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# Determinants of Work Readiness Among Vocational High School Students: An Analysis of Career Motivation and Industrial Work Practice Experience

**Gijanto Purbo Suseno[1], Deddy Supriyadi[2], Nataliningsih[3], Arika Nur Syaadah [4], Dede Gun Gun[5]**
[1]Indonesia Cooperative University Sumedang, Indonesia, gps@ikopin.ac.id
[2]Indonesia Cooperative University Sumedang, Indonesia, deddy.bungur@gmail.com
[3]University of Winaya Mukti, Indonesia, natalihuseina@gmail.com
[4]Indonesia Cooperative University Sumedang, Indonesia, nursyaadaharika@gmail.com
[5]Indonesia Cooperative University Sumedang, Indonesia, dedegungun@gmail.com

**Corresponding Author:** gps@ikopin.ac.id[1]

**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the influence of career motivation and industrial work practice experience (Prakerin) on the work readiness of students at SMK Perkasa 1 Sumedang. The research employs a quantitative method, with data collected via questionnaires from 60 students who have completed Prakerin. The results indicate that career motivation influences work readiness by 42.6%, with a correlation coefficient of 0.653, while industrial work practice experience influences it by 55.8%, with a correlation coefficient of 0.747. Simultaneously, both variables contribute 61.6% to work readiness, with the remaining 38.4% influenced by factors outside there search model. These findings underscore the importance of developing industry-relevant skills, both technical and non-technical, such as communication, time management, teamwork, and work ethic. Therefore, schools must map competency needs and strengthen synergies with the business and industrial world (DUDI) to comprehensively enhance students' work readiness.

**Keywords:** Career Motivation, Industrial Work Practice Experience (Prakerin), Work Readiness, Technical Skills, Non-Technical Skills

## INTRODUCTION

The Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) by education level serves as a key indicator for assessing the linkage between education system outputs and labor market needs. Variations in TPT across education levels reflect potential competency mismatches and differences in labor absorption capacity. Thus, analyzing TPT by education level provides a relevant basis for identifying vulnerable unemployment groups and formulating more targeted education and employment policies.

**Table 1. Open Unemployment Data for Vocational High Schools (SMK) in Indonesia, 2021-2023**

| Education Level | 2021 (%) | 2022 (%) | 2023 (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| No/Never Attended School/Not Yet Graduated & Primary School Graduate | 3.61 | 3.59 | 2.56 |
| Junior High School (SMP) | 6.45 | 5.95 | 4.78 |
| General Senior High School (SMA) | 9.09 | 8.57 | 8.15 |
| Vocational Senior High School (SMK) | 11.13 | 9.42 | 9.31 |
| Diploma I/II/III | 5.87 | 4.59 | 4.79 |
| University | 5.98 | 4.80 | 5.18 |

Source: BPS, processed in 2025

The data above show that vocational high school (SMK) graduates are the main contributors to Indonesia's highest Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) at 9.31% in 2023, despite SMK being designed to produce job-ready workers under Law No. 20/2003 Article 15.
Source: Tracer Study Data from SMK Perkasa 1 Sumedang

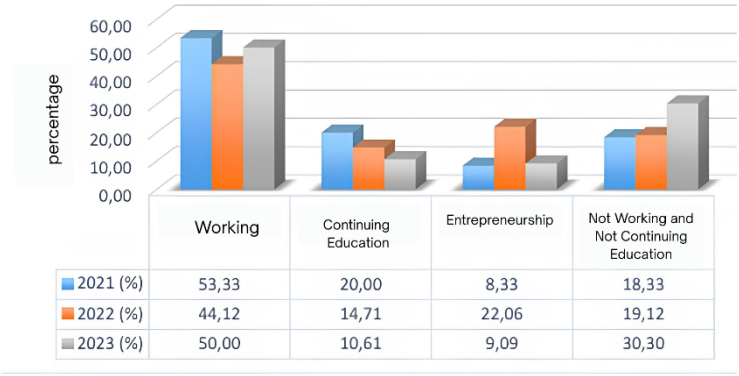



**Figure 1. Post-Graduation Activities of SMK Perkasa 1 Students**

## METHOD

This study uses a quantitative descriptive method and multiple linear regression testing with primary data from questionnaires distributed to 60 Grade XII students at SMK Perkasa 1 Sumedang who fully completed Prakerin (census - non-probability sampling) and related literature studies.

**Research Materials and Procedures:**

**1. Participants:** The sample consists of final-year students from various majors who have completed the Industrial Work Practice (Prakerin) program.

**2. Data Collection Instruments:** Data were collected using validated questionnaires to measure motivation levels, Prakerin experience, and work readiness.

**3. Analysis Techniques:** Data were analyzed using statistical methods, including correlation analysis and regression modeling, to identify inter-variable relationships.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All statement items were valid with correlation coefficients ≥ 0.30. All variables showed Cronbach's Alpha > 0.80, indicating high reliability. Thus, the research instruments were suitable for further analysis. Descriptive analysis of each variable yielded the following findings:

**Table 2. Descriptive Analysis Results**

| Variable | Number of Indicators | Total Score (%) | Average (%) | Criteria | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Career Motivation (X1) | 6 | 430 | 71.67 | Good | Student motivation is sufficiently strong, especially from internal factors and self-esteem needs. |
| Industrial Work Practice Experience (X2) | 6 | 413 | 68.83 | Good (borderline adequate) | Prakerin experience is fairly good but needs improvement in monitoring and practice quality. |
| Work Readiness (Y) | 8 | 569 | 71.13 | Good | Work readiness is good, particularly in logic and attitudes, but learning experience and ambition need enhancement. |

Before conducting multiple linear regression analysis, classical assumption tests were performed to ensure that the data met statistical requirements and the model was valid. These included normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and linearity tests. If all assumptions are met, regression analysis can accurately test independent variables' effects on the dependent variable. Classical assumption test results:

**Table 3. Classical Assumption Tests**

| Test | Result | Remarks |
|---|---|---|
| Normality Test | Data normally distributed | Valid |
| Multicollinearity Test | No multicollinearity | Valid |
| Heteroscedasticity Test | No heteroscedasticity | Valid |
| Linearity Test | Linear inter-variable relationship | Valid |

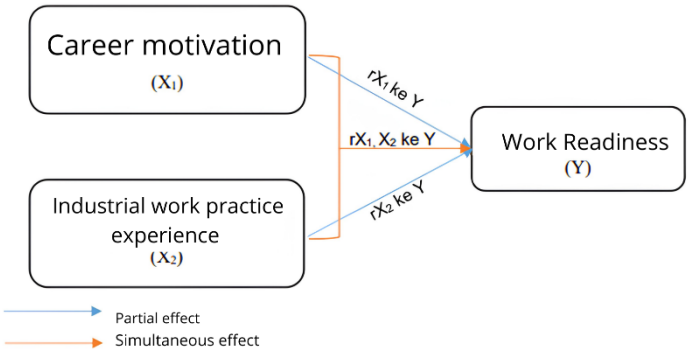
**Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results:**
The analysis yielded the following key findings:

**1. Influence of Career Motivation on Student Work Readiness at SMK Perkasa 1 Sumedang:** Testing shows career motivation positively and significantly affects work readiness. This is evidenced by a t-value of 6.566 (> t-table 1.672) and significance of 0.000 (< 0.05). Thus, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H0) rejected. The regression coefficient of 0.849 indicates that every unit increase in career motivation boosts work readiness (Regression equation: $Y = 31.782 + 0.849X_1$). This suggests career motivation is a key factor; higher motivation leads to higher readiness. Career motivation significantly influences work readiness by 42.6%, with a correlation coefficient of 0.653. Students with higher motivation show better readiness for work challenges.

**2. Influence of Industrial Work Practice Experience on Student Work Readiness at SMK Perkasa 1 Sumedang:** Testing shows industrial work practice experience positively and significantly affects work readiness, with a t-value of 8.549 (> t-table 1.672) and significance 0.000 (< 0.05). Ha accepted, H0 rejected. Regression coefficient 0.658 indicates every unit increase in experience boosts readiness (Equation: $Y = 36.025 + 0.658X_2$). This confirms Prakerin as a key factor, providing direct experience to enhance skills, adaptation, and work understanding.
Prakerin contributes 55.8% to work readiness variation, with a correlation of 0.747. Direct industry exposure improves technical competencies and work habits.

**3. Simultaneous Influence of Career Motivation and Industrial Work Practice Experience on Student Work Readiness at SMK Perkasa 1 Sumedang:** Testing shows both variables simultaneously positively and significantly affect work readiness, with F-value 45.717 (> F-table 1.672) and significance 0.000 (< 0.05). Ha accepted, H0 rejected. Multiple linear regression equation: $Y = 25.105 + 0.401X_1 + 0.489X_2$. This shows a unit increase in career motivation raises readiness by 0.401, and in Prakerin by 0.489 (higher for Prakerin, indicating dominance). The coefficient of determination explains 61.6% of work readiness variation (correlation 0.785), with 38.4% from other factors like parental and school support.

Findings indicate work readiness stems from both internal drive and real industry experience; higher levels of both enhance readiness.




Source: Research Results

**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

## Discussion

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that motivation and practical experience significantly influence work readiness (Richard M. Ryan dan Edward L. Deci, 2000). These results align with vocational education and workforce development theories emphasizing the interplay of individual drive and practical experience in shaping student work readiness. Readiness is not solely academic but driven by internal motivation and real Prakerin experience. Higher motivation and better practice yield greater preparedness for work demands. Furthermore, the empirical results of this study indicate that Prakerin experience has a more dominant influence compared to career motivation. This finding suggests that direct exposure to real work environments plays a critical role in strengthening students' competencies, particularly in terms of work discipline, adaptability, and problem-solving skills. This is consistent with experiential learning theory which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through direct experience (Kolb et al., 2014).

**1. Comparison with Prior Research:** Numerous studies show motivation as a primary career success determinant for young workers. Strong motivation fosters clear career orientation, high learning spirit, and mental readiness for competition. In addition, practical programs such as Prakerin play a significant role in bridging the gap between education and industry needs by providing real-world experience (Zaharah & Irianto, 2023). Practical programs like Prakerin effectively bridge education-industry skill gaps, providing real-world experience to build technical competencies, discipline, work adaptation, and professional attitudes needed by DUDI.

**2.Managerial Implications:** Schools must prioritize identifying industry-specific skills and aligning curricula with work trends. This includes strengthening both technical (hard) skills, such as mastery of tools and procedures, and non-technical (soft) skills, such as communication,

teamwork, discipline, responsibility, and problem-solving (Nurbaya, Husain Syam, 2022). Schools should enhance Prakerin quality via structured monitoring, periodic evaluations, and intensive school-industry mentoring. Industry practitioner mentoring can realistically convey work expectations. Schools should enhance Prakerin quality via structured monitoring, periodic evaluations, and intensive school-industry mentoring. Industry practitioner mentoring can realistically convey work expectations(Lukman & , Mithen Lululangi, 2025). This discussion affirms work readiness as a synergy of motivation, Prakerin experience, and effective school management. Industry-need-based training, supported by mentoring and DUDI collaboration, is key to boosting technical and non-technical competencies. Integrated optimization drives more adaptive, competitive student readiness matching market needs.

**3. Practical Implications:** Educational institutions must prioritize: First, curriculum design balancing theory and practice so students not only understand concepts but apply them directly (Creswell, 2014; (Shanti Nugroho Sulistyowati & Sri Yuni Wulandari, 2024)). Second, strengthening industry partnerships to enhance Prakerin relevance to job market needs. Third, ongoing career guidance to boost student motivation for mature, directed career planning. These steps will equip SMK graduates with higher readiness and competitiveness.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that career motivation and industrial work practice experience positively and significantly influence work readiness among SMK Perkasa 1 Sumedang students, both partially and simultaneously. Prakerin experience has a more dominant effect than career motivation, making direct industry exposure a primary shaper of readiness. Together, they explain most readiness variation, showing it's driven by both internal drive and real-world experience.

Findings emphasize synergy among career motivation, quality Prakerin, and school support aligning learning with DUDI needs. Thus, practice-based curriculum strengthening, Prakerin quality improvement, and sustained career guidance are strategic steps for producing more job-ready, adaptive, and competitive graduates.

This study offers policy novelty through an integrative approach strengthening student motivation and structured, industry-based Prakerin design. First, develop an adaptive industry-driven curriculum systematically integrating motivation enhancement into learning. Second, strengthen outcome- and competency-based Prakerin models, measuring success by standardized skill and readiness achievements, not just participation. Third, integrate soft skills as core competencies via contextual, project-based learning. Fourth, vocational education policies must foster school-industry-stakeholder ecosystems through mentoring programs, competency certification, and ongoing career guidance. This strategically bridges education-market gaps and sustainably boosts graduate competitiveness.

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