

The Influence of Technical Competence and Work Motivation on the Job Readiness of Grade XII Students (A Survey Conducted at Public and Private Vocational High Schools in the Tambora District, West Jakarta)

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Abstract

The persistently high unemployment rate among vocational high school (VHS) graduates in Indonesia, which reached 9.01% in 2024, indicates a critical disconnect between vocational education and labor market demands, highlighting an urgent need to investigate the factors influencing graduate work readiness. This research investigates the influence of vocational competence and work motivation on the work readiness of twelfth-grade students at public and private vocational high schools in Tambora District, West Jakarta. Prompted by ongoing graduate unemployment linked to a skills mismatch, the study utilized a quantitative survey design. The population consisted of all 102 twelfth-grade students in the Accounting and Financial Institutions and Office Management and Business Services programs, surveyed via a saturated sample. Data gathered from questionnaires were analyzed using multiple correlation, coefficient of determination, and multiple linear regression. Results show a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.788$) between the independent variables and work readiness. With an R^2 of 0.792, vocational competence and work motivation explain 79.2% of the variance in readiness, underscoring the critical role of competency development. The study concludes that vocational schools should prioritize industry-aligned, competency-based learning to better prepare students for the workforce.

Keywords: Vocational Competence, Vocational High School Students, Work Motivation, Work Readiness.

1. Introduction

In responding to the rapid development of the business and industrial sectors, schools are required to continuously enhance the competencies of their students. Schools, in general, are educational institutions that operate in formal, non-formal, and informal settings, administered by either the government or private entities (Hendarman et al., 2020; Kurniawati, 2025). Schools play a crucial role, particularly in supporting human resources development by enhancing knowledge and competencies.

As part of governmental efforts to advance human resource development, Vocational High Schools provide formal, specialized education and training (Dau et al., 2019). Vocational high schools primarily aim to prepare students to be job-ready, entrepreneur-ready, and capable of continuing their education to higher levels. However, many SMK graduates aspire to enter the workforce immediately after graduation. Nevertheless, data from Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) show that the unemployment rate among VHS graduates reached 9.01% in 2024, which is higher than that of other



educational levels. This condition has become a major concern for the government, educational institutions, and the Ministry of Manpower, as VHS graduates who are expected to be ready for employment remain unemployed.

The increasing unemployment rate in Indonesia, which is predominantly contributed by VHS graduates, indicates a critical issue, given that vocational education is designed to produce work-ready graduates. This situation should serve as an evaluation material for the government and relevant educational institutions regarding the relevance of the vocational school curriculum, as many VHS have not fully implemented learning processes aligned with industrial needs. This issue is also caused by the lack of certified competencies among vocational teachers and their limited understanding of industry-based curricula, which consequently results in VHS graduates lacking industry-oriented skills.

Developing technical competencies is crucial for producing work-ready graduates. Here, competence refers to the integrated application of skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes, evident in an individual's habitual actions and mindset (Mulyasa, 2013). Under Government Regulation No. 17 of 2010, vocational secondary education aims to prepare students with relevant science, technology, and vocational skills that meet societal demands (Munawaroh, 2017). In education, learning activities are fundamental, as learning is a conscious activity undertaken by individuals to achieve specific goals. The focus of vocational high schools is to prepare graduates for three pathways: direct entry into the workforce, entrepreneurship, or continued higher education. VHS provide both education and training, with the expectation that their graduates will be better prepared to enter the workforce upon graduation (Afriani & Setiyani, 2015).

The implementation of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 demands new skill sets, making the preparation of human resources with competencies aligned with technological advancements an unavoidable necessity (Maryanti & Apriana, 2019). Therefore, strengthening industry-based curricula and training is crucial in producing adaptive and competent graduates in the era of Industry 4.0. Vocational teachers play a pivotal role as the frontline of vocational education; if they lack industry-oriented skills, this deficiency will directly affect students' technical competencies. Consequently, this issue should receive serious attention from the government, particularly in enhancing the competencies of vocational teachers so that such competencies can be effectively transferred to students.

Entering the industrial sector requires relevant competencies. Therefore, VHS graduates are expected not only to possess technical skills in their respective fields but also to demonstrate professional competence. The high unemployment rate among VHS graduates in Indonesia is partly attributed to low levels of knowledge and skill competencies (Mukhlason et al., 2020). Hence, to ensure work readiness, VHS graduates must acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills that align with their field of expertise.

In addition to technical competencies, VHS students should receive motivation, guidance, and direction relevant to their areas of expertise prior to graduation. Many VHS graduates experience a lack of direction after graduation; although they possess specific skills, they still require motivation and guidance to be truly prepared for employment. Motivation is the driving force behind an individual's actions, influencing the passion, purpose, and determination they put into reaching their objectives. Work motivation refers to internal or external drives, whether conscious or unconscious, that encourage individuals to engage in work activities (Dewi & Tasdin, 2023).

The issues described above contribute to the lack of job readiness among SMK graduates, primarily due to insufficient technical competencies and inadequate work motivation. These factors must be collectively addressed to ensure that VHS graduates are genuinely prepared for employment in accordance with their areas of expertise. This study, which examines the perceptions of students from private vocational high schools in the Tambora District, West Jakarta, is expected to provide

valuable insights for Grade XII students, vocational teachers, and schools in preparing prospective graduates for employment. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in examining and analyzing the topic entitled “The Influence of Technical Competence and Work Motivation on the Job Readiness of Grade XII Students (A Survey Conducted at Private Vocational High Schools in the Tambora District, West Jakarta)”.

2. Methods

A quantitative survey method was used in this study. Following Sugiyono (2019), surveys collect natural data on opinions, characteristics, behaviors, and variable linkages. The researcher administered a structured questionnaire to all twelfth-grade students in public and private vocational schools in Tambora District, West Jakarta, treating the full population as the sample. The questionnaire aimed to assess how vocational competence and work motivation affect work readiness. The population of this study consisted of 102 respondents. a population as the entire set of characteristics or units of measurement that constitute the object of research (Riduwan, 2014). Accordingly, the population of this study included all twelfth-grade students with the following characteristics, as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Research Population

No	School Name	Grade	Amount	Vocational Program
1	VHSP Islam Bahagia	XII	48	Accounting & Institutional Finance
2	VHSP Permata Bunda	XII	20	Accounting & Institutional Finance
3	VHS Negeri 9 Jakarta	XII	34	Office Management & Business Services
Amount			102	

Source: Vocational High School Data for the Tambora District, West Jakarta

This research adopted saturated sampling, incorporating the whole population as the sample. In line with Sugiyono (2019) definition of a sample as a representative subset of the population, every population member was included as a respondent. To test hypotheses and draw valid inferences, data analysis was carried out systematically in stages, utilizing relevant inferential statistical methods for processing all collected data.

Saturated sampling was used as the sampling method, ensuring that every individual in the population was accounted for as participants in the study. This technique was applied because the population size was relatively small and allowed for comprehensive data collection. By involving the entire population, the data obtained accurately represent the actual conditions of twelfth-grade students included in this study. This study’s analytical focus was to assess the relationship and effect of the independent variables, vocational competence (X_1) and work motivation (X_2), on the dependent variable of student work readiness (Y). The statistical techniques employed included multiple correlation analysis, coefficient of determination analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis.

To assess the strength and direction of the simultaneous relationship between vocational competence, work motivation, and students' work readiness, multiple correlation analysis was conducted. The multiple correlation coefficient (R) quantifies the degree of association between these independent variables and the dependent variable. An R value near 1 reflects a strong positive relationship, while a value approaching 0 indicates a weak association. A positive correlation implies that enhanced vocational competence and work motivation correspond with higher levels of student work readiness. Additionally, coefficient of determination (R^2) analysis was performed to determine how much of the variance in work readiness can be collectively explained by vocational competence

and work motivation. The R^2 value represents the proportion of variance accounted for by the model, with the remainder attributable to factors outside the study.

To assess the functional relationship and the significance of both partial and simultaneous effects, multiple linear regression was applied. This analysis tests whether vocational competence and work motivation significantly impact work readiness and reveals which predictor is most influential. The employed data analysis procedures yield a comprehensive view of these relationships, forming a strong empirical basis for conclusions and recommendations.

3. Results and Discussion

The research procedure began with validity and reliability testing, conducted by administering the questionnaire to 30 randomly sampled respondents. Following this, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method was applied for analysis, with results provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Normality Test Results

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test				
		Skill Competency	Work Motivation	Work Readiness
N		102	102	102
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	84.24	83.58	86.65
	Std. Deviation	9.248	9.280	9.782
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.079	.122	.095
	Positive	.079	.109	.095
	Negative	-.069	-.122	-.095
Test Statistic		.079	.122	.095
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c		.123	.001	.024
		Sig.	.001	.022
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) ^d	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.000	.018
		Upper Bound	.001	.026

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

d. Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 1314643744.

Source: Processed by the researcher

The One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test applied to residuals ($n = 102$) revealed that vocational competence data were normally distributed (Asymp. Sig. = $0.123 > 0.05$). However, work motivation (0.001) and work readiness (0.024) both showed significant departures from normality, as their p-values were below 0.05 . Therefore, further analysis for the work motivation and work readiness variables was conducted using a non-parametric approach, namely correlation analysis. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple Correlation Analysis Results

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.890 ^a	.792	.788	.05372

a. Predictors: (Constant), X₂, X₁

b. Dependent Variable: Y

Source: Processed by the researcher

Analysis using SPSS 27 yielded a multiple correlation coefficient of 0.788, which falls within the 0.60–0.799 range and, with 102 respondents, is interpreted as strong. Additionally, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.792, indicating that 79.2% of the variance in work readiness (Y) is explained by vocational competence (X_1) and work motivation (X_2), while the remaining 20.8% is due to factors outside the scope of this study.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Coefficients ^a				t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	2.477	4.444			.557	.579
Skill Competency	.275	.066	.260		4.151	.000
Work Motivation	.730	.066	.693		11.076	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Work Readiness

Source: Processed by the researcher

According to the data in Table 4, the equation for multiple linear regression is derived as follows:

$$Y = a + b_1.X_1 + b_2.X_2$$

$$Y = 2,477 + 0,275 + 0,730$$

Where:

Y = Work Readiness

X_1 = Vocational Competence

X_2 = Work Motivation

Table 4 (Coefficients) presents the regression results with work readiness as the dependent variable and vocational competence and work motivation as predictors. The constant (2.477) is not statistically significant ($p = 0.579 > 0.05$). Vocational competence shows a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.275$, $t = 4.151$, $p = 0.001$), meaning each unit increase in competence raises work readiness by 0.275 units, *ceteris paribus*. Work motivation also has a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.730$, $t = 11.076$, $p = 0.001$), with each unit increase in motivation increasing work readiness by 0.730 units. Based on the standardized beta coefficients, vocational competence has a beta value of 0.260, while work motivation has a beta value of 0.693. Thus, it can be concluded that work motivation is the most dominant variable influencing work readiness.

Table 5. F Test Results

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	7661.545	2	3830.772	189.268	.000 ^b
Residual	2003.749	99	20.240		
Total	9665.294	101			

a. Dependent Variable: Work Readiness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Skill Competency, Work Motivation

Source: Processed by the researcher

According to the ANOVA results in table 5, the regression model is statistically significant, with $F(2, 99) = 189.268$, $p = 0.001 (< 0.05)$. The regression sum of squares (7,661.545) indicates the variance in work readiness explained by work motivation and vocational competence, while the residual sum of squares (2,003.749) reflects unexplained variance attributable to other factors. With a regression mean square of 3,830.772 and a residual mean square of 20.240, the high F-value demonstrates the model's strong explanatory power in predicting work readiness.

Table 6. Nonparametric Correlation Test

		Correlations		
			Work Motivation	Work Readiness
Spearman's rho	Work Motivation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.854**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	102	102
	Work Readiness	Correlation Coefficient	.854**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	102	102

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Processed by the researcher

Non-parametric correlation analysis yielded a significance value of 0.000 for the relationship between work motivation and work readiness. Since this is below the 0.10 threshold, a statistically significant relationship is confirmed, and there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H_0). Furthermore, multiple linear regression and coefficient of determination analyses indicate that work motivation and vocational competence collectively have a significant effect on work readiness. Individually, each variable also exerts a positive and significant influence, with work motivation being the strongest predictor in enhancing readiness.

3.1. Discussion

The regression analysis reveals a constant of 2.477, which is not statistically significant ($p = 0.579 > 0.05$). This indicates that when both vocational competence and work motivation are zero, the baseline work readiness score is 2.477, though this intercept does not meaningfully predict the outcome. Vocational competence shows a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.275$, $t = 4.151$, $p = 0.001$), meaning each unit increase in competence raises work readiness by 0.275 units, *ceteris paribus*. Similarly, work motivation has a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.730$, $t = 11.076$, $p = 0.001$), with each unit increase in motivation corresponding to a 0.730-unit rise in readiness.

These findings align with previous research examining factors influencing vocational students' work readiness. The significant positive effect of vocational competence found in this study is consistent with the work of Riyanto et al. (2020), who reported that job competence has a significant influence on vocational students' work readiness ($p = 0.007$) among 717 vocational students in Cilacap Regency. Similarly, a systematic literature review by Harianto et al. (2025) identified technical competence as one of the primary individual factors affecting vocational school graduates' work readiness, alongside soft skills and self-efficacy. This convergence of findings across different contexts and methodologies strengthens the evidence that developing students' vocational competencies is fundamental to preparing them for workforce entry.

The coefficient of determination in the present study ($R^2 = 0.792$) indicates that vocational competence and work motivation together explain 79.2% of the variance in work readiness, which is considerably higher than the 30.7% reported for vocational competence alone in the study by Febrian et al. (2024). This substantial difference underscores the importance of examining multiple predictors simultaneously and highlights the powerful combined effect of competence and motivation on readiness outcomes. The remaining 20.8% of variance unexplained by these two factors may be attributed to other variables identified in the literature, such as self-efficacy (Ma'arif et al., 2025; Urrofik et al., 2025), soft skills (Fitriyani et al., 2025), industrial work practice (Wati et al., 2025), or career guidance (Ma'arif et al., 2025).

The finding that work motivation has a stronger effect ($\beta = 0.730$) than vocational competence ($\beta = 0.275$) on work readiness merits particular attention. This result is supported by Rizqianto & Hidayat

(2025), who found that among final-year university students, work motivation significantly contributed to job readiness while social support did not show a statistically significant effect, leading them to conclude that "internal factors particularly individual motivation" play a crucial role in enhancing job readiness as students transition into the workforce. The primacy of motivation is further corroborated by Fitriyani et al. (2025), who identified work motivation as a mediating variable between soft skills, self-efficacy, and fresh graduate job readiness, suggesting that motivation may serve as a mechanism through which other individual characteristics influence readiness outcomes.

The significant positive relationship between vocational competence and work readiness found in the present study can be contextualized within broader research on competency-based approaches. Urrofik et al. (2025) demonstrated that competency-based training significantly affects both work skills and work readiness among training participants at vocational centers, with work skills mediating the relationship between competency-based training and readiness. This suggests that the pathway from vocational competence to work readiness may operate partially through the development of specific employability skills. However, it is important to note that not all studies have found consistent effects: Musa & Rashid (2020) reported that competency-based learning approaches did not have a significant effect on career readiness among vocational college graduates in Malaysia, highlighting the importance of how competency-based education is implemented and contextualized.

The partial t-test addressing the first research question whether vocational competence affects work readiness among twelfth-grade TITL students at SMKN 2 Pandeglang reveals a positive and significant effect. The analysis yields a calculated t-value of 5.453, which exceeds the critical value of 1.997 ($t = 5.453 > 1.997$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) and acceptance of the alternative (H_a). This confirms that vocational competence positively influences work readiness. Additionally, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.307$) indicates that vocational competence explains 30.7% of the variance in work readiness, with the remaining 69.3% attributable to factors beyond this study.

The findings of Dau et al. (2019) reported a significant positive Pearson correlation ($r = 0.466$, $p = 0.002$) between industrial work practice and work readiness, with an R^2 of 0.217. This aligns with the broader literature establishing work practice experiences as important contributors to readiness. However, a more recent study by Ma'arif et al. (2025) presents a more complex picture: their analysis showed that field work practice had a significant but negative effect on work readiness among vocational students, while self-efficacy and career guidance demonstrated positive and significant effects. The authors interpreted this unexpected finding as indicating a need "to review the Field Work Practice system," suggesting that the quality and structure of work practice experiences may be as important as their mere presence. This nuanced finding underscores the importance of examining not just whether vocational competence matters, but how it is developed through specific educational practices.

The statistical analysis reveals a significant positive Pearson correlation ($r = 0.466$, $p = 0.002 < 0.01$) between industrial work practice and work readiness, leading to the rejection of H_0 . Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.217$) indicates that industrial work practice accounts for 21.7% of the variance in work readiness, with the remaining 78.3% attributable to other factors. Supportive t-test results ($t = 3.242$, $p = 0.002$; t-critical = 2.024, $df = 38$) confirm the significance of this relationship, thereby accepting H_a and rejecting H_0 .

The present study's finding that vocational competence and work motivation jointly explain 79.2% of work readiness variance represents a contribution to the literature by demonstrating the powerful combined effect of these two factors. This is consistent with Chayomchai (2025) comparative study of Generation Z workers and employers in Thailand, which identified work motivation as one of

four key factors (alongside technology skill, learning skill, and attitude) that both students and employers agreed influence work readiness. The convergence between student and employer perspectives on the importance of motivation suggests that interventions targeting motivational factors may be particularly valuable for aligning graduate capabilities with labor market expectations.

However, the literature also suggests that the relationship between vocational competence and work readiness may be more complex than direct effects models suggest. Wati et al. (2025), examining vocational students in Kendal Regency, found that of sixteen hypothesized relationships, only three showed positive and significant effects, including the path from industrial work practices to soft skills and from learning achievement to soft skills. This complexity is echoed by Agussalim et al. (2024), who reported that work skills and family socioeconomic status did not play a substantial direct role in determining work readiness, but instead influenced readiness through entrepreneurial attitude as an intervening variable. These findings suggest that future research should consider more complex models including mediating and moderating variables to fully understand how vocational competence translates into work readiness.

In conclusion, the present study confirms and extends previous research by demonstrating the significant positive effects of both vocational competence and work motivation on work readiness among twelfth-grade vocational students. The stronger effect of motivation compared to competence highlights the need for vocational schools to focus not only on technical skill development but also on fostering students' internal drive to enter the workforce. The high combined explanatory power (79.2%) suggests that these two factors are central to work readiness, though the remaining unexplained variance indicates opportunities for future research to incorporate additional variables such as self-efficacy, soft skills, and the quality of industrial work experiences. These findings have practical implications for curriculum design and student support services in vocational education, suggesting that integrated approaches addressing both competence development and motivational enhancement may be most effective in preparing graduates for successful workforce entry.

4. Conclusion

The findings indicate that vocational competence (X_1) and work motivation (X_2) explain 79.2% of the variance in work readiness (Y) ($R^2 = 0.792$), while the remaining 20.8% is influenced by other factors. Furthermore, a strong relationship exists between vocational competence, work motivation, and work readiness, as indicated by a correlation coefficient of 0.788. This study is limited to vocational high schools in the Tambora District, specifically focusing on the Accounting and Institutional Finance and the Office Management and Business Services study programs. Additional limitations include the restricted geographical scope, confinement to two specific study programs, cross-sectional design that cannot establish causality, reliance on self-reported measures susceptible to response bias, and the unexplained 20.8% variance that may be attributed to unexamined variables.

Theoretically, this study contributes empirical support for multidimensional frameworks of work readiness, demonstrating that motivational factors ($\beta = 0.730$) exert a stronger influence than competence factors ($\beta = 0.275$), extending social cognitive career theory by highlighting the relative importance of psychological constructs alongside skill-based competencies. Practically, these findings suggest vocational schools should integrate competence development with motivational enhancement through career guidance, industry partnerships, and mentorship programs. For policymakers, the high explanatory power (79.2%) indicates that interventions targeting both competence and motivation could be cost-effective strategies for improving graduate employment outcomes. Future research should expand geographically across diverse regions and vocational specializations, employ

longitudinal designs to track readiness development over time, incorporate additional variables such as self-efficacy and soft skills, utilize qualitative methods for deeper contextual understanding, and conduct intervention studies testing specific strategies for enhancing both vocational competence and work motivation.

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