Vol. 14, No. 03, pp. 1831-1846, 2024 DOI: 10.23960/jpp.v14.i3.2024124

Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif

e-ISSN: 2550-1313 | p-ISSN: 2087-9849

http://jurnal.fkip.unila.ac.id/index.php/jpp/

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

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Received: 26 November 2024 Accepted: 17 December 2024 Published: 19 December 2024

Abstract: Factors Affecting the Work Readiness of Vocational School Students: A Systematic Literature Review. Objectives: This study aims to comprehensively identify and analyze the factors affecting the work readiness of vocational school students, employing a systematic literature review approach. It seeks to provide comprehensive insights into individual, educational, and contextual elements that shape students' preparedness for transitioning into the workforce. **Methods:** The research employs a systematic literature review methodology, analyzing relevant academic articles and reports published between 2015 and 2024. Sources were selected based on predefined criteria emphasizing their relevance to vocational education, work readiness, and factors shaping students' transition to employment. Key themes were identified and synthesized to construct a comprehensive understanding of the topic. **Findings:** The study identifies three principal dimensions influencing work readiness. First, individual factors, including motivation, interpersonal skills, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and soft skills, are crucial in equipping students to adapt successfully to professional environments. Second, the learning process, including experiential activities like internships and teaching factories, enhances students' technical and non-technical skills by bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Third, contextual factors—such as socioeconomic status, regional disparities, and social support systems—substantially impact students' access to resources and opportunities, thereby shaping their career preparedness. Additionally, regional disparities in school-industry partnerships underscore the need for localized interventions to address these gaps. **Conclusion:** Work readiness among vocational school students is a multifaceted construct shaped by individual characteristics, practical learning experiences, and contextual influences. Developing targeted strategies, such as integrating industry-relevant practical learning models and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, can significantly enhance students' preparedness for entering the workforce. Policymakers and educators are encouraged to address resource and opportunity disparities to ensure equitable outcomes for all students.

Keywords: contextual factors, individual factors, systematic literature review, vocational school students, work readiness.

To cite this article:

Suroto, Sunyono, Sukirlan, M., Winatha, I, K., Yuliyanto, R., & Rahmawati, F. (2024). Factors Affecting the Work Readiness of Vocational School Students: A Systematic Literature Review. *Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif, 14*(3), 1831-1846. doi: 10.23960/jpp.v14.i3.2024124.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized and technology-driven world, work readiness has emerged as a critical concern for both employers and educators (Putriatama et al., 2016; Suroto et al., 2017; Tentama & Riskiyana, 2020). The preparedness of vocational school students to transition from the classroom to the workforce

has garnered significant attention (Indrawati et al., 2023), as these students often face unique challenges in developing the skills and competencies required for successful employment (Conn et al., 2017). The work readiness of vocational school students is particularly important, given their vital role as drivers of industrial and national development in the future (Putriatama et al., 2016; Sulistiobudi & Kadiyono, 2023). However, many vocational school graduates still lack adequate work readiness, as evidenced by the persistently high unemployment rates among this group. Vocational school graduates, who are expected to enter the workforce directly as skilled personnel meeting industry demands, often fail to fulfill these expectations. (Suroto, Pargito, et al., 2023; Wahyudi et al., 2023).

The issue of work readiness among vocational school students has become a pressing topic of discussion (Wahyudi et al., 2023). According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), as of July 2024, the unemployment rate for vocational school graduates in Indonesia stood at 9.31%, the highest among all educational levels. Several fundamental issues have been identified as contributing factors, including: (1) insufficient technical skills aligned with industry requirements, (2) lack of soft skills such as communication and collaboration, (3) limited work experience, and (4) a mismatch between graduate competencies and employment demands (Permana et al., 2023; Lawton et al., 2024; Yuliyanto et al., 2024). Additionally, societal preference for university education over vocational pathways has exacerbated the shortage of skilled technical personnel. (Conn et al., 2017).

The growing global demand for a competent and adaptive workforce underscores the urgency of research into the work readiness of vocational school students. This demand necessitates continuous improvement in the quality of vocational school graduates to ensure their competitiveness in the labor market. Vocational schools serve as an alternative educational pathway, focusing on practical learning to produce a middle-level workforce (Permana et al., 2023; Yuliyanto et al., 2024). These institutions are designed to prepare students for specific careers, equipping them with relevant skills to enter the workforce, establish entrepreneurial ventures, or pursue further education (Inderanata & Sukardi, 2023; Plasman & Gottfried, 2022). Nevertheless, the quality of vocational schools in Indonesia has yet to meet the qualification standards expected by employers and industries..

Previous research has highlighted various factors influencing the work readiness of vocational school students, such as the quality of pre-school programs (Yuliyanto et al., 2024), student competencies (Hidayatulloh & Ashoumi, 2022; Putriatama et al., 2016), and parental support (Yunus, 2016). Beyond academic factors, non-academic aspects, such as mental well-being, school readiness, and the availability of adequate learning facilities, also play significant roles in shaping work readiness (Sulistiobudi & Kadiyono, 2023; Tentama & Riskiyana, 2020). While existing literature primarily focuses on the general experiences of vocational students, limited attention has been given to their unique challenges and needs. This gap underscores the necessity of a comprehensive approach that addresses not only academic factors but also broader contextual influences. Although several studies have reviewed factors affecting work readiness at the university level (Masole & van Dyk, 2016; Lawton et al., 2024), research focusing on vocational school students remains scarce, particularly those analyzing articles published in reputable journals. A systematic literature review is therefore essential to synthesize existing findings and provide a foundation for curriculum development tailored to enhance work readiness. Such research can support the alignment of vocational education with industry demands, ensuring graduates are

equipped with relevant skills and contributing to the success of vocational education objectives..

This study aims to systematically identify and analyze the factors influencing the work readiness of vocational school students. Previous research has highlighted various determinants, including individual attributes, the learning process, and broader contextual influences. However, gaps remain in understanding how these dimensions intersect and contribute to work readiness outcomes. To address these gaps, this study formulates the following research questions:

1. What are the key individual factors influencing the work readiness of vocational high school (SMK) students, and how do interpersonal skills, work motivation, and self-efficacy contribute to their transition into the workforce?
2. How does the implementation of practice-based learning, such as internships and teaching factories, enhance the technical and non-technical competencies of vocational students and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and workplace application?
3. To what extent do contextual factors, including socioeconomic status, social support, and regional disparities, affect the work readiness of vocational students and their access to equitable employment opportunities?
4. How can collaboration among schools, industries, and communities be optimized to improve the alignment of vocational education with labor market demands?
5. What effective strategies can be implemented to address the mismatch between vocational school graduates' competencies and industry requirements, ensuring their success in the workforce?

By addressing these questions, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of work readiness in vocational education. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of targeted interventions and strategic recommendations, enabling educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to collaboratively enhance the employability of vocational school graduates.

■ METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology to explore the factors influencing the work readiness of vocational high school (SMK) students. The SLR approach was chosen for its ability to synthesize existing research comprehensively and systematically (Suroto, Sunyono, et al., 2023). To ensure rigor and transparency, the study follows the guidelines outlined in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA).

The research examines peer-reviewed articles and reports published between 2015 and 2024, specifically addressing vocational education, work readiness, and factors shaping students' transition to the workforce. Through a structured process of identifying, selecting, and analyzing relevant studies, this research aims to provide a multidimensional perspective on the individual, educational, and contextual elements shaping vocational students' readiness for employment.

The research method used in this study is a systematic literature review that focuses on identifying and analyzing factors that affect the work readiness of vocational school students. This systematic approach follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, ensuring a rigorous and transparent review process. (Moher et al., 2009). The review process follows four main stages as outlined by Xiao & Watson (2019): (1) defining inclusion criteria, (2) identifying relevant articles, (3) selecting studies that meet the inclusion criteria, and (4) evaluating the quality and feasibility of the selected articles for analysis.

This research is guided by the following questions, formulated to address the gaps identified in the introduction:

1. What are the key individual factors influencing the work readiness of vocational high school (SMK) students, and how do interpersonal skills, work motivation, and self-efficacy contribute to their transition into the workforce?
2. How does the implementation of practice-based learning, such as internships and teaching factories, enhance the technical and non-technical competencies of vocational students and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and workplace application?
3. To what extent do contextual factors, including socioeconomic status, social support, and regional disparities, affect the work readiness of vocational students and their access to equitable employment opportunities?
4. How can collaboration among schools, industries, and communities be optimized to improve the alignment of vocational education with labor market demands?
5. What effective strategies can be implemented to address the mismatch between vocational school graduates' competencies and industry requirements, ensuring their success in the workforce?

These questions provide a framework for analyzing the collected data and ensuring a focused investigation into the multidimensional factors affecting the work readiness of vocational school students.

Search Strategy

A systematic search of academic literature was conducted using the Scopus database. Keywords such as "work readiness," "vocational school students," and related terms were employed to identify relevant studies. Boolean operators and truncation were applied to expand the search scope. The search targeted studies published in English to ensure accessibility and consistency in interpretation. Additionally, the search included journals and conference proceedings directly related to vocational education and employability.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

To maintain focus and relevance, the following criteria were applied:

1. Inclusion Criteria: Studies published between 2015 and 2024; peer-reviewed articles; studies addressing work readiness in vocational school contexts; research investigating individual, educational, or contextual factors; and publications available in English.
2. Exclusion Criteria: Studies not directly related to vocational education; articles lacking empirical data or methodological rigor; duplicate records; and studies published in non-peer-reviewed outlets.

The inclusion and exclusion process involved a two-stage screening: an initial review of titles and abstracts, followed by a full-text review to confirm relevance to the study objectives.

Data Analysis

Data were extracted systematically from the selected articles to identify recurring themes and trends. Key information, such as study population, research methods, variables, and findings, was organized into a structured summary table. Thematic synthesis was employed to group the identified factors into individual, educational, and contextual dimensions. A descriptive-quantitative approach was used to evaluate publication trends over the review period, while qualitative analysis was applied to interpret the implications of the findings. The synthesized data were analyzed to highlight gaps in the literature and provide recommendations for future research and policy development.

The article search and selection process adhered to the PRISMA model, ensuring a systematic and transparent approach. Initially, 122 articles were identified through a comprehensive search. An initial screening based on the titles and abstracts narrowed the selection to 54 articles deemed relevant for further evaluation. These articles were then reviewed in full to assess their alignment with the research objectives and methodological rigor. Following this comprehensive review process, 16 articles were finalized for in-depth analysis. These selected articles were analyzed to explore the factors influencing the work readiness of vocational school students.

A descriptive analysis approach was employed, incorporating descriptive-quantitative examinations to evaluate the completeness and reliability of the collected data. The 16 articles sourced from the Scopus database were subjected to further analysis. The review revealed a growing academic interest in the factors affecting the work readiness of vocational school students over the years. Notably, 2023 marked a peak in publications on this topic, reflecting a surge in scholarly attention. While there were periods of decline, such as from 2017 to 2019, the upward trend in 2023 indicates a renewed focus on this area. The fluctuations in the number of articles published over the years are illustrated in Figure 2.

The systematic review process, visualized in Figure 1, outlines the rigorous identification, screening, and inclusion of relevant articles,

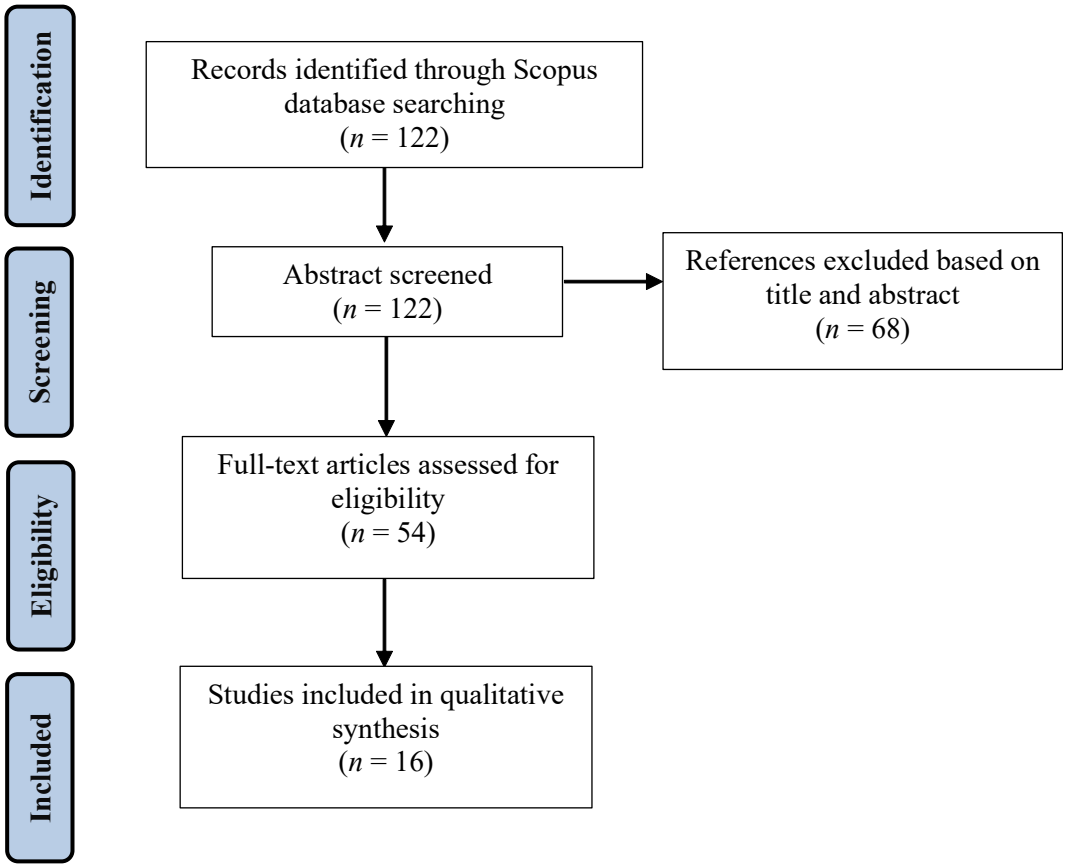

Figure 1. Prisma flow diagram of systematic review

resulting in a focused dataset for analysis. Following this, Figure 2 captures the publication trends over the study period, highlighting fluctuations in academic interest in vocational work readiness from 2015 to 2024. These trends reflect the evolving priorities within the field, with a notable increase in publications in 2023, suggesting a growing recognition of the importance of vocational education and its alignment with workforce demands. Together, these figures provide a comprehensive overview of the methodological process and temporal context of the reviewed literature.

Figure 2 illustrates the trend in the number of articles published between 2015 and 2024, highlighting fluctuations over the years. Although

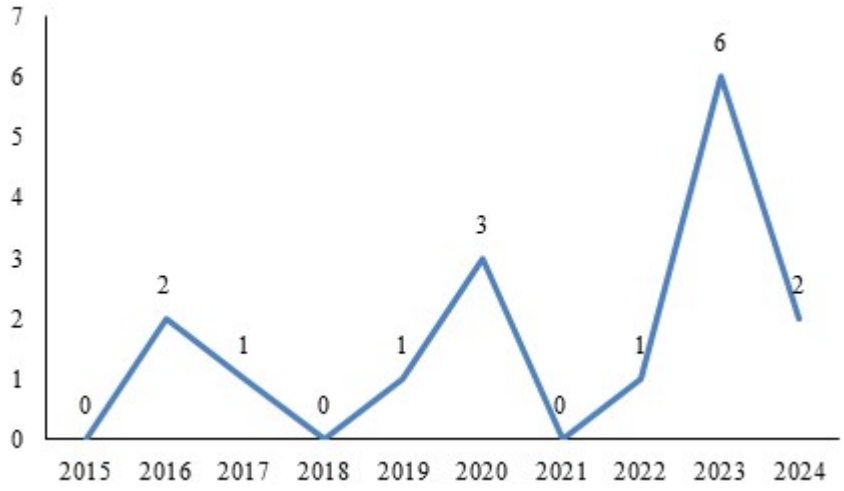

Figure 2. Article fluctuations in 2015 – 2024

the changes in quantity are relatively modest, the overall pattern reveals a gradual increase in publications from 2015 to 2022, culminating in a notable peak in 2023. This upward trend suggests a growing academic interest in the topic during this period. Additionally, Table 1 provides a summary of the main research focuses, emphasizing the various factors influencing the employability of vocational school students as analyzed in the reviewed articles.

Table 1. Studies that assess work readiness factors

Author	Variables Used	Population	Subject	Method
(Hidayatulloh & Ashoumi, 2022)	Communication and collaboration skills	625	Students	Quantitative
(Schneider et al., 2023)	Implementation of theory-based training	25	Teachers	Qualitative
(Mahmudah et al., 2022)	Forms of partnership and partnership management	-	Vocational high school students and have done industrial practices	Qualitative
(Rosidah & Sutirman, 2023)	Teaching Factory (TEFA) Learning Model	20	Vocational school students who participate in the TEFA teaching and learning program	Qualitative

(Sudarsono et al., 2024)	Implementation of learning and training within industry (LTWI) model	12 teachers and 89 students	Teacher and students from the automotive engineering department	Research and Development (R&D)
(Plasman & Gottfried, 2022)	Applied STEM career and technical education (AS-CTE) and absence from school	More than 23.000 students in over 900 schools across the United States	Students	Longitudinal Study
(Inderanata & Sukardi, 2023)	Integrated vocational guidance	32 students divided into experimental and control classes	Students of the Mechanical Engineering Expertise Program	Quasi-experimental research with a quantitative approach
(Yunus, 2016)	Innovative learning, school-business partnership, and parents' social status	2.797	Vocational school students majoring in Business and Management	Explanatory research which uses cross sectional survey approach
(Indrawati et al., 2023)	Work motivation, interpersonal skills, and knowledge construction	1.327	Vocational school students majoring in Business and Management	Quantitative
(Sulistiobudi & Kadiyono, 2023)	Role of psychological capital and perceived student-parent career congruences	317	Rural private vocational secondary schools students	Quantitative
(Prianto et al., 2020)	Implementation of teaching factory and its learning involvement	1.412	Students	Quantitative
(Wahyudi et al., 2023)	Soft skills consisting of creativity, information gathering, public speaking, problem solving, confidence, character, critical thinking, communication, and cooperation	530	Students	Quantitative
(Tentama & Riskiyana, 2020)	Social support and self-regulation	170	Students	Quantitative

(Permana et al., 2023)	Students' self-efficacy	360	Students	Quantitative
(Jannah et al., 2016)	Competence Acquisition, Internship, Career Interest	420	Vocational school students majoring in Computer and Networking Department	Quantitative
(Putriatama et al., 2016)	Industrial work practice experience, vocational competence, employability skill	329	Vocational school students majoring in Computer and Networking Department	Explanatory research

Table 1 provides a summary of the characteristics of each study, including the variables assessed, population, subjects, and methods. The research characteristics are synthesized based on the research design and disciplinary focus. The studies are categorized according to their approach to analyzing the factors influencing work readiness. This synthesis highlights the dynamic nature of academic interest in vocational education and work readiness, reflecting changing priorities and the evolving demands of the labor market. The detailed breakdown in Table 1 offers valuable insights into nuanced factors such as curriculum relevance, practical training, and industry engagement, all of which are critical for preparing vocational students to transition effectively into the workforce.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Key Individual Factors Influencing Work Readiness

Work readiness among vocational school students is shaped by various individual factors, including interpersonal skills, work motivation, and self-efficacy. These factors are fundamental in determining how students transition from educational institutions to professional environments and integrate effectively into the workforce (Hargie, 2011). Interpersonal skills, such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability, are among the most critical competencies for work readiness. According to Wahyudi et al. (2023), students with strong interpersonal skills exhibit higher confidence and effectiveness in collaborative workplace settings. These skills enable students to build professional relationships, navigate team dynamics, and resolve conflicts constructively. Activities like group projects, peer collaboration, and role-playing exercises in vocational schools can enhance these competencies, providing students with real-world skills that are transferable across industries.

Work motivation is a pivotal factor influencing students' readiness for employment. Indrawati et al. (2023) highlight that motivated students demonstrate greater persistence in achieving professional goals and are more inclined to actively apply their knowledge and skills in workplace settings. Motivation can be intrinsic, such as a personal drive to excel, or extrinsic, influenced by rewards, recognition, or future career opportunities. Vocational schools can nurture motivation by integrating career counseling and mentorship programs into their curricula, helping students align their goals with industry expectations.

Self-efficacy, defined by Bandura, (2012) as the belief in one's capability to execute tasks, is another significant factor influencing work readiness. Permana et al. (2023) found that

students with high self-efficacy exhibit greater resilience and adaptability in the face of workplace challenges. These students are more likely to take initiative and approach new tasks with confidence, traits that are highly valued by employers. Additionally, self-regulation, the ability to manage emotions and behaviors effectively, further enhances students' capacity to meet professional demands (Tentama & Riskiyana, 2020).

Moreover, soft skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, are essential in preparing students for a dynamic and evolving job market. Wahyudi et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of integrating soft skills development into vocational education to equip students with the flexibility and innovation needed in modern industries. Structured workshops, practical simulations, and extracurricular activities serve as effective platforms for students to develop and refine these skills.

In conclusion, individual factors such as interpersonal skills, work motivation, self-efficacy, and soft skills are foundational for work readiness. Addressing these aspects through targeted educational interventions ensures that vocational school graduates are equipped not only with technical expertise but also with the personal attributes required for professional success.

Practice-Based Learning and Its Impact on Work Readiness

Practice-based learning, encompassing internships, teaching factories, and hands-on training, is a critical element in vocational education that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and workplace application (Nägele & Stalder, 2017). This approach provides students with practical experiences that prepare them for real-world challenges. Internships are widely recognized as an effective method for enhancing students' work readiness. Jannah et al. (2016) observed that internship programs enable students to apply classroom learning in professional contexts, fostering technical competencies and workplace adaptability. During internships, students gain exposure to industry operations, professional standards, and collaborative environments, equipping them with the skills needed to succeed in their careers. Furthermore, Mahmudah et al. (2022) noted that internships enhance problem-solving abilities and confidence by immersing students in authentic work settings.

Teaching factories, another effective practice-based model, simulate real industrial environments within educational institutions. Prianto et al. (2020) emphasize that teaching factories enable students to develop job-specific skills through hands-on production activities. These experiences not only enhance technical expertise but also cultivate essential soft skills, such as teamwork, communication, and leadership. Rosidah & Sutirman (2023) further highlight that service production units within teaching factories provide entrepreneurial exposure, encouraging students to think innovatively and take initiative.

Teachers play a crucial role in effectively facilitating practice-based learning. Plasman & Gottfried (2022) argue that educators who actively engage in the design and implementation of practical learning modules significantly influence students' read for employment. By incorporating industry-relevant tasks and providing constructive feedback, teachers help students align their skills with labor market requirements. Collaboration with industries further enhances the effectiveness of practice-based learning. Mahmudah et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of partnerships between vocational schools and local industries in providing students with access to updated technologies, real-world challenges, and professional mentorship. These collaborations ensure that vocational education remains aligned with current industry standards and needs.

In conclusion, practice-based learning models, such as internships and teaching factories, play a vital role in equipping students with the skills and experiences required for workforce readiness. Strengthening collaborations between schools, teachers, and industries is essential for optimizing these programs and ensuring their effectiveness.

Contextual Factors Affecting Work Readiness

Work readiness is also influenced by contextual factors, including socioeconomic status, regional disparities, and social support systems (Rodriguez-Segura et al., 2021). These factors create varying levels of access and opportunities for vocational school students, significantly impacting their preparedness for the workforce. Socioeconomic status is a critical determinant of students' access to resources and opportunities. Yunus (2016) observed that students from lower-income families often face financial constraints and limited exposure to career guidance, which hinder their ability to acquire essential skills. Conversely, students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from additional training programs and career development opportunities, giving them a competitive edge in the labor market (Humaedi et al., 2021).

Regional disparities significantly exacerbate inequalities in work readiness. Schools in urban areas typically have better infrastructure, stronger industry connections, and more advanced technologies compared to those in rural regions. Mahmudah et al. (2022) noted that vocational schools in underdeveloped regions face challenges in providing practical training opportunities, limiting students' exposure to real-world applications. Addressing these disparities through policy interventions and regional partnerships is crucial for ensuring equitable outcomes. Social support systems also play a vital role in shaping work readiness. Tentama & Riskiyana (2020) found that students with strong support from family, peers, and educators exhibit higher levels of confidence and preparedness for employment. Family encouragement, in particular, influences students' career choices and motivation to succeed. Sulistiobudi & Kadiyono (2023) emphasize the importance of parental alignment with students' career aspirations, especially in collectivist cultures like Indonesia.

To address these contextual challenges, vocational schools must implement targeted interventions, such as scholarships, mentorship programs, and industry collaborations, to bridge the gaps created by socioeconomic and regional disparities (Lerner, 2018). Policymakers should also prioritize investments in underdeveloped regions to ensure that all students have access to quality vocational education (Liu et al., 2022). In summary, contextual factors such as socioeconomic status, regional disparities, and social support systems significantly influence work readiness. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach that ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all vocational school students.

Collaboration Among Schools, Industries, and Communities

Collaboration among schools, industries, and communities is a critical factor in enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of vocational education(Plant & Slippers, 2015). This partnership ensures that the curriculum, training, and overall educational approach align with the ever-changing demands of the labor market, providing students with the skills and competencies needed for successful employment (Ciarocco, 2018). One of the most significant aspects of school-industry collaboration is the development of internship programs and practice-based learning models. Mahmudah et al. (2022) emphasize that partnerships between vocational

schools and industries enable students to gain hands-on experience and exposure to real-world professional environments. These collaborations ensure that students acquire technical competencies and familiarity with workplace dynamics, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Industries benefit from such collaborations by gaining access to a skilled workforce that meets their specific needs, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship.

Furthermore, industries play an essential role in shaping vocational school curricula. By involving industry representatives in curriculum development, schools can ensure that their programs reflect current trends and technological advancements in the workforce. Prianto et al. (2020) suggest that industry involvement in designing teaching factories and production-based learning activities allows students to develop job-specific skills that are immediately applicable upon graduation. These partnerships also facilitate continuous feedback loops, enabling schools to adapt and update their training programs as industry requirements evolve. Communities also play a pivotal role in enhancing the vocational education system. Local governments and community organizations can support vocational schools by providing funding, organizing job fairs, and facilitating mentorship programs. For instance, community-driven initiatives such as apprenticeship schemes and local business partnerships create pathways for students to access employment opportunities in their regions. Community leaders can also advocate for policies that prioritize vocational education, ensuring that schools receive the resources needed to deliver quality training programs.

Teachers are key intermediaries in fostering collaboration among schools, industries, and communities. As facilitators, they guide students in integrating the knowledge gained from industry partnerships into their learning experiences. Plasman & Gottfried (2022) note that teachers who engage with industry professionals are better equipped to provide students with relevant and actionable insights. Moreover, teachers can help students navigate the complexities of professional environments by providing mentorship and career guidance.

Despite its potential, collaboration between schools, industries, and communities faces challenges such as unequal access to industry partners, particularly in rural areas, and limited resources for fostering partnerships. Policymakers must address these challenges by incentivizing industry participation and providing financial support to vocational schools. In conclusion, fostering collaboration among schools, industries, and communities is essential for aligning vocational education with labor market demands. By working together, these stakeholders can create a robust ecosystem that enhances the employability of vocational school students and ensures that they are well-prepared for their professional roles.

Strategies to Address Competency Gaps

Addressing the mismatch between vocational school graduates' competencies and industry requirements is a critical challenge in improving work readiness. Effective strategies must focus on aligning educational outcomes with the needs of employers, ensuring that students possess the technical and non-technical skills demanded by the workforce. One of the most effective strategies is the regular updating of vocational school curricula to reflect industry standards and technological advancements. Mahmudah et al. (2022) highlight that curricula should be developed collaboratively with industry stakeholders to ensure relevance and applicability. For example, incorporating modules on emerging technologies, such as automation and artificial intelligence, equips students with future-ready skills. By aligning the curriculum with

industry needs, vocational schools can prepare graduates who are immediately employable.

Another key strategy is the implementation of mentorship programs that connect students with industry professionals (Sukmayad et al., 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2018). These programs provide students with guidance, feedback, and exposure to workplace realities. Mentorship also helps students understand employer expectations and adapt their skills accordingly. Prianto et al. (2020) note that mentorship fosters professional development by bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical application. Practical training models, such as teaching factories and internships, also play a vital role in addressing competency gaps. Teaching factories, as described by Rosidah & Sutirman (2023), simulate real-world industry environments, enabling students to develop technical expertise and entrepreneurial skills. Internships, on the other hand, allow students to gain hands-on experience in professional settings, fostering adaptability and problem-solving abilities. These approaches ensure that students acquire not only technical skills but also the interpersonal and soft skills necessary for workplace success.

Strengthening partnerships between vocational schools and industries is essential for addressing competency gaps (Triyono & Murniati, 2017). Industries can provide resources, expertise, and feedback to help schools design effective training programs. Collaborative projects, such as co-designed courses or industry-sponsored workshops, further enhance the alignment between education and employment. Moreover, industries can offer on-the-job training opportunities that allow students to apply their skills in real-world contexts. Vocational schools must also prioritize the development of career readiness skills, such as critical thinking, communication, and teamwork. Wahyudi et al. (2023) emphasize that these soft skills are increasingly valued by employers and are essential for navigating complex workplace environments. Training programs that integrate these skills into the curriculum, along with opportunities for students to practice them in simulated or real-world settings, are crucial.

In conclusion, addressing competency gaps requires a multifaceted approach that involves curriculum alignment, mentorship, practical training, and industry partnerships. By implementing these strategies, vocational schools can ensure that their graduates are equipped with the skills needed to succeed in a competitive and dynamic labor market.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the key factors influencing the work readiness of vocational school students through a systematic literature review. The findings underscore the importance of three major dimensions: individual factors, educational processes, and contextual influences. Individual factors, such as interpersonal skills, work motivation, self-efficacy, and soft skills, are critical in shaping students' ability to transition successfully into the workforce. Educational processes, including practice-based learning models like internships and teaching factories, provide essential practical experiences that bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world applications. Additionally, contextual factors, including socioeconomic status, regional disparities, and social support, significantly influence students' access to opportunities and preparedness for employment. These findings emphasize the importance of targeted strategies, such as fostering school-industry partnerships, incorporating practice-based learning into curricula, and addressing systemic disparities, to enhance vocational education quality and improve students' readiness for the workforce.

The implications of this research are significant for the field of vocational education.

By identifying the multidimensional nature of work readiness, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders to design and implement more effective educational interventions. Schools can prioritize the integration of soft skills development and practice-based learning, while policymakers can focus on reducing regional and socioeconomic disparities. However, this study has limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research is based on secondary data from existing studies, which may limit the depth of analysis on specific regional or institutional contexts. Second, the scope of the review focuses primarily on published articles, potentially overlooking relevant insights from grey literature or unpublished studies. Future research should explore empirical investigations that incorporate field-based data to validate and expand upon these findings.

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