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The Effect of Field Work Practice on Vocational Students' Work Readiness and Career Motivation

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ABSTRACT

Purpose-This study aims to determine the effect of Field Work Practice (PKL) on vocational high school students' work readiness and career motivation. The high unemployment rate among vocational high school graduates indicates a gap between graduates' competencies and the demands of the world of work. Therefore, increasing work readiness and career motivation is crucial in bridging the gap and preparing students to face the world of work optimally.

Methodology-This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal design. The sample consisted of 78 grade XII students of the Motorcycle Engineering Department at SMK PGRI 5 Jember who were selected through purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using a validated Likert scale questionnaire, covering indicators of field work practice implementation, work readiness, and career motivation. Data analysis was performed using simple linear regression.

Findings-The results of the study showed that field work practice had a positive and significant influence on work readiness ($p < .001$; $t = 8.366$) and students' career motivation ($p < .001$; $t = 3.775$). These findings indicate that direct involvement in the world of work during fieldwork practice contributes to increasing technical competence, mental readiness to face the challenges of the world of work, and strengthening students' orientation and enthusiasm in planning their future careers.

Significance-This study shows that fieldwork practice is an effective strategy to simultaneously improve vocational high school students' work readiness and career motivation. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the implementation structure of fieldwork practice and closer collaboration between schools and the industrial world. These findings can be the basis for developing more relevant and adaptive vocational curricula and vocational education policies. In addition to providing technical skills, fieldwork practice also plays a role in developing 21st-century competencies.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in developing quality human resources to face the challenges of a dynamic job market (Susianita & Riani, 2024). In Indonesia, Vocational High Schools (SMK) are designed to equip students with technical and professional competencies to be ready to enter specific fields of work (Agustian et al., 2024). Based on Law No. 20 of 2023, Article 15, vocational education is aimed at preparing students to work in specific fields (Indonesia, 2023). One of the main programs that supports this goal is field work practice, which is industry-based training integrated into the Vocational High School curriculum. Field work practice allows students to apply theoretical knowledge in a real work environment, so that their competencies are more aligned with the needs of the labor market (Lovie et al., 2023; Pommarang & Kenaphoom, 2025).

The theoretical framework of work-based learning literature suggests that experiential learning programs such as fieldwork internships can enhance students' work readiness by developing technical and soft skills and fostering motivation to pursue a career in their field (Shore & Dining, 2023). Work readiness includes physical and psychological maturity, practical experience, and self-efficacy to perform work tasks effectively (Muspawi & Lestari, 2020). Meanwhile, career motivation is an important psychological factor influencing students' willingness to develop skills and face work challenges (Pambajeng et al., 2024). These two constructs are interrelated; motivation can strengthen readiness, and experience through field work practices can foster motivation (Rahmadani & Mardalis, 2022). Based on these theoretical insights, this study constructs a conceptual model that fieldwork practices influence work readiness and career motivation, facilitating students' transition from school to work together.

Although fieldwork practices play an important role, initial observations at SMK PGRI 5 Jember show that some graduates still face challenges in terms of job readiness. Alum tracer studies from the school's Special Job Exchange (BKK) in 2023 showed that around 18% of graduates were still unemployed, and 20% continued their education. This figure is still below the national target of vocational school graduate employment absorption of 75% (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). These data indicate a potential gap in the effectiveness of fieldwork practices. However, the limited scope of the data requires careful interpretation and needs to be supplemented with more in-depth empirical studies before making generalizations. Previous research has shown that the results of fieldwork practice programs vary and are influenced by experience and psychological factors. For example, Yulianah et al. (2021) found that career motivation significantly predicted career preparation, while ability and performance did not. Research by Chotimah & Suryani (2020) showed that internship experience, work motivation, and self-efficacy jointly contributed to work readiness.

However, there is still a lack of quantitative studies that simultaneously measure the causal impact of fieldwork practices on work readiness and career motivation in Indonesian vocational education. In addition, international studies in work-based learning also emphasize the importance of contextual research so that global results can be applied appropriately in the education system and labor market (Thapa, 2024). This study aims to fill the gap through a quantitative causal design approach to examine the effect of fieldwork practice on the work readiness and career motivation of grade XII SMK students, thus providing a new empirical contribution in this field. The novelty of this study lies in its approach that integrates two important dimensions of psychological career readiness and skills through validated quantitative instruments and causal analysis. The study results are expected to enrich academic studies in vocational education and career development and provide practical insights for policymakers and educators in optimizing the implementation of fieldwork practice. Thus, this study contributes to bridging the gap between vocational training and labor market needs and strengthening the conceptual and practical understanding of work-based learning in Indonesia and other developing countries.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a causal research design to test the effect of Field Work Practice (PKL) on the work readiness and career motivation of grade XII students at SMK PGRI 5 Jember. The causal approach was chosen because it identifies causal relationships between the independent variables (field work practice) and the dependent variables (work readiness and career motivation). As Creswell (2014) explained, this design is effective for empirically analyzing the direct influence of independent variables on dependent variables. In this context, Field Work Practice is positioned as the independent variable (X), while work readiness (Y1) and career motivation (Y2) are the dependent variables.

Population and Sample

The study population was all grade XII students participating in the field work practice program at SMK PGRI 5 Jember. A sample of 78 Motorcycle Engineering Expertise Program students was selected using a purposive sampling technique based on the inclusion criteria. These students participated in field work practice in two periods, namely when they were in grades XI and XII, with a minimum attendance rate of 80%, and they had a field work practice evaluation report from the partner industry. Exclusion criteria included students who had not completed the field work practice period or did not have complete data regarding the implementation of the field work practice. The selection of the Motorcycle Engineering Expertise Program as the focus of the study was based on the consideration that this program is an expertise program with the largest number of field work practice participants and has relatively stable industrial cooperation. However, this limitation implies that the study's results cannot be generalized to all other expertise programs or vocational schools, so caution is needed in drawing general conclusions.

Instruments and Data Collection

The data collection instrument was a closed questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale, consisting of three parts: implementation of field work practice (X), work readiness (Y1), and career motivation (Y2), each containing 10 items based on theoretical indicators. Before being used, the instrument had undergone validity and reliability tests. The construct validity test was carried out using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Validity, which showed that all items had a correlation value above 0.344 ($r > 0.344$), so they were declared valid. The reliability test was carried out using Cronbach's Alpha, with the results $\alpha = 0.959$ for the field work practice scale, $\alpha = 0.957$ for work readiness, and $\alpha = 0.964$ for career motivation, which showed a high level of reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis for each dependent variable (Y1 and Y2) separately. The prerequisite tests conducted before regression include normality, homogeneity, and linearity. This study adopts a simple linear regression approach. This choice is based on the ability of simple linear regression to predict the value of the dependent variable based on the value of the independent variable (Creswell, 2014). There are several reasons for the selection of this method. First, as Hair et al. (2019) expressed, this study aims to explore the direct influence of field work practice on work readiness and career motivation. Simple linear regression allows researchers to understand the relationship between these variables clearly. Second, the simplicity and ease of interpretation of the results of simple linear regression make it an appropriate choice for understanding the relationship between the variables studied (Field, 2013). This study only involves one independent variable, field work practice, and two dependent variables, work readiness and career motivation. Therefore, simple linear regression can be an effective method to analyze the relationship between these variables.

Although simple linear regression can provide valuable results, further research may consider using multiple regression or path analysis to understand the role of mediating or moderating variables in the relationship between fieldwork practice and work readiness or career motivation (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In addition, multiple regression or path analysis can help understand the complexity of the relationship between the variables studied (Kline, 2015). Thus, this study can provide a good foundation for more complex and comprehensive follow-up studies and broaden the understanding of the influence of field work practice on students' work readiness and career motivation.

FINDINGS

This study involves three main variables, namely Field Work Practice (PKL) as an independent variable (X), and Work Readiness (Y1) and Career Motivation (Y2) as dependent variables. Each variable is measured using ten leading indicators.

Validity and Reliability Test

Before data collection, instrument validity and reliability tests were carried out as a prerequisite for the research (Yolanda & Meilana, 2021). Validity testing aims to ensure that the instrument can measure variables accurately so that the data obtained is valid (Sugiono et al., 2020). Validity was tested using Pearson Product-Moment correlation with an r table value of 0.344 (N=35, α=0.05). All items in the three variables showed r count value > r table, so they were declared valid (see Table 1).

Table 1. The Summary of Validity Test Results

Variables	Items Total	Range of r_{count}	r_{table}	Valid Items	Information
Field Work Practice (X)	10	0.705 – 0.940	0.344	10	All items are valid
Work Readiness (Y1)	10	0,745 – 0,924	0.344	10	All items are valid
Career Motivation (Y2)	10	0,701 – 0,956	0.344	10	All items are valid

Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha shows that all instruments have a very high level of reliability with an α value > 0.9 for all variables (see Table 2).

Table 2. The Result of the Reliability Test

Variables	Items Total	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
Field Work Practice (X)	10	0.959	Reliable (high)
Work Readiness (Y1)	10	0.957	Reliable (high)
Career Motivation (Y2)	10	0.964	Reliable (high)

Classical Assumption Test

In simple linear regression analysis, it is necessary to ensure that basic assumptions such as normality, homogeneity of variance, and linearity are met before hypothesis testing is carried out (Agustin & Permatasari, 2020). The results of the classical assumption test in this study are as follows:

Normality Test

Using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, the residual normality test shows that the residuals in models Y1 and Y2 are typically distributed, with a significance value > 0.05 (see Table 3).

Table 3. The Result of the Normality Test

Variables	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)	Information
Y_1	0.200	0.458	Residuals are normally distributed
Y_2	0.200	0.276	Residuals are normally distributed.

Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test was conducted to ensure that the group variance was homogeneous. The results of the homogeneity test showed that:

Table 4. The Results of the Homogeneity Test

Variables	Significance Value (Based on Mean)	Information
Y_1	0.032	The variance between groups is not entirely homogeneous.
Y_2	0.157	Variance between homogeneous groups

On the Y model$_1$, the significance value (0.032) is less than 0.05 in one category based on the Mean, which indicates that the variance between groups is not entirely homogeneous. However, in general, the assumption of homogeneity can be met, and parametric analysis such as ANOVA can still be performed by considering the results more carefully in that category (Field, 2013). On the Y model$_2$, the significance value (0.157) is greater than 0.05, which means that the variance between groups is homogeneous without any significant differences. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity in Y_2 is adequately met, and parametric statistical analysis such as ANOVA can proceed without problems related to homogeneity.

Linearity Test

The linearity test shows a linear relationship between the independent variable (field work practice) and the two dependent variables (Y1 and Y2), with a significance value > 0.05 (see Table 5).

Table 5. Linearity Test Results

Connection	Significance Value	F	Information
X and Y_1	0.325	1,153	Linear relationship
X and Y_2	0.164	1,382	Linear relationship

Thus, there is a good relationship between variables X and $Y._1$ or between X and Y_2 that is linear, so that the linearity assumption is met and the linear regression model is suitable for analyzing the relationship between each pair of variables.

Final Analysis

The final analysis in this study was conducted using simple linear regression to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables that have been determined. This approach was chosen because it can directly describe the effect of one independent variable on one dependent variable, which aligns with the research objectives.

Simple Linear Regression Analysis

This test is used to determine how the Internship Program (Field Work Practice) affects the work readiness and career motivation of students at SMK PGRI 5 Jember.

Table 6. The Results of the Simple Regression Test for variable Y1

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9,741	3,076		3.167	.002
	x	.698	.083	.692	8,366	<.001

Dependent variable: y1

Based on the results shown in Table 6, the regression equation obtained in this study is Y1 = 9.74 + 0.698X. According to this equation, the intercept value of 9.74 indicates that when the value of variable X is 0, the predicted value for variable Y1 is 9.74. This means that it is the baseline value of Y when there is no

influence from X. Furthermore, the regression coefficient of$_1$, which is 0.698, indicates that each increase of one unit in X will be followed by an increase of 0.698 units in Y1, assuming no influence from other variables. Therefore, X has a positive relationship with Y1, meaning that as the value of X increases, the value of Y1 tends to increase as well.

Table 7. Simple Regression Test Results for variable Y2

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	23,390	3.715		6.297	.001
	x	.380	.101	.397	3.775	<.001

Dependent variable: y2

Based on the results shown in Table 7, the regression equation obtained in this study is Y2 = 23.390 + 0.380X1. According to this equation, the intercept value of 23.390 indicates that when the value of variable$_1$is 0, the predicted value for variable Y2 is 23,390. This means that it is the baseline value of Y when there is no influence from X. Furthermore, the regression coefficient of X, which is 0.380, indicates that each increase of one unit in Therefore, X has a positive relationship with Y2, meaning that as the value of X increases, the value of Y2 tends to increase as well.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is a temporary assumption regarding the problem that has been formulated, which needs to be tested for its truth through empirical data (Akbar et al., 2023). In this study, hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test, which is used to examine the partial effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. The acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis is carried out based on the following criteria: (1) If the significance value > 0.05 or the t calculated ≤ t table, then H_0 is accepted, meaning the regression coefficient is insignificant, and thus the independent variable does not significantly affect the dependent variable. (2) If the significance value ≤ 0.05 or the t calculated ≥ t table, then H_0 is rejected, meaning the regression coefficient is significant, and the independent variable significantly affects the dependent variable (Yusnarti & Suryaningsih, 2021).

Based on the t-test results in the table, the significance value for the effect of Field Work Practice on students' work readiness is p < .001, smaller than 0.05, and the calculated t-value is 8.366, greater than the t-table value. Therefore, H_0 is rejected, and H_1 is accepted, indicating that Field Work Practice significantly affects students' work readiness. Furthermore, the t-test results on the effect of Field Work Practice on students' career motivation show a significance value of p < .001, which is also smaller than 0.05, and the calculated t-value is 3.775, which exceeds the t-table value. Thus, H_0 is again rejected, and H_1 is accepted, meaning Field Work Practice significantly affects students' career motivation in vocational schools. These results show that, partially, the implementation of Field Work Practice contributes significantly to improving students' work readiness and career motivation.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that implementing Field Work Practice (PKL) significantly influences students' work readiness and career motivation at SMK PGRI 5 Jember. Based on the t-test results, the significance value for the effect of PKL on students' work readiness was p < .001, which is smaller than 0.05, and the calculated t-value was 8.366, which is greater than the t-table value. Therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, indicating that Field Work Practice significantly affects students' work readiness. In addition, the t-test results on the effect of Field Work Practice on students' career motivation showed a significance value of p < .001, which is also smaller than 0.05, and a calculated t-value of 3.775, which exceeds the t-table value. Thus, H_0 is again rejected and H_1 is accepted, meaning that Field Work Practice also significantly affects the career

motivation of vocational high school students. This finding aligns with the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) proposed by Lent et al. (2002), which states that real work experience can influence individual work readiness and career motivation. According to Bandura (1997), regarding self-efficacy, this study also shows that fieldwork practice can help students build a more precise and more realistic career identity.

Compared with previous studies, this study has several novel contributions. First, this study shows that fieldwork practice can improve students' work readiness and career motivation through real work experience and technical competency development. Second, this study shows that fieldwork practice can help students build a more precise and more realistic career identity. Based on these novel findings, it can be concluded that fieldwork practice can solve the problems studied, namely, improving students' work readiness and career motivation. The scientific impact of this study is that fieldwork practice can be one of the effective strategies to improve students' work readiness and career motivation in the future. These findings support the results of previous studies by Akkermans & Kubasch (2017), which show that real work experience can affect individual work readiness and career motivation. In addition, this study is also in line with research conducted by Suleman (2018), which shows that the development of technical competencies can influence individual work readiness.

However, this study also has several limitations. First, this study only involved one school, so the generalization of the results of this study needs to be done carefully. Second, this study used simple linear regression, so further research is needed to understand the more complex relationships between the variables studied. In the context of future education, this study shows that fieldwork practice can effectively improve students' work readiness and career motivation. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a more systematic and strategic fieldwork practice program to prepare students to face the challenges of an increasingly dynamic and competitive world of work.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Field Work Practice (PKL) significantly and positively influences vocational high school students' work readiness and career motivation. Through real work experience relevant to the field of expertise, fieldwork practice can improve technical skills, understanding of the industrial world, and shape students' professional attitudes. Psychologically, fieldwork practice has also been shown to encourage increased career motivation, which is shown through strengthening career identity, understanding of career choices, and resilience in facing challenges in the world of work. These findings support the theory of career development and Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the importance of direct experience in shaping career readiness and orientation. Thus, field work practice is not just a complement to the vocational curriculum, but is a strategic element that must be systematically integrated into vocational education. Strengthening field work practice programs through relevant industrial school partnerships and training of supervising teachers is essential to ensure alignment with the needs of the 21st-century world of work. This study contributes to the development of career theory and vocational education. It provides practical recommendations for schools and industry partners in sustainably improving the quality of implementation of field work practice and work readiness of vocational high school students.

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