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The Influence of Locus of Control and Student Competence on Students' Work Readiness

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Abstract

Vocational education aims to produce a competent and competitive workforce, reduce unemployment, and strengthen the industrial sector. This study uses a quantitative method with multiple linear regression analysis to evaluate data from 122 students in grades X and XI. The results show that LOC (Locus of Control) and student competence significantly influence job readiness, with a combined contribution of 17.9%. Students with an internal LOC have high motivation and effective decision-making skills, which support their job readiness. Good student competence, including knowledge, skills, and attitude, strengthens their ability to adapt to the workplace. Although LOC's contribution to job readiness is only 8.8%, student competence shows a contribution of 16.1%. These findings highlight the importance of developing LOC and competence in vocational curricula to prepare students for a competitive job market. Educators should design programs that enhance students' technical skills and LOC, equipping them to better face career challenges.

Keywords
Locus of Control, Student Competency, Work Readiness, Vocational Education

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INTRODUCTION

The principal aim of vocational education is to cultivate a proficient and employable workforce. High-quality vocational education enables graduates to immediately enter the workforce, possessing skills that correspond with market demands. Moreover, vocational education seeks to mitigate unemployment among graduates of vocational high schools and to bolster the domestic manufacturing sector. Vocational High Schools (SMK) serve a significant role in providing students with practical skills relevant to the needs of the industrial world [1]. Consequently, SMK students are more favorably situated to compete following graduation [2].

This objective corresponds with the government's initiatives to bolster national competitiveness in the context of globalization. Indonesia aims to cultivate a proficient workforce through comprehensive vocational education to enhance its competitiveness in the global market. Vocational education has a crucial role in fostering economic growth and national development [3]. It is anticipated to furnish students with opportunity to refine industry-relevant abilities. Vocational school graduates will be better equipped to confront labor market issues and contribute to national economic advancement.

In preparation for post-graduation employment, students are anticipated to develop both essential skills and knowledge, as well as a robust locus of control. A robust locus of control

enables pupils to cultivate self-confidence and assume accountability for their achievements or setbacks. With this psychological preparedness, students are more inclined to confront problems with fortitude and proactively pursue their career objectives.

An individual's readiness for employment after graduation is strongly influenced by the competencies they possess. Competence refers to the combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable a person to perform job tasks effectively. Students whose competencies align with the requirements of their desired field are generally more likely to secure jobs that match their interests and talents. Therefore, it is essential for students to develop the competencies required in the labor market during their educational journey. By acquiring relevant competencies, students will be able to compete more effectively in an increasingly competitive job market [4][5]. Moreover, competency development also supports students' ability to adapt to the ever-evolving demands of the workplace. Consequently, students will be better prepared to face the challenges of the working world after completing their formal education, and their chances of obtaining their ideal jobs will significantly increase.

This view is supported by an interview conducted with the Career Guidance and Placement Service (BKK) of SMK Veteran 1 Tulungagung, which emphasized the importance of student competence in facilitating graduates' entry into the workforce. Students with strong competencies are more likely to succeed in the job-seeking process. Based on this background, this study aims to examine the influence of locus of control and student competence on the work readiness of vocational high school students, both partially and simultaneously.

METHOD

This study utilized a descriptive quantitative methodology to examine the impact of Locus of Control and student competency on job preparedness among students at SMK Veteran 1 Tulungagung. A descriptive quantitative design was chosen to quantitatively characterize the connection between the independent factors (Locus of Control and student competency) and the dependent variable (work readiness). This method facilitates a thorough analysis of the influence of internal psychological elements and practical skills on students' readiness for workforce entry. Data were gathered via a closed-ended questionnaire employing a Likert scale, facilitating the precise assessment of student replies to each variable. The instrument was developed to assess various dimensions of competence, encompassing knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, along with indicators of internal and external locus of control.

The study population consisted of all grade X and XI students at SMK Veteran 1 Tulungagung, amounting to 122 persons. This research qualifies as a census study as the complete population was included in the sample. Data were examined utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. A multiple linear regression analysis was performed to assess the degree to which the independent factors affected job preparedness, both independently and collectively. Before doing hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were performed to verify the validity of the regression model. The tests encompassed normality, linearity, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation. The analytical framework was designed to correspond with the study's objective of determining how psychological orientation and competence development influence vocational students' preparedness for entering the labor market.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 1. Partial Test Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.547	3.771		2.797	.006
	LOC	.196	.073	.124	2.672	.008
	Student competence	.496	.137	.337	3.632	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Work Readiness

1. The Influence of Locus of Control on Work Readiness

Based on the partial test results presented in Table 1, the significance value between the Locus of Control variable and work readiness is 0.008. Since this value is lower than the threshold of 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that Locus of Control has a statistically significant influence on students' work readiness. The magnitude of this influence is further illustrated by the R-square value shown in Table 2, which indicates that Locus of Control contributes 8.8% to the variation in work readiness.

Table 2. Model Summary: The Effect of Locus of Control on Work Readiness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.296[a]	.088	.080	1.784

a. Predictors: (Constant), LOC

2. The Influence of Student Competence on Work Readiness

The results in Table 1 indicate a significance value of 0.000 for the relationship between student competence and work readiness. Given that this value is below the 0.05 threshold, the hypothesis is accepted, suggesting a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The R-square value presented in Table 3 demonstrates that student competence explains 16.1% of the variance in students' work readiness. This indicates that competence, encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes, significantly contributes to the readiness of vocational students for successful labor market entry.

Table 3. Model Summary: The Effect of Locus of Control on Work Readiness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.402[a]	.161	.154	1.711

a. Predictors: (Constant), Student Competence

3. The Influence of Locus of Control and Student Competence on Work Readiness

This simultaneous test aims to determine the joint influence of the independent variables—Locus of Control (X_1) and student competence (X_2)—on the dependent variable, work readiness (Y). The results of the multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Model Summary: The Combined Effect of Locus of Control and Student Competence on Work Readiness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	. 423a	. 179	.165	1.700

a. Predictors: (Constant), Student Competence, Locus of Control

As shown in Table 4, the R Square value of 0.179 indicates that the combination of *Locus of Control* and student competence accounts for 17.9% of the variance in students' work readiness. This suggests a meaningful joint contribution of both psychological orientation and student competency development in predicting vocational students' preparedness for employment.

Table 5. ANOVA: Simultaneous Effect of Locus of Control and Student Competence

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	74.784	2	37.392	12.940	.000[b]
	Residual	343.871	119	2.890		
	Total	418.656	121			

a. Dependent Variable: Work Readiness
b. Predictors: (Constant), Student Competence, Locus of Control

Table 5 displays the ANOVA test results, indicating an F value of 12.940 and a significance level of 0.000. The model demonstrates statistical significance as the p-value is below 0.05. This indicates that Locus of Control and student competence, when analyzed collectively, significantly influences students' preparedness for workforce entry.

Discussion

1. The Influence of Locus of Control on Work Readiness

The findings of this study indicate that Locus of Control has a significant impact on students' work readiness, evidenced by a p-value of 0.008, which is below the 0.05 threshold, thus supporting the hypothesis. This indicates that individuals with a stronger internal Locus of Control are generally more equipped to handle workforce demands than those who view their lives as influenced by external factors. The findings align with previous research indicating a significant relationship between Locus of Control and work readiness [6].

Individuals with an internal Locus of Control theoretically believe that their personal effort and decision-making significantly influence outcomes, including employment-related results. Success and failure are perceived as primarily self-determined, which encourages greater engagement in learning and preparation for workforce entry. Individuals exhibiting greater responsibility and enhanced self-regulation are significantly correlated with job readiness [7]. The study indicates that Locus of Control explains 8.8% of the variance in students' work readiness. This contribution, while not extensive, is statistically and practically significant, indicating that psychological factors significantly influence employment preparedness in conjunction with technical skills, knowledge, and work experience.

Prior research corroborates these findings, indicating that individuals with a robust internal Locus of Control generally exhibit enhanced job performance and increased job satisfaction [8]. Individuals with a stronger internal locus of control exhibit greater adaptability in dynamic work environments and possess a heightened achievement orientation, thereby enhancing their prospects for labor market entry relative to those with a weaker internal locus.

2. The Influence of Student Competence on Work Readiness

This study's findings demonstrate that student competence significantly affects work preparedness. This indicates that a student's degree of competency correlates positively with

their preparedness to enter the workforce. Work readiness is an essential quality that vocational school graduates must have to participate effectively in industrial environments. Graduates are anticipated to proficiently adjust to employment requirements and workplace settings.

The R-square value of 0.161 in Table 3 signifies that student competency accounts for 16.1% of the variance in job preparedness. The remaining 83.9% is presumably attributable to other external or internal factors beyond competence, including internship experiences, social support, and soft skills [9]. This indicates that while competency is a significant component, it is not the exclusive determinant of employability. Competence, which includes both technical and practical abilities obtained via school and training, is theoretically significant for entering the labor market [10]. Industrial simulations performed in educational environments or via internships assist students in comprehending authentic working realities, consequently augmenting their readiness. Additional research further validate the beneficial impact of competence on employment preparedness [11]. These findings underscore that competency, encompassing technical proficiency, domain knowledge, and interpersonal skills, is crucial for vocational students to satisfy the changing requirements of the contemporary workforce.

3. The Combined Influence of Locus of Control and Student Competence on Work Readiness

The combined influence of Locus of Control and student competence on work readiness represents a strategic issue in vocational education, particularly in preparing graduates who can compete in a highly dynamic and competitive labor market. The findings of this study reveal that both variables jointly contribute significantly to students' work readiness, with a total effect size of 17.9%. This indicates that both psychological and technical dimensions are critical in shaping students' attitudes, behaviors, and mental as well as practical readiness for employment.

Students with a strong internal Locus of Control tend to be more proactive, responsible, and motivated in pursuing their career goals. At the same time, students with high levels of both technical and non-technical competence are more confident and capable of performing professional tasks effectively. Locus of Control, as an individual's belief in their ability to control outcomes, plays a pivotal role in shaping motivation and work behavior. Students with internal control orientation tend to possess a strong work ethic, perseverance, and a belief that success is determined by effort rather than external circumstances. Previous research has shown that internal Locus of Control, along with internship experience and self-efficacy, significantly affects vocational students' work readiness [12].

On the other hand, student competence—encompassing knowledge, technical skills, and work attitudes—is also essential for enhancing employability. Competence is acquired not only through formal education but also through industrial practice and field experience. Digital and ICT competencies, in particular, have been shown to significantly improve vocational students' work readiness, especially when supported by adequate internship programs [13]. Additional studies have also found a positive correlation between internal Locus of Control and adversity quotient in predicting the work readiness of vocational students in electrical engineering programs [14].

Nevertheless, not all studies confirm a strong direct influence of Locus of Control. For instance, in some contexts, self-efficacy appears to play a more dominant role in determining work readiness among members of Generation Z, while Locus of Control shows no significant direct effect [15]. These findings suggest that the influence of psychological and competency factors may vary depending on students' contexts, backgrounds, and prior experiences. Therefore, the present findings underscore the need to develop both Locus of Control and student competence in a balanced manner within vocational curricula. Educational programs

should not only focus on technical skills, but also emphasize the development of character and mental resilience through soft skills training, psychological coaching, and collaboration with industry partners. The integration of these two aspects constitutes a key strategy for producing graduates who are not only technically proficient but also mentally strong, independent, and well-prepared to face the challenges of the global workforce.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

Conclusion

This research investigates the impact of Locus of Control and student competence on the work readiness of vocational high school (SMK) students, both individually and collectively. The study was based on the essential requirement for SMK graduates to be sufficiently equipped for the growing competitive demands of the industrial labor market. Work readiness is shaped by both the mastery of technical skills and psychological factors, including Locus of Control and adaptability gained through competence development. The results indicate that Locus of Control significantly influences students' work readiness. Students possessing an internal Locus of Control, characterized by the belief that success results from individual effort and decision-making, generally demonstrate increased motivation, self-confidence, and autonomy in career planning. This psychological factor accounts for 8.8% of students' work readiness, highlighting the significance of internal motivation and personal responsibility in influencing employability.

Furthermore, student competence, which includes knowledge, technical skills, and work attitudes, was identified as a significant factor affecting work readiness, accounting for 16.1% of the variance. Students with relevant and sufficient competencies exhibit greater competitiveness in the job market, demonstrate quicker adaptation to workplace environments, and execute tasks professionally in alignment with their area of expertise. Simultaneous analysis revealed that Locus of Control and student competence collectively accounted for 17.9% of students' work readiness. This indicates that both internal psychological orientation and externally acquired competencies are crucial in influencing graduates' readiness for employment. The synergistic impact underscores the necessity for a balanced approach to character development and technical skill acquisition in vocational education.

The study concludes that vocational curricula must not only emphasize technical competencies but also include systematic initiatives to enhance students' character and psychological preparedness, particularly through the reinforcement of their Locus of Control. Educators should create learning experiences that promote responsibility, independence, and professionalism. Moreover, enhanced collaboration with industry is crucial for equipping students with genuine, real-world experiences that improve their skills and prepare them for the workforce.

Recommendation

This study recommends that vocational education institutions prioritize the comprehensive development of students' Locus of Control and competencies in their curriculum. Programs that enhance self-confidence, independence, and responsibility—such as mental development activities, soft skills training, and character education—should be reinforced to better prepare students for workforce challenges.

Furthermore, educational institutions ought to enhance collaborations with industry via work-based learning initiatives, including internships and field placements. These experiences enable students to apply technical skills learned in school while gaining insight into real workplace dynamics. Implementing these recommendations is anticipated to enhance the competitiveness of vocational graduates in a complex and demanding labor market. They will

possess relevant technical expertise and demonstrate strong personal character traits that enhance professional performance and adaptability in diverse work environments.

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