

Self-Efficacy as a Predictor of Work readiness among Vocational High School Students

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Abstract

Background – Vocational High Schools (SMK) accounted for the highest unemployment rate by educational level in 2024, primarily due to a lack of work readiness. One factor that is predicted to influence work readiness is self-efficacy.

Research Urgency – This study needs to be conducted to verify whether self-efficacy can truly serve as a predictor of work readiness, so that teacher can design the right curriculum to prepare vocational high school graduates for entering the workforce.

Research Objectives – This study aims to examine whether self-efficacy can significantly affect an individual's work readiness.

Research Method – The study was conducted using a quantitative design and engaged 102 students as respondents from 10th and 11th grades at SMK Gatra Praja, Pekalongan, selected through quota sampling. Two scales were used in this research: General Self-Efficacy Scale to measure self-efficacy and Work Readiness Scale to assess students' work readiness. This study utilized simple linear regression analysis to examine the effect of self-efficacy on work readiness.

Research Findings – The analysis indicate that self-efficacy significantly affected work readiness, with a significance value of $0,001 < 0,05$. The study also found a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0,598, indicating that self-efficacy contributed 59,8% to work readiness, while the remaining 40,2% was affected by additional factors that were beyond the scope of this study.

Conclusion - These findings confirm that the higher a student's self-efficacy, the more prepared they are to face the demands of the workforce, reinforcing the role of self-efficacy as a key predictor of work readiness.

Research Novelty/Contribution – This study was conducted at SMK Gatra Praja in Pekalongan, a setting that has rarely been the focus of research on self-efficacy and work readiness. These findings can serve as a basis for developing school-based career guidance programs aimed at fostering or enhancing students' self-efficacy to improve their work readiness.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy, Work Readiness, Vocational High School

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty and unemployment remain major issues in Indonesia. According to data released by the Badan Pusat Statistik, as of February 2025, there were approximately 728 million unemployed individuals in the country. BPS also reported that in 2024, the highest unemployment rate by education level was recorded among graduates of vocational high schools, at 9,01%, followed by general high school graduates at 7,05%. The inability of vocational education to keep pace with changes in the labor market is one of the main factors contributing to the lack of work readiness among students. This, in turn, leads to vocational high school graduates representing the highest proportion of the unemployed (R. B. M. O. Wijaya & Utami, 2021). In fact, vocational high schools are designed to produce graduates who are ready to enter the world of work or entrepreneurship, with the aim of meeting industry and business demands (Pratama et al., 2023).

To reduce the unemployment rate in Indonesia, it is essential to ensure the work readiness of the available human resources, including vocational high school students who are expected to enter the workforce immediately after graduation (Karlina et al., 2022). The low level of work readiness among vocational high school students indicates that they have not yet met the quality standards expected by the labor market (Irawan & Hendri, 2022). Work readiness is also a key focus in recruitment and selection processes, as it provides insight into a candidate's potential performance and career development (Azky & Mulyana, 2024). Furthermore, work readiness helps individuals adjust to the work environment and the tasks assigned to them.

Work readiness refers to an individual's ability to complete tasks or jobs in accordance with existing standards without obstacles and to achieve the given targets (Riyanti & Kasyadi, 2021). It can also be defined as a stage in which an individual possesses physical and mental maturity, along with sufficient knowledge and experience, as well as the willingness and ability to perform a job (Novita & Armida, 2022). In addition, work readiness can be interpreted as the preparedness of each individual's skills and abilities that align with their potential and the practical demands of specific types of jobs in society (Muspawi & Lestari, 2020). Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that work readiness is a condition in which an individual has reached physical and mental maturity and possesses the knowledge and experience necessary to complete tasks in the workplace.

According to Caballero et al. (2011), there are four aspects of work readiness: personal characteristics, organizational acumen and awareness, work competence, and social intelligence. These four aspects collectively reveal an individual's level of work readiness. They encompass an individual's traits and qualities, professionalism or work ethics, organizational skills and critical thinking, as well as the ability to adapt and communicate effectively with others. Work readiness is also influenced by several factors, including career self-management, cultural competence, self-efficacy, career resilience, sociability, entrepreneurial orientation, proactivity, and emotional literacy (Bezuidenhout & Coetzee in Syamsurijal & Tandirerung, 2023).

Bandura (as cited in Walidaina & Hidayat, 2024), defines self-efficacy as the result of a cognitive process involving several elements, such as an individual's beliefs, decisions, or expectations regarding their perceived ability to carry out specific tasks in order to achieve desired outcomes. Self-efficacy can also be described as an individual's belief in their capacity to manage a particular situation, not necessarily based on actual ability, but rather on the confidence to face future challenges using their existing skills (Wasni et al., 2024). In general, self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their ability to complete assigned tasks. According to Bandura (as cited in Rahmawati & Sari, 2025) self-efficacy consists of three dimensions: magnitude/level, which relates to the perceived difficulty of a task; strength, which refers to the degree of confidence in one's belief; and generality, which refers to the applicability of self-efficacy across different tasks or behavioral domains.

A strong sense of self-efficacy can foster confidence in entering the workforce. An individual's belief in their ability to complete tasks enhances their self-confidence and their perceived capacity to compete with others in a professional context. The higher a person's self-efficacy, the more confident they are in handling various tasks with differing levels of difficulty, whether within a specific field or across multiple domains in their work. High self-efficacy also indicates a sufficient level of mental preparedness to face the demands of the industrial and business world.

This is consistent with several previous studies on self-efficacy and work readiness. Research evidence suggests that self-efficacy serves as a strong and meaningful predictor of vocational high school students' work readiness. (Puspitasari & Bahtiar, 2022; Lubis & Khairani, 2021; Itryah & Anggraini, 2022). Furthermore, a study carried out by Wiharja et al. (2020) found that the three dimensions of self-efficacy, level/magnitude, strength, and generality, also contribute to the level of work readiness.

Given the data on unemployment rates among students that graduates from vocational high school and findings from previous studies regarding the influence of self-efficacy on work readiness, the researcher is interested in re-examining the effect of self-efficacy on work readiness. This interest is rooted in the persistent challenge faced by vocational education in preparing students for the demands of the labor market, despite its primary objective of producing job-ready graduates. By focusing on self-efficacy, this study aims to identify whether internal beliefs about one's capabilities can significantly predict how well vocational students are capable of meeting workplace demands. Therefore, the central research question posed in this study is: *Does the level of self-efficacy predict an individual's level of work readiness?* The answer to this question is expected to provide insights that could inform educational strategies, career counseling, and policy development in vocational institutions. This study adds to the existing literature by focusing on a new population, students of SMK Gatra Praja Pekalongan, which has not been the subject of previous research on self-efficacy and work readiness.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research method. The subjects of the research were 10th and 11th grades students of SMK Gatra Praja, Pekalongan, in the 2024/2025 academic year, selected using a quota sampling technique. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula based on the total population of 115 students from 10th and 11th grade. The minimum required sample size was calculated to be 90 students. In this study, a total of 102 students participated as research subjects.

The instruments used in this study included the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) developed by Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1979) based on Bandura's theory and adapted by Novrianto et al. (2019). The items used in the adaptation had *t*-values greater than 1,96 and item-rest correlations ranging from 0,479 to 0,690, indicating that the scale is valid and unidimensional. The work readiness variable was measured using the Work Readiness Scale (WRS) originally developed by Caballero et al., (2011) and modified by Wijayanti (2019). The construct validity was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), with *t*-values greater than 1,96 and item-rest correlation values ranging from 0,370 to 0,700, indicating that the scale is valid. The collected data were analyzed using statistical methods, and hypothesis testing was conducted through simple linear regression analysis, assisted by the JASP software. The following are the items of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Table 1) and the Work Readiness Scale (Table 2).

Table 1. General Self-Efficacy Scale

Item	Item-Rest Correlation
1	0,490
2	0,479
3	0,486
4	0,597
5	0,563
6	0,535
7	0,618
8	0,690
9	0,562
10	0,533

Table 2. Work Readiness Scale

No.	Item-Rest Correlation
1	0,490
2	0,457
3	0,598
4	0,564
5	0,385
6	0,370
7	0,490
8	0,606
9	0,663
10	0,585
11	0,592
12	0,700
13	0,527
14	0,522
15	0,623
16	0,577
17	0,640
18	0,699
19	0,573

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 102 respondents who were 10th and 11th grade students from SMK Gatra Praja, Pekalongan. The respondents came from three departments offered at the school: Office Management and Business Services (MPLB), Accounting, and Visual Communication Design (DKV). The gender distribution among respondents was relatively balanced, while the majority of respondents, 42%, came from the DKV department. The following is a general overview of the respondents' characteristics.

Table 3. Respondents' Characteristics

Description	Total	Percentage
Gender		
Male	51	50%
Female	51	50%
Grade		
10 th	45	44%
11 th	57	56%
Department		
MPLB (Management)	29	28%
Accounting	30	29%
DKV	43	42%

The instruments used in this study, the General Self-Efficacy Scale and the Work Readiness Scale, were tested for reliability beforehand. The reliability test was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. The reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a value of $\alpha = 0,853$ for the General Self-Efficacy Scale and $\alpha = 0,909$ for the Work Readiness Scale. These results indicate that both scales have very good reliability, as their Cronbach's Alpha values exceed the threshold of 0,6.

Table 4. Reliability Test Result

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-Efficacy	0,853
Work Readiness	0,909

The following is a general overview of the score distribution tendencies for the two variables, self-efficacy and work readiness, as measured by the previously mentioned scales among 102 vocational students in 10th and 11th grades at SMK Gatra Praja. The standard deviation for the self-efficacy variable was 6,156, indicating that the distribution of respondents' total scores on this variable was relatively narrow, with the majority of scores falling within the range of 31 to 43. Similarly, the standard deviation for the work readiness variable was also relatively small, although slightly higher than that of the self-efficacy variable.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Work Readiness	102	58,471	8,790
Self-Efficacy	102	37,157	6,156

Self-efficacy as a predictor of students' work readiness at SMK Gatra Praja was tested through simple linear regression analysis. A summary of the regression model and the results of the ANOVA test, which assesses the overall significance of the model, is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Model Summary and ANOVA Test

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig. (p)
1	0,773	0,598	0,594	5,602	148,629	< 0,001

According to Table 6, it can be concluded that self-efficacy positively associated with work readiness. The findings imply that individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to demonstrate higher levels of work readiness. This is reflected in the positive value of the correlation coefficient ($R = 0,773$), which is close to 1, indicating a strong relationship. Another finding is the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0,598$), showing that self-efficacy contributes 59,8% to the work readiness of students at SMK Gatra Praja, while the remaining 40,2% was affected by additional factors that were beyond the scope of this study. The ANOVA test in this study also produced an F-value of 148.629 with a significance level (p) < 0.001, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant. Additionally, the standard error of the estimate for this model was relatively low, suggesting that the regression model is sufficiently accurate in predicting work readiness based on self-efficacy.

Table 7. Result of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	B	Std. Error	t	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	17,450	3,410	5,117	< 0,001
Self-Efficacy	1,104	0,091	12,191	< 0,001

Based on Table 7, the results of the regression analysis show a significance value of $p < 0,001$, indicating that self-efficacy has a significant effect on work readiness, as the significance value is below the 0,05 threshold. The table also shows that the regression coefficient for self-efficacy is 1,104, meaning that for every one-point increase in self-efficacy, the work readiness score increases by 1,104 points. The analysis also yielded a constant value of 17,450, which indicates that if a student has a self-efficacy score of zero, their predicted work readiness score would be approximately 17,450. Therefore, the regression equation in this study is as follows:

$$Y = 17,450 + 1,104X$$

Where:

Y = Work Readiness Score

X = Self-Efficacy Score

The results of this study indicate that self-efficacy positively affects work readiness. In other words, the greater an individual's self-efficacy leads to better work readiness, and vice versa. Lower self-efficacy is associated with reduced preparedness for entering the workforce. This relationship underscores the importance of psychological factors in shaping students' capacity to transition successfully from school to work. Individuals with strong self-efficacy are more likely to view challenges as tasks to be mastered, persist in the face of difficulties, and engage more actively in problem-solving, all of which are essential attributes in modern professional environments.

This results align with several previous studies that have concluded that self-efficacy is one of the predictors of an individual's work readiness (Neswari & Dwijayanti, 2022; Habibah & Dwijayanti, 2023; Violinda et al., 2023; Ariyanto et al., 2023; Fitri et al., 2025). For example, prior research has shown that individuals who possess confidence in their abilities tend to perform better in job-related tasks, show greater adaptability, and demonstrate higher levels of commitment in organizational settings. These results collectively suggest that enhancing self-efficacy may be a key strategy in improving vocational students' readiness to meet the demands of the labor market.

The dimensions that form the self-efficacy variable, magnitude/level, strength, and generality, can each influence a person's work readiness. For example, the generality dimension, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to apply their skills in specific areas (Herlina et al., 2025), can affect certain aspects of work readiness, such as social intelligence and work competence. These aspects help an individual adapt to group settings and collaborate effectively in a team by applying previously

acquired knowledge or skills. It is essential for individuals to be able to transfer and apply their prior knowledge or abilities to problems or tasks encountered in the workplace. If they succeed in doing so, they are considered to possess good work competence, supported by social intelligence to help them adapt.

Personal characteristics and organizational acumen, which refer to an individual's attitudes and behaviors in the workplace and their ability to adapt within an organization, can also be influenced by self-efficacy (Prisrilia & Widawati, 2021). The strength dimension of self-efficacy affects how a person develops these traits, as it relates to the confidence an individual has in their ability to complete specific tasks. Individuals with high strength in self-efficacy tend to show perseverance and a strong willingness to adapt to the values of the organization. This, in turn, becomes a valuable asset when entering the industrial world, as they are expected to work in accordance with organizational standards, an indicator of strong work readiness.

An individual's level of self-efficacy can also be observed through how they approach tasks of varying difficulty. Those with low self-efficacy tend to avoid complex or challenging tasks (Maulanada et al., 2024). This tendency directly impacts their work readiness, particularly in terms of work competence. The more frequently students avoid difficult tasks, the lower their competence will be, as they miss out on learning opportunities and valuable feedback necessary for improvement. Consequently, such individuals may struggle to meet organizational standards or expectations, resulting in lower levels of perceived work readiness.

Self-efficacy not only influences how individuals perceive their ability to perform tasks, but also shapes their behavioral responses in facing real-world challenges. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to set challenging goals, remain persistent in the face of obstacles, and regulate their emotions when dealing with pressure, traits that are essential in adapting to the demands of the workplace. The confidence they possess enables them to take initiative, communicate effectively, and solve problems independently, all of which contribute to greater work readiness. Conversely, individuals with low self-efficacy may underestimate their capabilities, avoid difficult tasks, and experience anxiety or doubt when encountering unfamiliar situations, leading to reduced preparedness for entering the workforce. Thus, self-efficacy acts as an internal driver that influences not only task completion but also the development of essential soft skills needed in a professional environment.

Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to approach tasks and responsibilities with seriousness, focus on problem-solving, and demonstrate a strong commitment to their work (A. D. Wijaya, 2024). This proactive and determined attitude allows them to persevere through difficulties and setbacks, enabling them to maintain motivation even in challenging situations. As a result, students with high self-efficacy are more likely to become resilient individuals who enjoy challenges and are eager to learn. They view obstacles not as barriers but as opportunities for growth and skill development. This mindset fosters adaptability, persistence, and continuous improvement, all of which are essential qualities in a dynamic work environment. Consequently, students with high self-efficacy are better equipped to meet the expectations of the labor market, navigate the complexities of the workforce, and contribute meaningfully to their future careers after graduating from vocational school.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted with 10th and 11th grade students at SMK Gatra Praja, Pekalongan, the results show that self-efficacy has positively and significantly affects work readiness. This indicates that the higher a student's self-efficacy, the more prepared they are to face the demands of the business and industrial world. Therefore, the findings of this study answer the research question, confirming that the level of self-efficacy does influence an individual's level of work readiness. These

results can serve as a basis for curriculum development in vocational high schools, emphasizing learning strategies that support and enhance students' self-efficacy in order to improve their work readiness. Schools can also use this research as a reference for developing career guidance programs that aim to foster greater readiness among students for entering the workforce. Future studies are encouraged to explore other variables that may affect work readiness, so that efforts to enhance students' preparedness can be planned and implemented more optimally.

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