunities for vocational school graduates. National policies that encourage links and matches between education and industry are effective strategies to increase the absorption of vocational labor (OECD, 2018). Therefore, a systemic approach is needed to optimize work readiness.

Based on the above description, it is important to conduct a systematic literature review to identify factors that are consistently found to influence the work readiness of vocational school graduates. This review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research findings. The results of the review are expected to provide an empirical basis for formulating more effective vocational education policies and practices. Thus, vocational school graduates will be better prepared to compete in an increasingly dynamic job market.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work Readiness of Vocational School Graduates

Work readiness refers to an individual's ability to enter and adapt to the world of work effectively, including mastery of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by industry (Yang et al., 2024). For vocational high school (VHS) graduates, work readiness includes not only technical skills according to the field of expertise, but also non-technical skills such as communication, teamwork, and self-management (Okolie, 2022). VHS as a vocational education institution is responsible for equipping students with relevant and applicable competencies so that they are able to compete in a dynamic job market.

Several studies have shown that the gap between competencies taught in schools and industry needs remains a significant challenge (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022). This is exacerbated by the lack of real work experience during the education period, limited practical facilities, and weak curriculum integration with business and industry (Herlinawati et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding the factors that influence the Work Readiness of VHS graduates is important as a basis for developing vocational education policies that are more adaptive and responsive to the needs of the times.

Effect of 21st Century Skills on Work Readiness

21st century skills are a set of competencies needed to face global challenges, technological advances, and socioeconomic changes (Herlinawati et al., 2024). In the context of work readiness, these skills include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, and flexibility. The application of 21st century skills in the learning process in vocational schools has been proven to improve the competitiveness of graduates and their readiness to face the demands of the modern world of work (Dilekçi & Karatay, 2023).

Some studies state that students who have mastery of 21st century skills perform better in teamwork, problem solving, and adaptation to new work environments (Dilekçi & Karatay,

2023). Therefore, the integration of 21st century skills in the curriculum and learning methods of vocational schools is a crucial factor in improving graduates' work readiness. These skills also support lifelong learning which is important in the era of disruption.

The Role of Problem Solving Skills in the World of Work

Problem solving skills are one of the main indicators of work readiness, especially in dealing with the complexity of tasks and dynamic challenges in the workplace (Kim et al., 2018). Students who are trained to think critically and find innovative solutions to complex problems will be better able to adjust and contribute to the workplace (Lu & Xie, 2024).

In the context of vocational education, problem solving is a key skill in completing competency-based projects and real work simulations. Research shows that improving problem solving skills in vocational schools significantly contributes to students' readiness in identifying, analyzing, and overcoming work barriers (Dilekçi & Karatay, 2023). Therefore, a problem-based learning approach is highly recommended to strengthen students' work readiness.

Self-efficacy as a predictor of work readiness

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her ability to complete a task or deal with a particular situation (Bandura, 1986). In the context of work readiness, self-efficacy plays an important role in increasing graduates' motivation, perseverance, and confidence to face the challenges of the world of work (Hao & Lu, 2024). Students with high self-efficacy tend to have positive expectations for their future careers and are better prepared for the transition from school to work.

Empirical studies show that self-efficacy is positively correlated with Work Readiness of vocational school graduates, especially in terms of decision-making, communication, and adaptation to new environments (Hao & Lu, 2024). Therefore, vocational education needs to provide space for psychological strengthening through career counseling, soft skills training, and industrial practice experiences to form strong self-efficacy.

Business and Industry Support

Collaboration between vocational schools and the World of Business and Industry determines the quality of graduates' work readiness. Industry support includes the provision of internship places, industrial teacher training, curriculum based on the needs of the world of work, and labor recruitment of vocational school graduates (Okolie, 2022). The active involvement of industry enriches students' learning experience while serving as a bridge between schools and the labor market.

Empirical evidence shows that the involvement of industry in the vocational education process has a positive influence on students' practical knowledge and work attitudes (Yusuf et al., 2020). However, challenges still arise in the aspects of program suitability and sustainability of cooperation. Therefore, a sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership system between VHS and industry is needed as a key to improving graduates' work readiness.

3. METHODS

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design, which aims to identify, assess, and synthesize findings from relevant studies related to factors that influence the work readiness of vocational school graduates. SLR was chosen due to its approach that allows the

collection of robust and comprehensive evidence, and ensures transparency in the literature selection and analysis process (Carrera-Rivera et al., 2022). It also allows for a systematic exploration of variables and relationships between factors that have not been explored in depth in previous studies.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were determined to ensure the relevance and quality of the literature used in this review.

The inclusion criteria were:

- Articles published between 2015 and 2024.
- Articles that discuss factors that influence the work readiness of vocational school graduates or vocational education.
- Research using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed approaches.
- Articles written in English.

Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria were:

- Articles that are not available in full text.
- Studies that focus on non-vocational education
- Studies that only address certain aspects (e.g. only technical competencies without considering other factors such as self-efficacy or soft skills).
- Articles that were not relevant to the purpose of this study, such as studies that did not focus on work readiness or did not address enough of these factors.

Literature Search and Selection Process

The literature search was conducted using the ScienceDirect academic database. The keywords used for the search included: "Work Readiness of vocational school graduates," "Work Readiness factors," "soft skills in vocational education," and "internship experience and Work Readiness." The search was conducted with a combination of relevant keywords to ensure more specific and complete results.

After the search, the identified articles will be selected based on relevance to the research topic. The selection process was conducted in two stages. First, articles that do not fit the inclusion criteria will be screened based on the title and abstract. Second, articles that meet the criteria will be analyzed in-depth based on the full text to ensure their compatibility with the research objectives.

Data Analysis Technique Literature

The data analysis technique in this study follows the procedure suggested in the systematic review (Mengist et al., 2020). Once the relevant articles are selected, data will be extracted to identify the main factors influencing the Work Readiness of vocational school graduates. The data extraction process involves recording information such as the type of study, variables analyzed, key findings, and methodology used.

The analysis was conducted qualitatively by categorizing the findings based on the main themes that emerged in the literature, such as technical competencies, soft skills, practical experience and psychological factors. The results of this analysis were then integrated to produce a comprehensive synthesis of the factors that influence work readiness. In addition, where possible, a quantitative analysis of the frequency and relationships between factors found in existing studies was also conducted.

Study Quality Assessment

To ensure the quality of the literature used, each article included in this review will be assessed using appropriate research quality assessment tools. This quality assessment covers aspects such as research design, data collection methods, data analysis, and study limitations. Some of the quality assessment tools used in this study include the Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP, 2018) for qualitative studies and The Cochrane Collaboration's Risk of Bias for quantitative studies (Sterne et al., 2019). These assessments are important to ensure that conclusions drawn from the existing literature are based on robust and reliable evidence.

PRISMA procedure

This review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) procedure, which leads to increased transparency and clarity in the review process. The PRISMA procedure includes four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion of literature. The PRISMA diagram will be used to illustrate the article selection process and present the results visually (Page et al., 2021). By using PRISMA, it is hoped that this research can provide a clear and structured picture of the relevant literature.

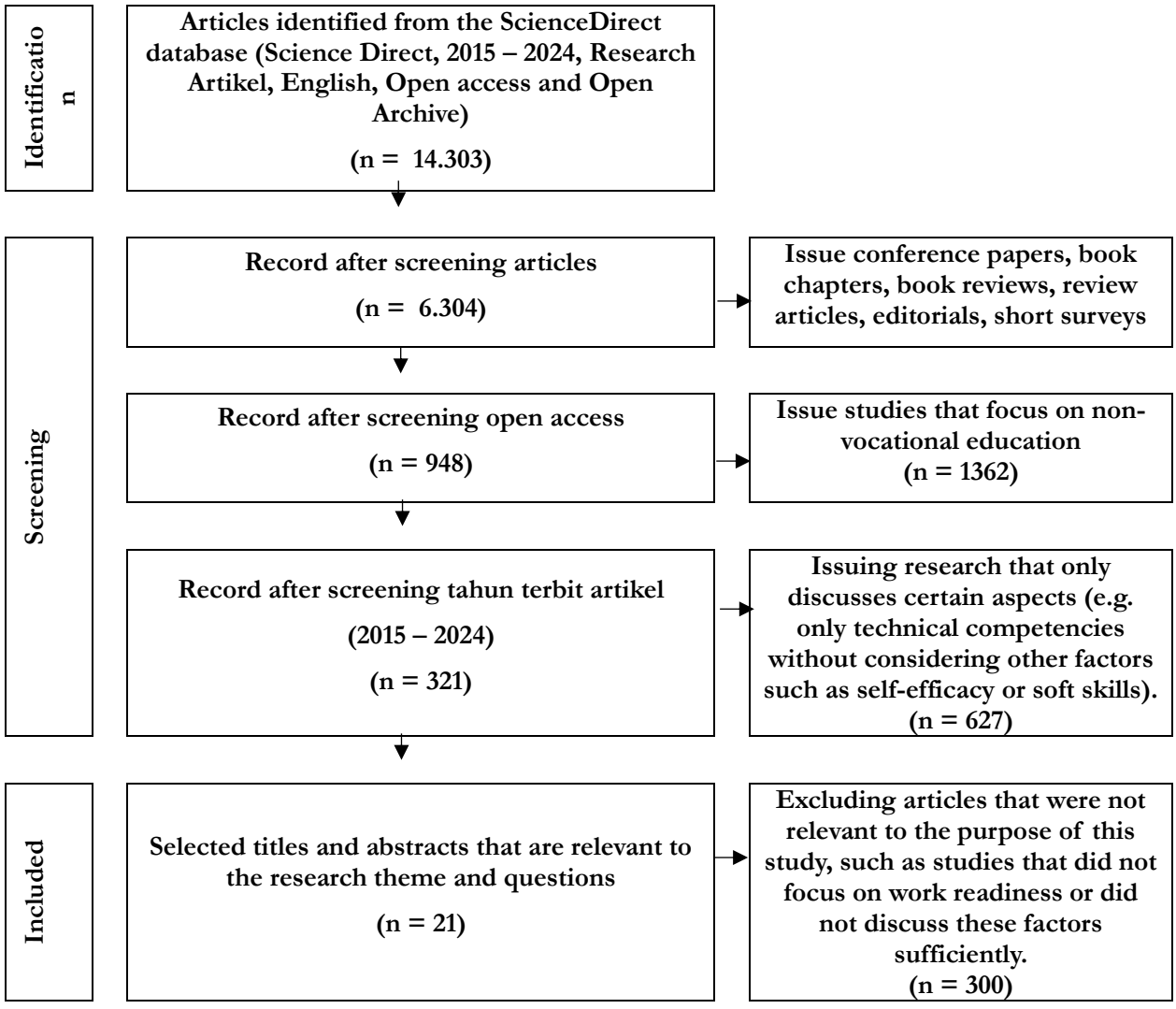

Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram of Literature Search Procedure and Review Process

4. RESULTS

Characteristics of Studies Reviewed

A total of 21 relevant articles were reviewed in this review. The articles were published between 2015 and 2023. The approaches used in the articles varied.

Table 1 Summarizes the characteristics of the reviewed studies.

No	Article	Approach	Technical and Professional Competencies	Soft Skills and 21st Century Skills	Industrial Practice Experience (Prakerin/Internship)	Self-efficacy and Career Motivation	Institutional Support and Vocational Curriculum	Contextual Factors (Industry Environment, Local Employment Opportunities, etc.)
1.	(Kholifah et al., 2025)	Quantitative	v			v		
2.	(Boat et al., 2021)	Quantitative					v	v
3.	(Kaya et al., 2023)	Quantitative		v			v	
4.	(Y. Lee & Lee, 2024)	Quantitative		v			v	
5.	(Loughlin & Priyadarshini, 2021)	Quantitative		v				v
6.	(Ocampo et al., 2020)	Quantitative			v	v		
7.	(Okolie, 2022)	Quantitative			v	v	v	
8.	(Wong et al., 2024)	Mix Methode	v	v			v	
9.	(Yang et al., 2024)	Qualitative			v	v		
10.	(Ait et al., 2015)			v		v		
11.	(Dilekçi & Karatay, 2023)	Mix Methode		v			v	
12.	(Kim et al., 2018)			v				v
13.	(Ito et al., 2024)	Quantitative				v	v	
14.	(Silitonga et al., 2025)	Quantitative		v			v	
15.	(Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022)	Quantitative	v				v	
16.	(Herbert et al., 2020)		v	v	v			
17.	(Inderanata & Sukardi, 2023)	Quantitative		v			v	
18.	(Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022)	Quantitative					v	
19.	(Fangonil-Gagalang, 2024)	Quantitative				v	v	

No	Article	Approach	Technical and Professional Competencies	Soft Skills and 21st Century Skills	Industrial Practice Experience (Prakerin/Internship)	Self-efficacy and Career Motivation	Institutional Support and Vocational Curriculum	Contextual Factors (Industry Environment, Local Employment Opportunities, etc.)
20.	(Rogers et al., 2023)	Quantitative	v				v	
21.	(Naseer et al., 2023)	Quantitative			v			

Factors Affecting Work Readiness

Based on the analysis, several main factors affecting the Work Readiness of vocational school graduates were found in the reviewed literature. These factors are divided into several subcategories as follows:

Technical and Professional Competencies

Technical and professional competencies are the main factors that influence the Work Readiness of vocational school graduates. Many studies show that technical skills relevant to the field of work to be entered are very important for vocational school graduates. Graduates who have strong technical skills and are in line with industry standards are more adaptable and accepted in the workforce (Kholifah et al., 2025; Wong et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important for the vocational education curriculum to continuously update teaching materials in accordance with the latest technological developments and industry needs.

In addition, professional competencies that include an understanding of work ethics, industry standards and professional responsibilities also play a significant role in work readiness. Several studies reveal that graduates who not only master technical skills, but also have insight into the professional world, tend to be better prepared to face challenges in the workplace (Herbert et al., 2020; Rogers et al., 2023). An understanding of professional ethics and high work standards is an added value for graduates in establishing good relationships with coworkers and superiors.

Technical skills are not only limited to mastering tools or technology, but also include the ability to work in teams, solve problems, and manage projects. These competencies are indispensable in a world of work that increasingly emphasizes collaboration between individuals and teams. Several articles identify the importance of the ability to work with the latest technological tools, as well as the ability to adapt to rapid changes in the industry (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022). Therefore, vocational education should provide training that encourages students to master practical skills that can be directly applied in the field.

In the context of work readiness, the importance of technical and professional competencies cannot be underestimated. Research has also shown that close links between vocational education and industry through internship or industrial practice programs can enrich students' technical skills (Ocampo et al., 2020; Okolie, 2022). Such programs give students the opportunity to develop more applicable competencies, so that they are better prepared for the demands of the real world of work. Therefore, the integration of education

with industry is necessary to ensure the relevance of the skills taught to the needs of the labor market.

Soft Skills and 21st Century Skills

Soft skills are one of the main factors that support the work readiness of VHS graduates. In contrast to technical competencies that are specific and practical, soft skills are more related to the way a person interacts with others, adapts in the work environment, and solves problems. Several studies show that effective communication skills, teamwork, and the ability to resolve conflicts are highly valued skills in the world of work (Kaya et al., 2023; Loughlin & Priyadarshini, 2021). These skills help VHS graduates to collaborate with coworkers and contribute to a productive and harmonious work atmosphere.

In addition to the more traditional soft skills, 21st century skills are also increasingly becoming a major focus in vocational education. These skills include critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration, which are needed in the face of global challenges and rapid technological change. Research by Dilekçi & Karatay (2023) states that skills such as critical and creative thinking are indispensable for solving complex problems that often arise in the world of work. Graduates who are able to think innovatively and solve problems with creative approaches have a greater chance of success in their careers.

Success in the world of work depends not only on technical skills, but also on one's ability to adapt to various situations and a constantly changing environment. Skills such as flexibility, time management, and lifelong learning are part of the soft skills that are increasingly important in this modern era (Ait et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2018). Graduates who have the ability to continuously develop and adapt to technological developments or industry trends have higher competitiveness in the job market. Therefore, vocational education needs to prepare students not only with technical skills, but also with skills that support adaptability and innovation.

In addition, mastery of soft skills and 21st century skills also contributes to the development of students' character and confidence. Self-efficacy, which relates to an individual's belief in his or her abilities, is strongly influenced by the level of mastery of these soft skills. Students who are able to manage emotions, communicate well, and work in teams will be more confident in facing career challenges in the professional world (Herbert et al., 2020; Silitonga et al., 2025). Therefore, the vocational education curriculum must integrate the development of soft skills and 21st century skills thoroughly, to ensure that graduates are not only technically prepared, but also ready to face the dynamics of the world of work that demands high interpersonal and cognitive skills.

Industrial Practice Experience (Prakerin / Internship)

Industrial practice experience or internship (prakerin) is one of the most important factors in preparing VHS graduates to enter the world of work. Several studies show that internship programs provide students with the opportunity to apply the skills they have learned at school in a real work environment (Ocampo et al., 2020; Okolie, 2022). This experience allows students to interact directly with professionals in their field, understand industry standards, and develop a deeper understanding of the world of work. Through internships, students not only acquire sharper technical skills, but also build the social and interpersonal skills required in a working environment.

In addition to improving technical skills, internships also provide an opportunity for students to boost their confidence. According to research, students who have undergone internships or industrial practice feel more prepared to face challenges in the world of work, as they have become familiar with situations and problems that may occur in a professional environment (Naseer et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024). This experience helps students develop a sense of responsibility, the ability to work in a team, as well as the ability to solve problems effectively, which is much needed by the industry. It also provides a clearer picture of the expectations and demands faced by employees in the workplace.

However, the success of internship programs in enhancing work readiness depends largely on the quality and relevance of the experience provided. A high-quality internship experience, which involves tasks that are relevant to students' field of study, will have a major positive impact on their work readiness (Herbert et al., 2020; Naseer et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important for schools and educational institutions to establish close partnerships with industry to ensure that the internship programs provided are relevant to the needs of the job market and able to provide valuable experience for students. Thus, the internship program serves as a bridge that connects the theories learned at school with the practices that exist in the industrial world.

Self-efficacy and Career Motivation

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her ability to succeed in specific tasks, and it plays an important role in the Work Readiness of vocational school graduates. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to be more confident in facing challenges and more proactive in seeking career opportunities (Kholifah et al., 2025; Ocampo et al., 2020). Research shows that high self-efficacy can influence graduates' decisions in finding a job and adapting to the work environment. Students who feel confident in their ability to complete tasks in the workplace are more likely to take initiative and get the job done well, which in turn improves their readiness for work.

Career motivation also plays an equally important role in work readiness. Graduates who have high career motivation tend to be more focused on their long-term goals, more persistent in their job search, and make more effort to continuously improve their skills (Fangonil-Gagalang, 2024; Ito et al., 2024). This career motivation can come from a variety of sources, including intrinsic drives to develop and achieve, as well as extrinsic drives such as expectations of higher compensation or social status. This strong motivation will encourage graduates to face the difficulties and challenges they may encounter in the world of work.

In addition, high self-efficacy is often closely associated with high levels of career motivation. Individuals who believe in their abilities tend to have a more positive view of their chosen career and are more motivated to achieve their career goals (Ait et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2024). In the context of vocational education, students with high self-efficacy are more likely to take active steps in planning and achieving their career goals. This suggests that there is a positive reciprocal relationship between self-efficacy and career motivation, both of which influence graduates' Work Readiness.

Vocational education that focuses on developing self-efficacy and career motivation can improve students' work readiness. Therefore, it is important for the curriculum to not only teach technical skills, but also to build students' confidence and motivation. Training programs that support self-efficacy development, such as simulations of work situations or mentoring,

can help students increase their confidence in their ability to succeed in the world of work (Ito et al., 2024; Okolie, 2022). Thus, self-efficacy and career motivation play an important role in preparing graduates to face the challenges of the world of work and achieve success in their careers.

Institutional Support and Vocational Curriculum

Support from educational institutions, particularly vocational schools, plays an important role in preparing students for the world of work. Schools that have adequate facilities, qualified teaching staff, and close relationships with industry can provide more relevant and applicable learning experiences for students (Boat et al., 2021; Kaya et al., 2023). This support is not only limited to providing infrastructure, but also includes efforts in improving the quality of teaching and learning, as well as building partnerships with business and industry to create programs that are oriented to the needs of the labor market.

A vocational curriculum that is relevant and responsive to the needs of the industry is crucial in preparing students to enter the job market. A curriculum that is integrated with industry competency standards can ensure that VHS graduates have skills that match the demands of the job. Several studies show that a competency-based and practical skills-oriented curriculum will improve students' work readiness, as they are trained with skills that can be directly applied in the workplace (Okolie, 2022; Wong et al., 2024). In other words, a curriculum that follows industry and technology developments will ensure the relevance of the education provided. In addition, internship programs or work practices integrated into the vocational curriculum are also part of in-depth institutional support. Through well-organized industrial work practices, students can gain first-hand experience in the world of work, hone technical skills, and understand the ethics and work culture that apply in the industry. Research shows that students who undergo structured and relevant internship programs tend to be better prepared to face work challenges after graduation (Dilekçi & Karatay, 2023; Silitonga et al., 2025). Institutional support in facilitating this internship program greatly contributes to improving graduates' work readiness.

The importance of support from educational institutions also includes career development and guidance services for students. These services can help students plan their careers, find job opportunities, and prepare them for a smoother transition from education to work. A study conducted by Inderanata & Sukardi, (2023) revealed that schools that provide career development services, such as career counseling, interview skills training, and CV writing training, make a positive contribution to students' work readiness. Thus, institutional support in providing facilities, relevant curriculum, and career development services is very important in shaping the work readiness of vocational high school graduates.

Contextual Factors (Industrial Environment, Local Job Opportunities, etc.)

Contextual factors, such as the industrial environment and local job opportunities, play a significant role in influencing the work readiness of vocational high school graduates. A rapidly developing and dynamic industrial environment provides greater opportunities for graduates to adapt and develop in their careers. Vocational high school students who study in areas with advanced or developing industries are more likely to have opportunities to get jobs that match the skills they have learned (Boat et al., 2021). On the other hand, in areas with limited or less developed industries, vocational high school graduates may face greater challenges in finding jobs that match their skills.

Local job opportunities also affect the level of graduates' Work Readiness. In areas with high labor demand, vocational high school graduates who have skills that match the needs of the labor market will be more easily accepted in the workforce. On the other hand, in areas with high unemployment rates or gaps between the skills of graduates and the needs of the labor market, vocational high school graduates may face difficulties in finding jobs (Loughlin & Priyadarshini, 2021). Therefore, the existence of local job opportunities that match the skills possessed by graduates is very important in influencing their readiness to work. In addition, technological developments and innovations in the industry also play a role in shaping the readiness of vocational school graduates to work. Companies that continue to innovate and adopt the latest technology will seek workers who have the latest skills and are able to adapt quickly to these changes. Research shows that vocational school graduates who have skills that match the latest technology will be better prepared to work in developing industries (Kim et al., 2018). Therefore, an innovative and growing industrial environment provides greater opportunities for graduates to find suitable jobs and develop their careers. Contextual factors also include government policies and institutional support that can create a supportive climate for skills development and job creation. Policies that support vocational education, local industry development, and the provision of job opportunities will greatly influence graduates' employability. For example, government programs that provide incentives for companies to recruit vocational school graduates or policies that facilitate retraining for existing workers can help reduce the skills gap and improve vocational school graduates' access to the job market (Boat et al., 2021). Therefore, contextual factors such as industrial environment, local job opportunities, and government policies play a very important role in the work readiness of vocational high school graduates.

5. DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Results Related to Theory/Previous Research

The results of this study indicate that the work readiness of vocational high school graduates is influenced by various factors, most of which are in line with the findings of previous studies. Technical competence, soft skills, industrial practice experience, self-efficacy, and institutional support are the main factors that influence work readiness. Research by Wong et al. (2024) dan and Kholifah et al. (2025) shows the importance of technical and interpersonal skills in preparing vocational high school graduates for the world of work, which is in line with the findings of this study. In addition, the findings on the importance of self-efficacy in motivating graduates to succeed in the workplace are also consistent with Bandura's theory (1986) which states that self-efficacy beliefs influence effort and resilience in facing challenges.

However, the findings of this study also add new insights into the importance of contextual factors, such as local job opportunities and government policies, in influencing work readiness. These contextual factors not only influence the level of difficulty faced by graduates in finding work, but also show that the success of vocational education is highly dependent on the existing industrial environment. These findings strengthen the argument of Poláková et al. (2023) who emphasize that effective vocational education must adapt to the needs of the labor market and local industrial developments.

The results of this study support and expand our understanding of the factors that influence the work readiness of vocational high school students, as well as the importance of a holistic approach in vocational education. The integration of technical competencies, soft skills, practical experience, and institutional support that focuses on the needs of the world of work must be part of a broader educational strategy, which is in line with theories of vocational education and career development.

Implications for Vocational Education and Curriculum

The implication of these findings for vocational education is the importance of adapting the curriculum to meet the demands of the ever-evolving industry. Vocational education curricula need to be designed to be more flexible, in order to accommodate rapid changes in technology and the job market. This is in line with the findings in this study which show that competency-based and industry-relevant curricula can improve students' work readiness. Therefore, it is important for educators and policy makers to continue to update and adapt vocational education curricula to the latest trends in the industrial world (Pantaruk et al., 2025).

In addition, the curriculum should place more emphasis on the development of soft skills and 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Vocational education that only emphasizes technical skills may not be enough to prepare graduates to face complex challenges in the world of work. Therefore, integrated education, which includes character development and interpersonal competencies, is essential in preparing graduates who are ready to face a competitive and diverse work environment.

Finally, institutional support in providing career services, structured internship training, and industry partnerships should also be an integral part of the curriculum. As seen in the results of this study, high-quality industrial experience or internships can provide students with first-hand insight into the world of work and help them build more applicable skills. This highlights the important role of schools in collaborating with industry to provide opportunities for students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that future research place more emphasis on the integration of various factors that influence the work readiness of vocational high school graduates. Research that combines factors such as technical competence, soft skills, industrial practice experience, and institutional support can provide a more comprehensive picture of students' work readiness. In addition, future research needs to pay more attention to the role of contextual factors, such as local industry developments and government policies, in influencing work readiness (Boat et al., 2021; Loughlin & Priyadarshini, 2021). Given the challenges faced by developing countries, research on the development of curricula and learning experiences that are relevant to the local labor market is critical.

In addition, further research combining qualitative and quantitative approaches is needed to better understand students' experiences in preparing for their careers, as well as the challenges they face in the workplace. Longitudinal studies can also provide insight into how the work readiness of vocational high school graduates develops over time and the influence of certain factors in the long term. Such research will provide stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of vocational education programs in preparing graduates for the workforce.

Recommendations for future research also include conducting broader cross-country comparisons to understand how different TVET systems affect graduates' employability. This research can enrich the understanding of how education policies and best practices in different countries can be applied in local contexts to improve the quality and relevance of TVET.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aims to identify and classify factors that influence the work readiness of vocational school graduates, analyze the contribution of each factor to work readiness, and provide evidence-based recommendations for the development of learning policies and practices in vocational schools. Based on the results of the analysis and literature review conducted, it can be concluded that the work readiness of vocational school graduates is influenced by various factors that are individual, institutional, and external.

1. Factors Influencing the Work Readiness of Vocational School Graduates Based on Previous Research Results

Based on the literature review, the factors that influence the work readiness of vocational high school graduates can be grouped into three main categories: individual, institutional, and external factors. Individual factors include technical competence, soft skills, self-efficacy, and career motivation possessed by students. Institutional factors include support from educational institutions, such as the quality of teaching, provision of adequate facilities, and relationships with industry for internship or work practice programs. External factors are related to the industrial environment, local job opportunities, and government policies that support vocational education and job creation.

2. Contribution of Each Factor (Individual, Institutional, External) to Graduates' Work Readiness

Analysis of the contribution of individual, institutional, and external factors shows that all three complement each other and have a significant impact on graduates' work readiness. Individual factors, such as technical competence and soft skills, provide a strong foundation for graduates to be able to adapt to the world of work. Good soft skills, such as communication and collaboration skills, have proven to be important factors in increasing graduates' competitiveness in the job market. On the other hand, institutional factors, such as the quality of the curriculum and industrial practice experience, play a major role in equipping graduates with skills that are in accordance with industry needs. Finally, external factors, such as industrial developments and government policies, also play an equally important role, because they provide opportunities for graduates to obtain jobs that are in accordance with their skills.

3. Synthesis of Key Findings Related to Efforts to Strengthen Work Readiness in Vocational Education

Human resources that are ready to work are the result of an education process that is well integrated between technical competencies, soft skills, and practical experience. The main findings of this study indicate that strengthening graduates' work readiness can be achieved through an educational curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the labor market, more

focused soft skills development, and more structured and industry-based practical experience. In addition, the importance of support from educational institutions, both in terms of facilities and cooperation with the business world and industry, is also an aspect that is no less important in improving students' work readiness. Strengthening these factors simultaneously will produce graduates who are more prepared and competitive in the world of work.

4. Evidence-Based Recommendations for the Development of Learning Policies and Practices in Vocational Schools

Based on these findings, there are several evidence-based recommendations for developing learning policies and practices in vocational schools. First, it is important for education policies to support the development of curricula that are more responsive to industry developments and labor market needs, with a focus on improving students' technical and soft skills competencies. Second, strengthening relevant and structured industrial practice or internship experiences needs to be increased and expanded so that students can gain practical skills that are in line with the demands of the world of work. Third, support from the government and educational institutions in providing career development services and guidance for students will greatly assist in their transition from education to the world of work. Finally, this recommendation also points to the need for increased collaboration between educational institutions and the business world to create job opportunities for graduates, as well as support the development of skills that are more in line with existing industry trends.

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