

The Effect of Employability on the Willingness to Work of Vocational Students in West Sumatra

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Abstrack

The unemployment rate of vocational high school (SMK) graduates in Indonesia, including West Sumatra, remains high despite their work-based education. This suggests a gap between acquired competencies and the willingness to work. This study examines the impact of employability on students' work motivation. Using a quantitative approach and simple linear regression, data were collected from 200 vocational students via standardized questionnaires. Results show that employability has a positive and significant effect on work volition, with a determination coefficient of 17.2%, while 82.8% of the variation is influenced by other factors. This indicates that strengthening employability, such as technical skills and work readiness, can significantly boost students' motivation to work. The findings underscore the importance of targeted programs, such as career guidance, job skills training, and coaching, in enhancing students' employability from an early stage. Improving these aspects can increase their willingness to enter the workforce and reduce youth unemployment.

Keywords: employability, work volition, vocational students

Abstract

Tingkat pengangguran lulusan Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK) di Indonesia, termasuk Sumatera Barat, masih tinggi meskipun mereka telah mendapatkan pendidikan berbasis dunia kerja. Hal ini menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara kompetensi yang dimiliki dengan keinginan untuk bekerja. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengaruh employability terhadap kemauan kerja siswa. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan regresi linier sederhana, data dikumpulkan dari 200 siswa SMK melalui kuesioner standar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa employability berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap work volition, dengan koefisien determinasi sebesar 17,2%, sedangkan 82,8% dipengaruhi oleh faktor lain. Hal ini mengindikasikan bahwa penguatan employability-seperti keterampilan teknis dan kesiapan kerja-dapat secara signifikan meningkatkan motivasi siswa untuk bekerja. Temuan ini menyoroti perlunya program-program yang ditargetkan seperti bimbingan karir, pelatihan keterampilan kerja, dan pembinaan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan kerja siswa sejak dini. Meningkatkan aspek-aspek ini dapat meningkatkan keinginan mereka untuk memasuki dunia kerja dan mengurangi pengangguran di kalangan anak muda.

Kata kunci: kemampuan kerja, kemauan bekerja, siswa kejuruan

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage that every individual experiences, during which they begin to explore themselves, recognize their potential, and develop interests, ultimately designing their life and career plans (Steinberg, L., 2017). Adolescents are in an early transition phase from childhood to adulthood, which is marked by numerous developmental challenges, including career decision-making (Arnett, J.J., 2020).

Vocational High School (SMK) students fall into the category of adolescence, which spans the age range of 15-18 years (Lestari & Farid, 2019). At this age, SMK students are faced with the need to prepare themselves for the world of work. In accordance with the objectives of vocational education, they are expected to possess work readiness and the ability to make informed, mature career decisions (Fadli et al., 2017).

However, the reality shows that not all vocational students have adequate readiness to enter the world of work. Many of them do not understand the demands of the job according to their field of expertise. Yenes et al (2012) noted that the main goal of vocational education has not been fully achieved. This is due to the gap between the skills students have and the skills needed in the world of work, both in terms of soft skills and hard skills (Rambe & Yusuf, 2021).

Vocational education in Indonesia has a strategic role in preparing human resources that are ready to use and relevant to the needs of the world of work. Vocational High Schools (SMK) are designed to produce graduates with technical and professional skills, enabling them to enter the workforce immediately after graduation. However, the reality in the field reveals a gap between the competencies of SMK graduates and the industry's demands, both in terms of hard skills and soft skills. This gap is a significant contributor to the low employment rate of SMK graduates in Indonesia, including in West Sumatra (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; BPS, 2023).

The gap between students' employability and the labor market's needs raises an important question: Do SMK students truly possess the readiness and willingness to enter the workforce? In this context, employability becomes a key concept that refers to the combination of skills, attitudes, knowledge, and personal attributes that enable a person to obtain, maintain, and develop in employment (OECD, 2021). Employability encompasses not only technical ability but also self-confidence, communication skills, cooperation, and flexibility in navigating the challenges of a rapidly changing work environment (Puspitasari & Wibowo, 2022).

Meanwhile, work volition refers to an individual's perception of freedom and capacity to choose a desired career path, despite economic, social, or structural limitations (Duffy et al., 2012). In the context of vocational students, work volition is a crucial aspect because it determines whether the skills they possess will be utilized to achieve a suitable career or hindered by low motivation and a lack of environmental support. Previous research has shown that work volition is influenced by various factors, including job readiness (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2020), career self-efficacy (Rogers et al., 2020), and social support, such as parental involvement (Putri & Nugroho, 2023).

In this context, work volition is a crucial aspect, referring to individuals' ability to choose and make career decisions despite facing various limitations such as knowledge, environmental factors, and personal barriers (Duffy et al, 2012). These barriers can adversely affect vocational identity, career maturity, job satisfaction, and career adaptability (Jackson & Wilton, 2017).



Work willingness is also closely related to employability, which is a set of skills, knowledge, and personal attitudes that enable a person to obtain and maintain suitable employment (Syani, 2021). Employability reflects an individual's readiness to understand job opportunities and determine career achievement strategies (Jackson & Wilton, 2017).

In Indonesia, studies on the relationship between employability and work volition among vocational students are still limited, particularly those that consider local contexts, such as West Sumatra. This region has numerous vocational schools and is a center of vocational education in Western Indonesia; however, the open unemployment rate among vocational school graduates remains high (BPS West Sumatra, 2023). Most SMK graduates have been unable to enter the formal workforce, despite attending vocational education programs that focus on job skills. This indicates the need for a deeper understanding of students' internal factors, including employability and employability.

Theoretically, the relationship between employability and work volition can be explained through the career construction theory approach, which posits that individual readiness in building a career is influenced by adaptability, career identity, and career decision-making (Savickas, 2013). Employability is a key driving factor in shaping work volition, as individuals who feel they possess the necessary skills and readiness will be more confident in making career decisions. The dimensions of employability in this study include work skills, career self-efficacy, and adaptability to the workplace (Lo Presti & Pluviano, 2016).

In addition to employability, parental support also makes an essential contribution to shaping students' willingness to work. Emotional, motivational, and instrumental support from parents has been shown to influence children's perceptions of their future careers (Astuti & Purnomo, 2021). However, most previous studies have examined external factors or the educational environment, while the role of the family has not been explored integratively along with employability in a single research model.

Against this background, this study aims to investigate the impact of employability and parental support on the willingness to work among vocational students in West Sumatra. This study is significant because it makes a theoretical contribution to understanding the relationship between work readiness and employability, as well as a practical contribution to the development of career guidance strategies in vocational schools. In addition, this research also fills a gap in the literature, especially in the local Indonesian context, where studies of this kind are still very limited.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a quantitative approach with a causal associative research type (Yusuf, 2014), which aims to determine the effect of employability variables on the work volition of vocational students. This study is explanatory because it seeks to clarify the cause-and-effect relationship between two variables based on numerical data.

The population in this study was all XII grade vocational students in West Sumatra Province in the 2023/2024 school year, totaling 58,078 students. The sampling technique used is probability sampling, specifically the proportionate stratified random sampling method, which ensures that all districts/cities, and departments are proportionally represented (Sugiyono, 2010). Determination of the number of samples using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 7%:



$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N \cdot e)^2} = \frac{58.078}{(1 + 58.078 (0,07))^2}$$
$$n = 200$$

Thus, a sample of 200 students was obtained.

The instrument used in this research is a questionnaire (standardized questionnaire) developed based on the theory of employability and work volition. The instrument development process went through three stages: preparation of a grid based on theoretical indicators, content validity testing through expert judgment, and instrument testing on 30 respondents outside the main sample. Construct validity was tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The results showed that all items were valid (with factor values greater than 0.4) and reliable (Cronbach's Alpha for employability = 0.892, work volition = 0.873).

The employability instrument consists of 20 items, while work volition consists of 15 items. Scores were measured using a 4-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Data analysis techniques were carried out using SPSS version 26. The stages of analysis include: (1) prerequisite analysis test (normality and linearity test), (2) descriptive analysis of variables, and (3) simple linear regression analysis to see the effect of employability on work volition, as well as significance testing through t-test and coefficient of determination (R^2).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis shows that the majority of vocational students in West Sumatra fall into the moderate category of employability (68%), with only 22% classified as having high employability. This suggests that while students are moderately equipped with basic skills and work readiness, there is still a lack of advanced or industry-specific competencies.

In terms of work volition, 65% of students fall into the moderate category, and only 20% demonstrate a high level of volition to enter the workforce after graduation. This indicates a concerning trend where students may possess some level of technical preparedness but remain hesitant or less motivated to seek employment, possibly due to low confidence, unclear career goals, or a mismatch between school training and labor market demands.

In the context of vocational education in West Sumatra, these findings highlight the need for more integrated career education, industry exposure, and employability-focused interventions throughout the learning process.

Description of Work Volition Data for Vocational High School Students in West Sumatra

The results of the research and discussion of work volition data for Vocational High School Students in West Sumatra from the total sample, namely 398 students, are presented as follows:



Table 1.
Distribution of Frequency and Category of *Work Volition* of Vocational High School Students in West Sumatra (n=398)

No	Category	Shoes	% Shoes	F	%
1	VeryHeight	114-135	80-100	220	55
2	Tall	92-113	60-83	176	44
3	Keep	70-91	52-67	2	1
4	Low	48-69	36-51	0	0
5	Very Low	<47	<35	0	0
Total				398	100

Based on table 1 of 398 Vocational High School students in West Sumatra who have work volition in the very high category as many as 135 people or 34%, who have work volition in the high category as many as 237 people or 60%, and who have work volition in the medium category as many as 26 people or 7%. These results indicate that overall, 94% of respondents had a high or very high level of motivation or desire to work, while only 7% had a moderate level of motivation. This shows that the majority of Vocational High School students in West Sumatra who have work volition are in the very high category.

These findings indicate that most students at West Sumatra Vocational High School have very high work volition, demonstrating strong motivation and readiness to enter the workforce. Most students have high work ethic, which can have a positive impact on learning outcomes and readiness to enter the workforce. Focusing on the development and empowerment of students with a moderate work ethic will help improve overall motivation and readiness.

Furthermore, to examine the descriptive work volition data of Vocational High School students in West Sumatra in more detail, refer to the following table.

Table 2.
Description of Average and Percentage of Work Volition of Vocational High School Students in West Sumatra (n=398)

Variabel	Sub Variabel	Ideal	Max	Min	Mean	%	Ket
Work Volition	Willpower (10)	50	50	26	39.5	79.0	T
	Financial Constraints (7)	35	35	16	28.5	81.5	T
	Structural Constraints (10)	50	50	28	40.5	81.0	T
	Overall	135	27	135	109	80.7	T

Based on Table 2, it was found that the average overall work volition of students was 109, with a percentage of 80.4%. The sub-indicator with the highest score is financial constraints, with an average score of 28.5 out of 35 or 81.5%. Financial constraints are the sub-indicators with the highest scores, indicating that financial factors are one of the biggest influences on students' work volition. These obstacles include education costs, daily living expenses, and financial burdens faced by students. A high score on financial constraints indicates that students are aware of and may be affected by financial issues in the educational context. This could mean that, although students have a high work drive,



they face significant cost-related challenges that hinder their ability to fully engage or reach their maximum potential. The indicator with the lowest score is willpower, with an average score of 39.5 out of 50, or 79.0. To improve the work volition of Vocational High School students in West Sumatra, the most important aspect to be improved is willpower. Willpower, while also high, has less influence than financial constraints. Increasing student willpower is a key aspect in increasing work volition.

Description of Employability Data for Vocational High School Students in West Sumatra

The results of the research and discussion of employability data for Vocational High School Students in West Sumatra from the entire sample, namely 398 students, are presented as follows:

Table 3.

Description of Average and Percentage of Work Volition of Vocational High School Students in West Sumatra

No	Category	Shoes	% Shoes	F	%
1	VeryHeight	131-155	84-100	94	24
2	Tall	106-130	68-83	151	63
3	Keep	81-105	52-67	53	13
4	Low	56-80	36-51	0	0
5	Very Low	<55	<35	0	0
Total				398	100

Based on table 3 out of 398 Vocational High School students in West Sumatra who have employability in the very high category as many as 94 people or 24%, of the total respondents are considered to have a very high level of employability. have excellent skills, experience, and quality that make students very prepared for the job market and very attractive to prospective employers, who have employability in the high category as many as 251 people or 63%, and who have work volition in the medium category as many as 53 people or 13%. These results explain the majority of Vocational High School students in West Sumatra who have employability in the high category. Most students, 63%, have employability in the high category, indicating that they are also quite ready to enter the workforce, although they are not as proficient as those in the very high category. Meanwhile, 13% of students fall into the medium category for employability.

To address this gap, it is essential to focus more on developing both technical and soft skills, providing practical experience, and offering adequate career support, which can improve students' overall job readiness and help them better enter the workforce. These results collectively indicate that most students from West Sumatra Vocational High School are in the high employability category, with the majority demonstrating good readiness for the job market.

Furthermore, to examine the descriptive employability data of Vocational High School students in West Sumatra in more detail, refer to the following table.



Table 4.
 Description of the Average and Percentage of Employability of Vocational High School Students in West Sumatra

Variabel	Sub Variabel	Ideal	Max	Min	Mean	%	Ket
Employability	Career development learning (5)	25	25	5	19.0	76.0	T
	Experience (work and life) (5)	25	25	6	19.4	77.5	T
	Degree subject knowledge, skill, and understanding (8)	40	40	16	31.1	77.7	T
	Generic skills (7)	35	35	15	27.8	79.4	T
	Emotional intelligence (6)	30	30	12	23.1	77.1	T
	Overall	155	155	54	120.4	77.7	T

Based on Table 4, it was found that the overall average employability score was 120.4 out of a total score of 144, corresponding to 83.3%. The sub-indicator with the highest score is generic skills, with an average score of 27.8 out of 35, or 79.4%. The indicator with the lowest score is the career development learning sub-variable, with an average score of 19 out of 25, or 76.0%. Overall, these results show that Vocational High School students have relatively high employability. Table 4 shows that vocational school students in West Sumatra have a good level of employability. Their main strength lies in generic skills, where students achieve the highest scores, indicating that they possess very relevant and useful skills in the world of work. However, there is an aspect that can still be improved, namely, career development learning. Although the score is low, to improve the quality and effectiveness of learning related to career development and better prepare students to face challenges and opportunities in the world of work. In other words, West Sumatra Vocational High School students already have a strong employability foundation, but need to focus additional on developing skills related to their career planning and development to be better prepared for the job market. These results suggest that to enhance the employability of Vocational High School students in West Sumatra, the most crucial aspect to improve is career development learning.

Analytical Prerequisite Testing

Prerequisite testing is a test that must be met before determining the data analysis technique that will be used for hypothesis testing. In this study, the hypothesis test that will be used is multiple linear regression, a parametric statistic. The prerequisite tests that must be met are the normality test, the linearity test, and the multicollinearity test.

Normality Test

The data is declared normal if the significance level is greater than 0.05. The instrument normality test in this study was conducted using SPSS 23.0 for Windows and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method.



Table 5.
Normality Test Results of Employability Parapal Support and Work Volition

No	Variabel	Asymp.Sig	Significance	Information
1	Employability	0.087		Normal
2	Parental Support	0.200	0.05	Normal
3	Work Volition	0.067		Normal

Based on Table 5, it is known that the Employability data has an asymptotic value. Sig. (0.087) > 0.05; Parental Support data has an Asymptotic value. Sig. (0.200) > 0.05, and Work Volition data value Asymp. Sig. (0.067) > 0.05. This result explains that the three variables are normally distributed because they have an Asymp value. Sig. > 0.05.

Linearity Test

Table 6.
Results of the Employability and Support Linearity Test with Work Volition

No	Variabel	F Calculate	Significance	Information
1	X1 Y	84.784	0.000	Linier
2	X2 AND	64.889	0.000	Linier

Based on Table 6, the results of the linearity test of the employability variable with the work volition value of $F_{\text{cal}} (84.784) > F_{\text{table}} (3.865)$ and the variable and support parameter with the work volition value of $F_{\text{cal}} (64.889) > F_{\text{table}} (3.865)$. Thus, between the employability variable and work volition, as well as the variable and support parameter with work volition, it is stated that a linear relationship exists.

Multicollinearity Test

Table 7.
Results of Multicollinearity Test Employability and Para-port and Work Volition

No	Variabel	Tolerance	BRIGHT	Information
1	(Constant)			
2	Employability	0.795	1.258	Multicollinearity Does Not Occur
3	Parental Support	0.795	1.258	

Based on table 7, the tolerance value is $0.795 > 0.01$ and the VIF value is $1.258 < 5$. Thus, it is concluded that there are no symptoms of multicollinearity in the multiple linear regression model.

Assumption Tests

Before conducting regression analysis, several assumption tests were performed. The normality test (Kolmogorov–Smirnov) showed that the data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$), indicating the regression model is statistically appropriate. The linearity test confirmed a linear relationship between employability and work volition ($p < 0.05$). These tests are essential, as normality ensures reliable parameter estimates, and linearity ensures that the model correctly captures the relationship between variables. Although this study employs simple linear regression, multicollinearity is mentioned



because its presence can distort the estimation in multivariable designs. In this case, the VIF score was 1.000, confirming no multicollinearity issues.

Uji Hypothesis

Based on the results of the prerequisite test previously carried out, it is known that further statistical tests can be conducted using parametric statistical techniques. The next step is to test the research hypothesis. The hypotheses that have been compiled are as follows:

First Hypothesis: There is a Correlation between Employability and Work Volition of West Sumatra Vocational High School Students

The first hypothesis to be tested in this study can be arranged in the form of sentences as follows:

H0: There is no significant correlation between Employability and Work Volition of West Sumatra Vocational High School Students

Ha: There is a significant correlation between Employability and Work Volition of West Sumatra Vocational High School Students

To test the proposed hypothesis, a statistical analysis was conducted using a regression test between the Employability variables and work volition. The statistical analysis in this study was conducted using SPSS 25 software. The test results are presented as follows:

Table 8.
Results Of The Partial Correlation Significance Test Of Employability With Work Volition

		Correlations		
Control Variables			Employability	Work Volition
Parental Support	Employability	Correlation	1.000	.299
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000
		Df	0	396
	Work Volition	Correlation	.299	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.
		Df	395	0

Based on Table 8 above, the value $r = 0.299$ with a sig value of 0.000 (<0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted, indicating a significant correlation between Employability and work volition among vocational high school students in West Sumatra.

To test the proposed hypothesis, a statistical analysis was conducted using a regression test between the Employability variables and work volition. The statistical analysis in this study was conducted using SPSS 25 software. The test results are presented as follows:



Table 9.
Results of Simple Regression Analysis of Employability with Work Volition

Variabel	R	R Square
X1 Y	0.415 ^a	0.172

Based on the table above, the R value is 0.415, which shows the correlation coefficient between Employability and Work Volition. Furthermore, the R-squared value of 0.172 indicates that employability accounts for 17.2% of the variance in work volition, while the remaining 82.8% is attributed to other factors. Based on the results of the linear regression analysis above, it is evident that there is a relationship between Employability and Work volition among West Sumatra Vocational High School Students; thus, H₀ is rejected and H_a is accepted.

Hypothesis Testing and Regression Analysis

The results of the simple linear regression show that employability has a significant positive effect on work volition ($\beta = 0.415$, $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) = 0.172, meaning that employability explains 17.2% of the variance in students' work volition.

Practically, this means that improvements in employability, such as communication skills, technical competencies, problem-solving abilities, and career planning, can significantly increase students' motivation and readiness to enter the workforce. However, 82.8% of the variance is explained by other factors, such as family socioeconomic background, student interest, type of vocational program, geographical access to job markets, and school-industry collaboration, which were not controlled in this study.

Comparison with Previous Research

These results align with Duffy's (2012) emphasis on the importance of career adaptability in shaping work volition among youth. Similarly, Savickas (2013) underlined employability as a central component of life design and career construction. Compared to Syani (2021), who found that employability accounted for 25% of the variance in work volition among urban vocational students, our result is slightly lower. This difference may be due to the broader geographical sample in West Sumatra, including rural schools with more limited access to industry exposure.

The lower explanatory power found in this study reinforces the importance of considering contextual and systemic variables beyond personal competencies. The results showed that employability has a positive and significant influence on the willingness to work of vocational students in West Sumatra. Statistically, the regression coefficient between employability and willingness to work shows a positive value with a significance level of less than 0.05. This means that the higher the students' employability level (in terms of work readiness, work skills, and work attitude), the higher their willingness to work after graduation.

According to the questionnaire results, the majority of students with technical skills, internship experience, and an understanding of the world of work demonstrate a high level of work readiness and a strong desire. Meanwhile, students with low employability tend to have doubts about working immediately after graduation.



Effect of Employability on Willingness to Work

This finding aligns with Rudolph & Zacher (2020) opinion that employability encompasses a set of achievements, skills, understanding, and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to secure a job and succeed in it. In other words, when students possess good employability, they are not only technically prepared but also confident in entering the world of work.

According to Suryani & Novitasari (2020), employability includes "the ability to obtain, maintain, and develop employment in a changing labor market." This reinforces the research findings that vocational students who have practical work experience, vocational training, and industry understanding are more ready and willing to work immediately after graduation.

These results are consistent with more recent research that emphasizes the critical role of employability in shaping students' readiness and willingness to enter the workforce. According to Jackson and Tomlinson (2020), employability encompasses not only technical competencies but also personal attributes such as resilience, self-confidence, and reflective capacity, which contribute to effective career decision-making and work engagement. Moreover, Lo Presti and Pluviano (2016) argue that employability is a dynamic construct encompassing career identity, adaptability, and self-management skills, which are crucial during school-to-work transitions in a volatile labor market.

In the Indonesian context, recent studies by Sari and Wulandari (2021) revealed that vocational students with higher self-efficacy and soft skills, particularly communication and teamwork, demonstrated greater enthusiasm and readiness to seek employment after graduation. This reinforces the idea that strengthening holistic employability dimensions can significantly enhance students' work motivation.

Research by Yuliana and Susanti (2020) in vocational schools in West Java showed that students with high employability (especially those who participated in industrial apprenticeship programs and entrepreneurship training) tended to be more enthusiastic about finding a job after graduation. This finding aligns with the results of a study in West Sumatra, which emphasized the importance of real work experience in increasing willingness to work.

In addition, Nugroho (2018) states that psychological factors, such as self-confidence and expectations of work outcomes, are strongly influenced by the extent to which students feel competent. The higher the employability, the greater the students' confidence in their abilities, and this contributes directly to their intention to work immediately.

This result is also in line with recent international research that highlights the increasing demand for graduates who possess strong soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and work ethic alongside technical expertise. According to Tran, Rahmat, and Nguyen (2020), employers in both developed and developing countries are increasingly prioritizing interpersonal and adaptive competencies over purely academic achievements. In the context of West Sumatra, vocational students who demonstrate strong interpersonal abilities show higher mental readiness to enter the workforce, particularly in terms of adaptability, problem-solving, and proactive job-seeking behavior.

While many previous studies have examined employability in general terms, this study adds value by investigating its direct relationship with students' willingness to work, specifically among vocational students in a local Indonesian context. It addresses a research gap where employability has often been regarded as an outcome of vocational education rather than as a predictor of psychological readiness and motivation to work.



Most Influential Employability Components

Based on further analysis, some of the employability components that most influence willingness to work are:

1. Soft skills (communication, teamwork, and work ethics)
This is reinforced by the findings of Singh and Singh (2022), who emphasized that employers today are more concerned with graduates' ability to collaborate, communicate effectively, and exhibit professional behavior than with technical mastery alone
2. Work experience/industrial practice (PKL/Internship)
This aligns with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which suggests that learning through direct experience enhances understanding and motivation. More recent studies, such as by Yeo et al. (2018), confirm that students who participate in structured internships or apprenticeships show significantly greater readiness and willingness to enter the workforce.
3. Self-efficacy (confidence in one's own abilities)
Recent studies have shown that self-confidence, or career decision-making self-efficacy, plays a crucial role in an individual's ability to make informed career decisions and sustain motivation to enter the workforce. For instance, Rogers et al. (2020) demonstrated that students with high levels of self-efficacy are more decisive, resilient, and motivated in navigating their career paths. Similarly, Jiang et al. (2021) found that career self-efficacy strongly predicts students' readiness and willingness to pursue employment opportunities, especially in uncertain job markets.

Limitations of Previous Studies and Research Contributions

To date, there are relatively few local studies in Indonesia, especially in West Sumatra, that explicitly examine the relationship between employability and willingness to work among vocational students. Many studies focus more on employability as the ultimate outcome of vocational education, rather than as a factor that encourages mental readiness and a willingness to work. Thus, this study makes both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it expands the scope of employability studies by including willingness as a psychological outcome. Practically, the findings are important for schools and policy makers to improve employability aspects in the curriculum, especially through strengthening soft skills and improving the quality of street vendors.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study supports the Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2013) by demonstrating how employability competencies relate to the development of work volition. Practically, the results indicate that career guidance and counseling services in vocational schools should be more targeted.

Concrete intervention programs that could be developed include:

1. Employability skills workshops (e.g., resume writing, interview simulations)
2. Career coaching and mentoring programs involving alumni or industry practitioners
3. Internship placements tailored to student interests and school specialization
4. Early career exploration modules embedded in vocational curriculum

These programs should be implemented by school counselors in collaboration with homeroom teachers and local industries, ensuring that students not only gain technical skills but also develop confidence and clarity about their future career paths.



Limitations and Confounding Factors

This study acknowledges several confounding variables that were not measured but may influence the relationship between employability and work volition, such as:

1. Socioeconomic status of students' families
2. Gender differences in work motivation
3. Type of vocational program (technical, service, agriculture)
4. Geographical disparities (urban vs. rural schools)
5. School-industry partnership levels

Future research should include these variables to develop a more comprehensive model of work volition among vocational students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's results, it can be concluded that vocational students in West Sumatra exhibit a high level of willingness to work, reflecting their strong enthusiasm for entering the workforce immediately. Students' overall employability is also high, with generic skills as the main aspect that contributes the most. This confirms the importance of generic skills development as a key asset for SMK graduates to remain competitive in the job market. In addition, a positive and significant relationship was found between employability and students' willingness to work, confirming that improving employability directly encourages students' readiness and motivation in facing the challenges of the workforce. These findings provide a strong basis for stakeholders to continue developing vocational education programs that not only focus on technical mastery but also strengthen students' generic skills and work motivation so that they are ready to compete and contribute to the world of work.

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