

The Relationship between the Intensity of Vocational Program Implementation and the Work Readiness of State Islamic Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Background: Vocational programs in Madrasah Aliyah are a strategic approach to bridge the gap between graduate competencies and labor market demands.

Objectives: This study aims to analyze the relationship between the intensity of vocational program implementation and the work readiness of MAN students.

Method: A quantitative correlational design was employed at MAN 1 Kediri City during the even semester of 2024/2025. A sample of 91 students from a population of 905 was selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a validated four-level Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Result: Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis revealed $r = 0.567$ with $p < 0.05$, indicating a positive and significant relationship with a strong level of closeness between vocational program intensity and student work readiness.

Conclusion: The more intense the vocational program implementation, the higher the students' work readiness in terms of technical skills, communication, cooperation, responsibility, and professional attitude. These findings can serve as a basis for strengthening vocational education policy in madrasahs.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in preparing high-quality and competitive human resources, particularly in facing the increasingly complex dynamics of the workplace. One of the main challenges facing secondary education today is the gap between graduate competencies and the skills needed in the workplace (Agustian et

al., 2024). Therefore, educational institutions are required to provide learning programs that focus not only on academic mastery but also on strengthening practical skills and student job readiness.

Vocational programs are a form of educational innovation designed to equip students with technical skills (hard skills) and non-technical skills (soft skills) relevant to the needs of the workplace. Vocational education has been proven to improve job readiness through practical-based learning experiences, skills training, teamwork, problem-solving, and the introduction of a professional work culture (Jaya et al., 2025; Nurdiana, 2023). Various studies have shown that the intensity of vocational program implementation is positively associated with increased job competency, self-confidence, and graduate adaptability to the workplace (Soenarto, 2024; Wardoyo et al., 2024).

In the context of madrasah education, the development of vocational programs is a strategic step to increase the relevance of Madrasah Aliyah graduates to job market demands. Madrasah Aliyah providers of vocational programs maintain the general curriculum, but complement it with skills-based learning based on students' interests and potential. This program is implemented through practical learning, skills projects, and participation in various competitions and skill exhibitions, which indirectly shape students' job readiness (Andhika & Hamdi, 2024).

Job readiness is an individual's state of mind, skills, knowledge, and work attitude to enter the workforce effectively. Aspects of job readiness include technical skills, communication, cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and the ability to adapt to job demands (Caballero et al., 2021; Jari & Satwika, 2025). Recent research shows that students who participate in intensive vocational programs have higher levels of job readiness than those who only participate in conventional academic learning (Rahmanto & Gunadi, 2022; Ramadhani, 2021).

MAN 1 Kediri City is a state Islamic high school (Madrasah Aliyah) that offers vocational programs in various skill areas, such as multimedia, robotics, fashion design, automotive engineering, electrical engineering, and culinary arts. This program is an institutional strength of the madrasah and has resulted in various non-academic achievements and competitive experiences for students. The intensity of the vocational program implementation at this madrasah is evident in the allocation of practical hours, the continuity of skills development, and student involvement in various competitions and skill exhibitions.

However, empirical studies specifically analyzing the relationship between the intensity of vocational program implementation and Madrasah Aliyah students' job readiness are still limited, particularly in the context of public madrasahs. Based

on literature searches and bibliometric analysis over the past five years, research on the direct impact of vocational programs on madrasah students' job readiness is still relatively rare. This is evident in the following analysis using VosViewer on Scopus-indexed journals from 2021 to 2025:

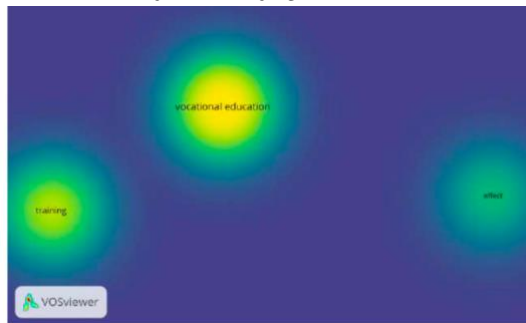


Figure 1. Analysis of previous research using Vos Viewer.

The figure above shows that research on vocational education tends to be frequently conducted in relation to the impact of vocational program training. Therefore, this study is important to fill this research gap. Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the relationship between the intensity of vocational program implementation and the work readiness of students at Kediri State Islamic Senior High School. The results of this study are expected to provide an empirical contribution to the development of vocational education policies in Islamic schools and serve as a basis for improving vocational programs to be more effective in preparing work-ready and competitive graduates.

METHODS

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational design, aiming to determine the relationship between the intensity of vocational program implementation and students' work readiness. Correlational research was chosen to test the closeness of the relationship between variables through statistical analysis. The study was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1, Kediri City, in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The location was selected based on the consideration that the madrasah actively provides vocational programs with various skill areas relevant to the research objectives. The study population was all 905 students in grades 10 and 11. The study sample used a proportionate stratified random sampling technique of 10% of the population, resulting in 91 respondents considered representative.

Data collection was conducted using a closed-ended questionnaire with a four-level Likert scale to measure the intensity of vocational program implementation and students' work readiness. The instrument was developed based on indicators of participation and quality of vocational program implementation, as well as aspects of work readiness, including skills, work attitudes, social skills, communication, responsibility, and non-academic achievements. Supporting data were obtained through documentation of relevant student achievement and activity data. The validity and reliability of the instruments were also tested before use in the study.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the characteristics of the data, while inferential analysis began with prerequisite tests, namely normality and linearity tests. Hypothesis testing was conducted using Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis using SPSS version 27.0 at a significance level of 0.05 to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two research variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research results and their discussion in an integrated manner to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the intensity of vocational program implementation and the work readiness of students at State Islamic Senior High Schools (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Kediri). The presentation of the results focuses not only on statistical data presentation but also on analysis and interpretation of the findings linked to the research objectives and relevant theoretical and empirical contexts. This approach ensures that the research findings are not limited to statistical figures alone but also provide a meaningful explanation of the relationships between the variables studied. The descriptive analysis results indicate that the intensity of vocational program implementation at State Islamic Senior High School 1, Kediri City, is high. This is reflected in the predominance of respondents who rated the program as agreeing or strongly agreeing with indicators of vocational program intensity, such as the frequency of student participation in practical activities, the sustainability of program implementation, the relevance of skills material to job needs, and active student involvement throughout the vocational program. These findings indicate that the vocational program is not incidental but is implemented in a relatively consistent and structured manner. The percentages of these respondents are shown in the following diagram.

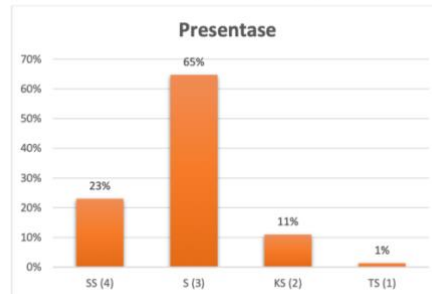


Figure 2. Percentage of Vocational Program Respondent Data

In line with these findings, the descriptive analysis of the student work readiness variable also showed a positive trend. Most students assessed themselves as having good work readiness, particularly in non-technical skills such as teamwork, communication, responsibility, and discipline, in addition to mastering practical skills relevant to their vocational field. The low percentage of respondents in the "neither agree" nor "disagree" categories indicates that students' work readiness has generally been formed through the learning experiences gained in the vocational program.

Before testing the relationships between variables, the research data was first tested for its feasibility using a prerequisite analysis test. The validity test results showed that all instrument items had item-total correlation coefficients greater than the table's r value; thus, all items were deemed valid and capable of representing the constructs of vocational program intensity and student work readiness. Furthermore, the reliability test yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.945, which is in the very high category. This value indicates that the instrument has strong internal consistency, making the resulting data reliable as a basis for analyzing the relationships between variables.

The results of the normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test showed a significance value greater than 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed. Meanwhile, the linearity test showed a significant deviation from linearity value above 0.05, confirming that the relationship between the intensity of vocational program implementation and student work readiness is linear. The fulfilment of these two prerequisites strengthens the validity of the Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis in this study.

The Pearson correlation test results showed a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.567$ with a significance value of $p < 0.05$. This finding confirms a positive and significant relationship between the intensity of vocational program

implementation and work readiness of students at State Islamic Senior High Schools, with a relatively strong level of relationship. Substantively, these results indicate that the more intensive the vocational program implementation, in terms of the regularity of activities, depth of practice, and active student involvement, the higher the students' work readiness.

These findings can be explained through the perspective of experiential learning theory, which emphasizes that direct learning experiences through real-world practice play a crucial role in developing work competencies. Experiential learning enables students to simultaneously integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Kolb, 2023). The high intensity of vocational programs provides students with opportunities for iterative learning, reflection, and the development of skills relevant to the world of work, significantly improving their work readiness.

These findings align with similar previous research findings, which indicate that work readiness is a multidimensional construct strongly influenced by practice-based learning experiences (Fathudin et al., 2025; Perera et al., 2021; Thapa, 2024). Intensive vocational programs not only strengthen technical skills but also develop non-technical skills such as communication, collaboration, and responsibility, which are key components of employability skills. Therefore, the strong relationship between vocational program intensity and student work readiness in this study can be understood as a result of a learning process that emphasizes active and contextual engagement.

This research also reinforces the findings of empirical studies in vocational education, which show that the intensity and quality of vocational program implementation are key factors in improving students' work readiness. Research conducted by (Nuryanto, 2020; Wardoyo et al., 2024; Zuniarti & Siswanto, 2025) found that students who participated in intensive vocational learning had higher work readiness than students with low levels of engagement. Similar findings were also reported by Mustajab & Irawan (2023), who confirmed that practice-oriented vocational programs significantly contributed to strengthening work skills and readiness to enter the workforce.

Thus, the results of this study consistently demonstrate that the intensity of vocational program implementation plays a strategic role in shaping the work readiness of students at State Islamic Senior High Schools (Madrasah Aliyah). The positive and significant relationship found is supported not only by statistical analysis but also by the theoretical framework and recent empirical findings. This indicates that optimizing the intensity of vocational program implementation is a crucial strategy for improving the quality of Madrasah Aliyah graduates who are ready to face the demands of the workforce.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research and discussion concluded that the intensity of vocational program implementation has a positive and significant relationship with the work readiness of students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1, Kediri City. This finding indicates that the higher the intensity of vocational program implementation, characterized by regular practical activities, continuous skills development, relevance of material to workplace needs, and active student involvement, the higher the level of student work readiness. Statistical analysis using Pearson Product-Moment correlation yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.567$ with a significance value of $p < 0.05$, indicating a strong and unidirectional relationship between the two variables. This finding was supported by the results of the analysis prerequisite test, which showed that the data were normally distributed, the relationship between variables was linear, and the research instrument was valid and reliable. Therefore, the results of this study have a strong empirical basis and are methodologically sound.

Substantively, the results confirm that vocational programs play a strategic role in shaping students' work readiness, not only in terms of technical skills (hard skills) but also non-technical skills (soft skills) such as communication, cooperation, responsibility, discipline, and adaptability to the work environment. Intense student engagement in practice-based learning and real-life experiences has been shown to strengthen students' mental and professional readiness to face the increasingly competitive world of work. In the context of madrasah education, these findings demonstrate that developing and strengthening vocational programs is a crucial step in increasing the relevance of Madrasah Aliyah graduates to job market needs. Intensive and well-planned vocational programs can be an effective means of bridging the gap between academic learning and job competency demands, while maintaining the characteristics and uniqueness of madrasah education.

Therefore, this study provides an empirical contribution that emphasizes the importance of optimizing the intensity of vocational program implementation as a strategy to improve the work readiness of students in the state Madrasah Aliyah. The results are expected to serve as a basis for consideration for madrasah administrators and education policymakers in designing, implementing, and evaluating vocational programs to ensure they are more effective, sustainable, and have a significant impact on graduates' work readiness.

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