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INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE AND WORK INTEREST AS PREDICTORS OF WORK READINESS AMONG OFFICE AUTOMATION AND MANAGEMENT VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The background of this study is based on the importance of vocational high school students' work readiness in facing the world of work after graduation, considering the strategic role of vocational education in producing a skilled and ready-to-use workforce. This study aims to determine the effect of internship experience and work interest on the work readiness of students majoring in Office Automation and Management (OTKP) at SMKN 50 Jakarta. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method and data collection techniques through questionnaires. The population in this study were all OTKP students of SMKN 50 Jakarta in the 2024/2025 academic year, with a total sample of 108 students being sampled using total sampling. Data were analyzed using SmartPLS software. The results show that both internship experience and work interest have a significant influence on students' work readiness. Internship experience contributes to students' understanding of the world of work, while work interest encourages students' mental readiness and motivation to immediately enter the world of work.

Keywords: Internship experience, Work interest, Work readiness, Vocational High School Students

ABSTRAK

Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada pentingnya kesiapan kerja siswa SMK dalam menghadapi dunia kerja setelah lulus, mengingat peran strategis pendidikan kejuruan dalam mencetak tenaga kerja terampil dan siap pakai. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh pengalaman magang dan minat kerja terhadap kesiapan kerja siswa jurusan Otomatisasi dan Tata Kelola Perkantoran (OTKP) di SMKN 50 Jakarta. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode survei dan teknik pengumpulan data melalui kuesioner. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah seluruh siswa OTKP SMKN 50 Jakarta angkatan tahun akademik 2024/2025, dengan jumlah 108 siswa yang dijadikan sampel secara total sampling. Data dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak SmartPLS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa baik pengalaman magang maupun minat kerja memiliki pengaruh signifikan terhadap kesiapan kerja siswa. Pengalaman magang memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman siswa tentang dunia kerja, sedangkan minat kerja mendorong kesiapan mental dan motivasi siswa untuk segera terjun ke dunia kerja.

Kata kunci: Pengalaman magang, Minat kerja, Kesiapan kerja, Siswa SMK

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INTRODUCTION

The economic growth of the Asian region is projected by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reach 4.2% by 2024, representing two-thirds of global economic growth. However, this growth comes with major challenges, particularly in Asia's two largest economies, Japan and China. Although Indonesia is not yet among the most prosperous countries globally, it holds a strong position in Southeast Asia due to various strategic government efforts aimed at achieving welfare and social justice (Yuda et al., 2021). Indonesia has established a long-term development vision through the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025–2045 under the theme "Golden Indonesia 2045." This vision emphasizes comprehensive transformation in various sectors: social, economic, governance, legal, and ecological. However, the success of this transformation heavily depends on the quality of human resources (HR). One indicator of Indonesia's progress is shown by the 2023 IMD World Talent Ranking, which places Indonesia at 47th out of 64 countries, marking an improvement in its HR competitiveness.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of human resources. Ki Hajar Dewantara, the father of Indonesian education, stated that education is a process to guide the natural strengths of children toward achieving the highest level of safety and happiness as individuals and members of society. Vocational High Schools (SMK) are institutions designed to produce graduates with technical skills and job readiness suited to their chosen fields (Inderanata & Sukardi, 2023). Specifically, in the Office Automation and Governance (OTKP) major, students are equipped with administrative skills, document management, information technology, and office management knowledge. During their education, they participate in internship programs as a practical application of their learning. According to Law No. 13 of 2003, internships are structured job training that serves as a crucial bridge between education and the world of industry.

Previous studies indicate that internship experiences provide students with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real work settings, enhancing their technical skills and professional competencies (Abuhussain et al., 2021). Empirical evidence consistently shows that students who undergo structured internships demonstrate higher levels of work readiness, including adaptability, problem-solving, and workplace communication skills (Baert et al., 2021). Aside from internships, another factor believed to influence students' job readiness is work interest (Rahmah et al., 2024). Work interest reflects a student's desire, enthusiasm, and motivation to enter the workforce upon graduation (Khoiriyah et al., 2025). Students with high work interest tend to be more motivated, have clear career plans, and are better prepared to face workplace challenges. Yet, limited research has explored how the interplay between internship experience and work interest contributes to enhancing students' work readiness in vocational education contexts.

A preliminary survey at SMKN 50 Jakarta revealed that many students expressed a stronger desire to start working rather than pursuing higher education. However, job readiness is not only shaped by training but also by mental maturity, practical experience, and individual motivation. Based on the preliminary study, many students consider themselves ready to work, yet in reality, they struggle to meet the complex and dynamic demands of the industry. This raises the question of how much internship experience and work interest truly contribute to enhancing vocational students' job readiness. Therefore, it is essential to conduct a study to examine the influence of internship experience and work interest on the job readiness of students, particularly those in the OTKP program at SMKN 50 Jakarta. This research is expected to provide empirical insights that contribute to improving the quality of vocational graduates and serve as an evaluation tool for schools and policymakers in developing job-oriented curricula.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

The Impact of Internship Experience on Work Readiness

An internship is defined as a training or practical activity undertaken by students under the guidance of a professional with the goal of improving their skills and understanding the knowledge they have acquired. Internship programs aim to provide on-the-job training to enhance skills in a specific field relevant to their major, preparing them for entering the workforce. Previous research based on journals (Fauzan et al., 2023; Gohae, 2020; Mu'arif, 2022; Mustari, 2021; Putri & Anwar, 2023; Suyanto et al., 2019) shows significant and positive results, indicating that internship programs significantly influence job readiness. A high internship program impact will lead to a high level of job readiness. Conversely, a low internship program impact will also lead to a low level of job readiness.

The Influence of Work Interest on Work Readiness

Career interest is defined as a person's tendency to possess the will, desire, and ability to effectively complete assigned tasks in their workplace. Students with a passion for work tend to prefer entering the workforce rather than continuing their education at university. Previous research (Gohae, 2020; Harjanto, 2013; Jaya, 2023; Kurniawati & Arief, 2016; Mustari, 2021; Putri & Anwar, 2023; Rosa, 2015; Suyanto et al., 2019) shows that work interest has a positive impact on work readiness. A person's level of work readiness increases with increasing work interest. Conversely, if work interest is low, work readiness will also decrease.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the explanation, the dependent variable in this study is work readiness (Y), while the independent variables are internship experience (X1) and work interest (X2). The relationships among these variables are formulated into the following hypotheses (See Figure 1):

H1: There is a significant influence of internship experience on students' work readiness.
H2: There is a significant influence of work interest on students' work readiness.

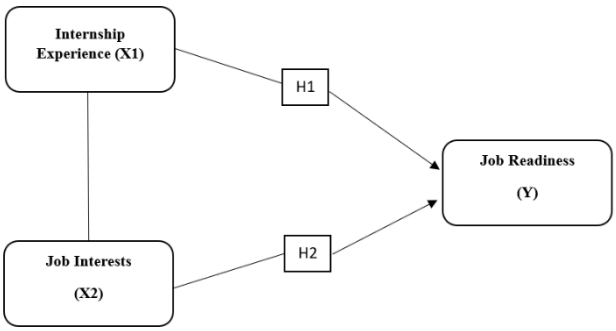

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey method, aiming to explain the causal relationship between internship experience and job interest on students' job readiness. This approach was chosen because it allows for hypothesis testing through statistically analyzed numerical data. The population in this study was all 108 students majoring in Office Automation and Management (OTKP) at SMKN 50 Jakarta in the 2024/2025 academic year. The sampling technique used was census sampling, as the population size was relatively small and all members of the population could be sampled. The main instrument in this study was a questionnaire compiled based on indicators for each variable. The scale used was a 5-point Likert scale, with a range from "Strongly Disagree" (1)

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to "Strongly Agree" (5). The variables in this study include two variables, namely the independent variable which contains X1: Internship Experience with X2: Work Interest and the dependent variable, namely Y: Work Readiness. The variable indicators are compiled based on previous theories and research (Fauzan et al., 2023; Mustari, 2021), which include dimensions of technical skills, field problem solving, and willingness and attention to career. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4.0 software. The analysis process includes Outer Model Evaluation which tests convergent validity (with AVE and loading factor > 0.70) and construct reliability (with Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability values > 0.70) and Inner Model Evaluation: Testing the coefficient of determination (R^2), f^2 effect (effect size), and testing the significance of the relationship between variables using t-statistics and p-values (significant if $p < 0.05$). This method was chosen because it is able to handle models with high complexity, small data, and loose data distribution assumptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outer Model

Data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach with the assistance of SmartPLS 4.0 software. The three variables analyzed in this study were internship experience (X1), job interest (X2), and job readiness (Y). The outer model analysis will produce a reliability value output, which is used to determine the relationship between variables in a study. The data used by the researchers was the second research model instrument, whose value was valid and met the outer model score requirement of >0.368. The results of the outer model measurement model analysis shown in Figure 1. In the process of analyzing the measurement model (outer model), researchers conducted three main types of tests: convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. This stage is crucial to ensure the instrument used is able to measure the construct accurately and consistently and can clearly differentiate one construct from another.

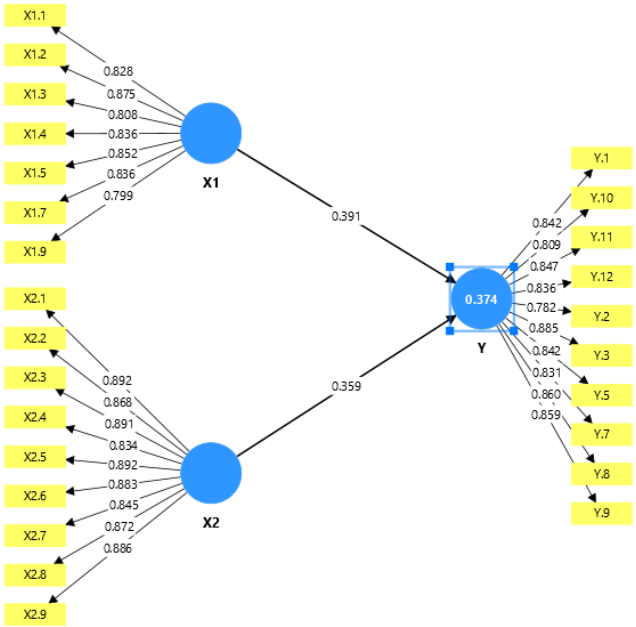

Figure 2. Outer Model

In the outer model test during the convergent validity assessment process, the required loading factor value must exceed 0.368. When the loading factor value exceeds this limit, the indicator can be declared valid, indicating a strong and meaningful relationship with the

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construct being measured. Based on Table 1, The results of the convergent validity test show that all indicators have a loading factor > 0.70, an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value > 0.50, and Composite Reliability > 0.70, which indicates that the research construct is valid and reliable.This section contains the results of data analysis, instrument and hypothesis testing (if any), answers to research questions, findings and interpretation of findings, as well as discussion of research results with theories and previous research results.

Table 1. Outer Loading Results After Calculation

	Internship Experience (X1)	**Work Interest (X2)**	**Work Readiness (Y)**
X1.1	0.933		
X1.2	0.804		
X1.3	0.814		
X1.5	0.833		
X1.7	0.784		
X1.9	0.865		
X2.1		0.892	
X2.2		0.868	
X2.3		0.891	
X2.4		0.834	
X2.5		0.892	
X2.6		0.883	
X2.7		0.845	
X2.8		0.872	
X2.9		0.886	
Y.1			0.726
Y.2			0.720
Y.3			0.767
Y.5			0.742
Y.7			0.782
Y.9			0.781
Y.10			0.719
Y.11			0.854
Y.12			0.710

To assess internal reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was used as a parameter to assess consistency between items within a construct. Based on the guidelines used, a construct is considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's Alpha value of more than 0.70. The test results showed that all constructs met this value, indicating that each construct has sufficient internal consistency and can proceed to the inner model testing stage. Based on Table 2, indicate that all constructs in this study have values higher than the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70. This finding indicates that each variable exhibits an adequate level of internal consistency, thus meeting the instrument reliability standards as proposed by (Sarstedt et al., 2022). Therefore, the constructs used in this study are deemed to have sufficient reliability and are suitable for further analysis, particularly at the stage of evaluating the inner model or testing hypotheses. This good reliability is an important foundation for ensuring that measurement results are stable and reliable, and supports the achievement of validity in the overall research findings.

Table 2. Cronbach Alpha

	Cronbach's Alpha
Internship Experience (X1)	0.927
Work Interest (X2)	0.961
Work Readiness (Y)	0.953

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Discriminant validity measurement requires that different constructs have no strong correlation, indicated by a score of <0.9. This can be determined by testing using reflective indicators. Three other calculations are also performed to strengthen the results of the discriminant validity test: the HTMT, Fornell-Larcker, and cross-loading calculations. In the HTMT discriminant validity Table 3, all pairs of variables obtained a score <0.9, including variables X1 and X2 (score 0.342), variables X1 and Y (score 0.537), and variables X2 and Y (score 0.502). Therefore, researchers can conclude that all pairs of variables do not have a strong correlation and the results of the HTMT discriminant validity are met.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity HTMT

	Internship Experience (X1)	Work Interest (X2)	Work Readiness (Y)
X1			
X2	0.342		
Y	0.537	0.502	

Based on the data presented in the Table 4, it can be concluded that all the square root values of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) listed on the main diagonal are higher than the correlation values between constructs located off the diagonal. This condition indicates that the discriminant validity requirements as proposed by the Fornell-Larcker criteria have been met. In detail, the AVE root for the Internship Experience construct (X1) is 0.834, which is greater than its correlation with the Work Interest construct (X2) of 0.328 and with Work Readiness (Y) of 0.509. Similarly, the AVE root value for the Work Interest construct (X2) is 0.874, exceeding its correlation with the Work Readiness construct (Y) which is only 0.487. Therefore, it can be concluded that each construct in the model is more closely correlated with its own constituent indicators than with other constructs, thus indicating that the model has met discriminant validity well.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Fornell Larcker

	Internship Experience (X1)	**Work Interest (X2)**	**Work Readiness (Y)**
X1	0.834		
X2	0.328	0.874	
Y	0.509	0.487	0.840

Composite reliability is used to measure the reliability of a construct using its reflective indicators. Reliability testing is conducted to determine the level of consistency, accuracy, and precision of an instrument in measuring a research construct. The score achieved in the composite reliability test, also known as construct reliability, must be greater than 0.7. To assess the reliability and validity of a construct, two main measures are used: Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). A construct is considered reliable if its composite reliability value is above 0.70, indicating adequate internal consistency between indicators. Based on Table 5, Convergent validity is met if the AVE value is greater than 0.50, meaning the majority of the indicator's variance can be explained by the latent construct in question. All constructs in this study demonstrated composite reliability values exceeding 0.70 and AVE values exceeding 0.50. Therefore, it can be concluded that each variable in this study has met the standards of convergent validity and construct reliability.

Table 5. Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	**Composite reliability**	**AVE**
Internship Experience (X1)	0.927	0.929	0.695
Work Interest (X2)	0.961	0.963	0.764
Work Readiness (Y)	0.953	0.955	0.705

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Inner Model

Structural model analysis (inner model) is a crucial step in the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method, which focuses on testing the strength and direction of relationships between latent constructs in a theoretical model. This stage aims to assess the extent to which independent variables influence the dependent variable, as formulated in the research's conceptual framework. This inner model evaluation provides an overview of the causal relationships between constructs and tests the predictive validity of the structural model as a whole. The structural model analysis in this study was conducted using SmartPLS software version 4.1.1.2. The analysis process produced a path diagram that visually represented the relationships between latent constructs (Figure 3). This diagram provides a comprehensive overview of the direction of the relationship (positive or negative), the magnitude of the influence (path coefficient), and the level of statistical significance of each relationship between the exogenous (independent) and endogenous (dependent) variables.

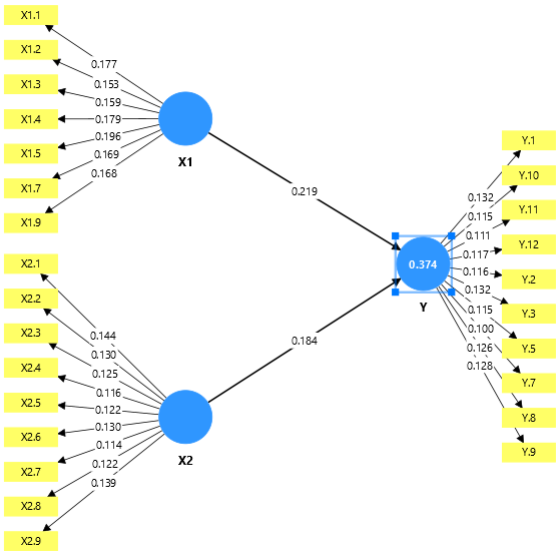

Figure 3. Inner Model

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to assess how much of the variance in an endogenous variable can be explained by one or more exogenous variables within a structural model. The R^2 value provides an important indicator of the model's predictive power and also indicates the extent to which the independent variables significantly contribute to explaining the dependent variable. According to (Sarstedt et al., 2022), the general interpretation criteria for the R^2 value in the context of social research are as follows: (a) $R^2 \geq 0.67$ is categorized as strong, (b) R^2 around 0.33 is considered moderate, and (c) R^2 around 0.19 is considered weak. In other words, the higher the R^2 value, the greater the model's ability to explain the construct under study. Based on Table 6, the R-square (R^2) value for the work readiness variable is 0.536, meaning that 53.6% of the variability in students' work readiness can be explained by internship experience and work interest.

Table 6. R-Square

	R-square	*R-square adjusted*	Explanation
Work Readiness (Y)	0.374	0.362	Medium *(Moderate)*

The effect size (f^2) test aims to evaluate the extent to which each independent variable influences the dependent variable in a structural model. This procedure aims to determine the extent to which removing one independent construct from the model will affect the R^2 value of

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the dependent (endogenous) construct. Thus, the f^2 value provides information about the magnitude of the individual impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable. Interpretation of these f^2 results provides a deeper understanding of the specific influence of each construct on student work readiness, beyond the combined contribution indicated by the R^2 value. Based on the Table 7, it can be seen that the magnitude of the influence of the variable construct X1 (Internship Experience) on the variable construct Y (Job Readiness) reached 0.219. This value is in the moderate category, which indicates a significant relationship between the two variables. Meanwhile, the influence of variable X2 (Job Interest) on Job Readiness (Y) shows a value of 0.184, which is also classified as moderate based on the interpretation of the effect size (F^2).

Table 7. F-Square

	Internship Experience (X1)	Work Interest (X2)	Work Readiness (Y)
Internship Experience (X1)			0.219
Work Interest (X2)			0.184
Work Readiness (Y)			

Hypothesis Testing

In quantitative research using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, hypothesis testing focuses on evaluating the significant influence between latent variables in the developed model. The primary method in this testing uses P-values generated from a bootstrapping procedure using SmartPLS software. In general, the decision-making criteria for hypotheses are based on the significance value (P-Value). If the P-Value is <0.05, the hypothesis is accepted, meaning the relationship between the variables in the model is considered statistically significant. Conversely, if the P-Value is >0.05, the hypothesis is rejected because the relationship between the exogenous and endogenous variables in the model does not show statistical significance. The use of P-Values as an indicator of significance is important in ensuring the empirical validity of the causal relationships formulated in the research model. Based on Table 8, Internship experience (X1) has a positive and significant effect on work readiness (Y) with a t-statistic value = 5.712 and p-value = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Work interest (X2) also has a significant effect on work readiness (Y) with a t-statistic value = 4.566 and p-value = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$).

Table 8. Hypothesis Testing with Bootstrapping

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Internship Experience -> Work Readiness	0.391	0.395	0.080	4.896	0.000
Work Interest -> Work Readiness	0.359	0.364	0.079	4.566	0.0

Discussion

There is a significant influence between Internship Experience on the Work Readiness of OTKP Students

Based on the path coefficient calculation displayed in the bootstrapping hypothesis test table, the Original Sample value is 0.391 for the effect of Internship Experience (X_1) on Job Readiness (Y). The T-Statistics of 4.896 exceeds the threshold value of 1.645, and the P-Value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance level, indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. Thus, the first hypothesis (H_1), which states that Internship Experience has a significant effect on Job Readiness of students in the OTKP expertise program at SMKN

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50 Jakarta, can be accepted. This is consistent with research conducted by (Mu'arif, 2022) on Educational Management students at UIN (State Islamic University), which showed that the internship program variable, through a reliability test, had quite good results, namely 0.780. Respondents in this study showed positive agreement for all variables examined on the scale, as explained by the statistically significant results of the one-sample t-test with a value of 3 (neutral point) at the 0.000 level for all variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that internships have an effect on job readiness.

Students who participated in the internship program positively appreciated all elements of the job readiness construct. They were aware of what employers expected of their tasks in the work environment. Relevant research results can also be found in research conducted by (Fauzan et al., 2023) which shows a significant influence between internships on work readiness in students with a t-table value of (8.048 > 1960) and a significance level of 0.000 < 0.005. So it can be concluded that internships have an effect on work readiness because students who have participated in internship programs are directly able to apply their basic academic skills in the workplace. Furthermore, similar research results were also found in research (Kapareliotis et al., 2019) conducted in various schools in Greece which showed that the internship variable had a fairly good reliability test result of 0.7. Sample respondents showed a positive side to all variables by showing statistically significant results from a single sample t-test value of 4 (neutral point) at the 0.01 level for all variables. This indicates that internships have a significant effect on work readiness. Students who participated in the internship program rated all aspects of the work readiness construct well.

There is a significant influence of work interest on the work readiness of OTKP students

Based on the results of the path coefficient calculation obtained through the bootstrapping hypothesis test, it is known that the Job Interest variable (X_2) has a positive influence on Job Readiness (Y), as indicated by the Original Sample value of 0.359. In addition, the T-statistics value of 4.566, which exceeds the critical limit of 1.645, and the P-Values value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance level, indicates that the influence is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the second hypothesis (H_2), which states that Job Interest has a positive and significant influence on Job Readiness of students in the OTKP expertise program at SMKN 50 Jakarta, is declared accepted. This finding aligns with the research conducted by (Jaya, 2023), which demonstrated that work interest has a positive and significant effect on work readiness. Based on the partial t-test, the calculated t-value obtained was 3.378, higher than the t-table of 2.000, with a significance level of 0.001, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, work interest is stated to have a positive influence of 15.5% on students' work readiness. This indicates that the greater students' work interest, the higher their level of readiness to enter the workforce.

Furthermore, the results of this study are supported by findings from (Kurniawati & Arief, 2016), which revealed that work interest has a significant influence on work readiness. In the partial test, the t-test value was obtained at 4.498 with a significance value of 0.000, smaller than the significance limit of 0.05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, stating that work interest contributes positively to work readiness. The study was conducted on grade XI students of the Accounting Expertise Program at SMKN 1 Kendal, which is the focus of the study. Additional support for this finding is also obtained from the results of research conducted by (Harjanto, 2013), which used a simple regression analysis with one predictor, namely the variable of Job Interest. The results of the analysis showed a positive r-value of 0.721, and a regression coefficient value of 0.790, indicating that job interest has a strong and positive influence on job readiness. This research was conducted on students of SMKN 1 Seyegan, who were the sample in the study. This finding strengthens the argument that job

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interest is an important determinant factor in the formation of job readiness among Vocational High School students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Following the discussion in the previous chapter regarding the research on the Influence of Internship Experience and Job Interest on the Job Readiness of OTKP Students at SMKN 50 Jakarta, in which the researcher used 108 respondents and the SmartPLS application version 4.1.1.2 in the analysis, this research has reached the final stage, namely the conclusion. The following are some conclusions that can be drawn from this study, namely, (1) There is a significant influence between Internship Experience and the Job Readiness of OTKP students at SMKN 50 Jakarta. Thus, the greater the influence of internship experience, the higher the level of student job readiness to enter the workforce, and conversely, the lower the influence of internship experience will have an impact on low student job readiness; and (2) There is a significant relationship between work interest and work readiness among students at SMKN 50 Jakarta. Thus, students with high work interest tend to have a higher level of work readiness than those with low work interest.

Limitation and Recommendation

In conducting this research, the researcher recognized several limitations that could potentially impact the results and the generalizability of the findings. These limitations include: (1) This research was limited to students in the Office Automation and Governance (OTKP) program at SMKN 50 Jakarta. Therefore, the results may not be widely applicable to other departments, schools, faculties, universities, or educational institutions. This is due to possible differences in the characteristics of the research subjects based on their institutional background, social environment, and the geographic and temporal context of the research; (2) This study focused solely on analyzing two independent variables—internship experience and job interest—as factors influencing job readiness. However, in reality, various other factors also have the potential to contribute to job readiness, such as interpersonal skills, family support, the quality of school learning, and the work environment. Therefore, the limited scope of variables in this study may affect the breadth and depth of our comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of job readiness.

Based on limitation, the researchers recommend that the results of this study be used specifically in the context of Vocational High School (SMK) students, considering that the primary focus of this study was on vocational high school students. If there is a desire to apply this research to higher levels of education, such as university students, it is recommended to adjust the instrument and consider differences in the characteristics of the research subjects that may influence the findings. Future similar studies consider the addition of other independent variables that could potentially influence work readiness. This will result in more comprehensive and varied research results, enriching the body of knowledge regarding the factors contributing to students' work readiness.

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