



The Mediating Role of Attitude: Internships and Learning Achievement on Work Readiness

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Internships, learning achievement, and attitude are essential for every vocational high school student to enter the workforce in fields aligned by their competencies and areas of specialization. This study investigates the influence of internships and learning achievement on the work readiness of 12th-grade students at VHS YPI Darussalam 2 Cerme, with attitude examined as a mediating variable by 79 students. This study employed data collection through the distribution of questionnaires. The data analysis technique used was Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis by SmartPLS that includes measurement model testing (outer model), structural model testing (inner model), and hypothesis testing. The findings show that internships significantly enhance work readiness, particularly through the development of discipline, which emerged as the strongest indicator of internship quality. Learning achievement also demonstrates a strong direct effect on work readiness. This study underscore the need for vocational schools to integrate structured internship programs, strengthen academic learning practices, and promote systematic character development. Well-designed collaboration between schools and industry is essential to ensure that students acquire both technical competencies and essential soft skills. The study affirms that a combination of strong academic performance, meaningful internship experiences, and positive attitudes forms the foundation of students' successful transition into the workforce

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INTRODUCTION

Education is closely related to the enhancement of standard human resources, as it serves as the fundamental foundation for cultivating individual potential, enhancing capabilities and knowledge, and forming good character and attitudes. According to Pristiwanti et al., (2022) Education is a leaning process to give knowledge by positive effects that occur throughout life.



Vocational High School (VHS) is an educational institution established by the government to give education and training, equipping students by the knowledge needed to prepare for the workforce. This ensures that they become competitive graduates capable of facing challenges in the professional world, possessing adequate capabilities, and mastering the science and technological expertise aligned by their competencies and expertise programs. VHS is an educational institution established by the government to give education and training, offering students the knowledge necessary to prepare for the workforce. This ensures that they become competitive graduates capable of facing challenges in the professional world, possessing sufficient capabilities, and mastering the science and technological expertise taught in alignment by their competencies and expertise programs. Therefore, the revitalization of education is crucial.

Employment is closely related to work readiness. In the workplace, technical knowledge and capabilities must be applied. One of the most common issues faced by many countries is unemployment (Inderanata & Sukardi, 2023). Currently, the main issue faced by the industrial sector is the expectation of how to acquire workers by the required capabilities by vocational school graduates. The segment of the labor force not absorbed by the industrial sector is known as the Open Unemployment Rate (OUR). This open unemployment rate can also reflect the capabilities of vocational school graduates. In 2023, the greatest percentage of open unemployment is vocational high school graduates, by the unemployment rates is 4.79% (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2023). This disparity contributes to the unemployment gap among vocational high school graduates. So, individuals are expected to possess work readiness and the necessary competencies to compete and contribute to the advancement of sustainable enhancement in Indonesia.

Work readiness in students can be developed through a positive attitude. Attitude is a crucial factor in education that must be taken into consideration. It can be defined as a student's response shaped by their perceptions, personality, and motivation. Since each student has a unique attitude, it becomes a factor closely related to behavior, motivation, leaning material, and personal impressions, all of that effect an individual's characteristics (Limpele et al., 2024).

Internships employ a crucial role in providing students by direct experience in the business and industrial sectors. They are designed to equip students by the capabilities and competencies required to need the demands and expectations of the professional world. Internships also enhance students' existing professional abilities, such as operating advanced equipment outcoming by rapid technological advancements. This practical experience

contributes significantly to forming their work readiness (Zebua, 2021).

Students' work readiness can be determined through their learning achievements (Aini & Nikmah, 2020). Learning achievement serves as evidence of academic success and can be measured through specific assessment techniques used by teachers to evaluate each student's abilities during the learning process. Every student should achieve high grades, particularly in subjects related to their major, as these achievements can support their job applications. Therefore, learning achievement is also a key determinant of students' readiness for the workforce.

Based on the fact in VHS of YPI Darussalam 2 Cerme, some students had no prior work experience, and some preferred to pursue greater education at a university rather than enter the workforce in a company or industry. Nasrullah et al. (2022) adds that many factors are experienced by students who are not yet ready to enter the workforce. These include the suboptimal implementation of internships, limited comprehending of core subjects – such as office management students who lack proficiency in operating office equipment or machines – and minimal interaction by professionals in the workplace, outcoming in limited practical experience. Additionally, a lack of self-confidence in completing assigned tasks further hinders their work readiness.

Research gap of this study shows by (Purba & Purba, 2024) where internships did not have a significant impact on students' work readiness. This study aims to head that gap by exploring how internships can be better implemented to help students become more prepared for real-world job condition. In contrast Aini & Choirul, (2020) stated that the outcomes was no positive effect of learning achievement on work readiness, meaning that the achievements fulfilled by each individual did not affect their readiness to work. Then, Purba & Purba, (2024) show that the internship has not significant effect on work readiness. Also, Aini & Choirul, (2020) found that learning achievement had no significant effect on work readiness. These findings differ by those of many previous studies, revealing a contradiction in the existing literature. As outcome, further study is needed to better understand how internships and academic achievement affect work readiness. By exploring this connection, students can be encouraged to improve their academic performance, actively participate in internships, and develop a positive attitude – helping them gain useful experience and better prepare for entering the workforce.

Thus, the objective of this study is to analyze how mediating role of attitude by the effect of the Internships and Learning Achievement on Work Readiness. So, the results can be served

by curriculum enhancement and innovations of optimizing teaching and learning models for vocational high school students. This study is expected to reduce the open unemployment rate among vocational high school students where vocational high schools achieve the greatest scores compared to other educational stages.

METHOD

This study is quantitative by Structural Equation Model (SEM) PARTIAL LEAST SQUARE (PLS) to examine the effect of internships, and learning achievement on work readiness through attitude as a mediating variable. The sampling technique used was probability sampling by total sampling, meaning all 12th-grade students by the following majors were included: Office Management, Clinical and Community Pharmacy, Medical Laboratory Technology, Digital Business, Accounting, and Fashion Design and Production. The total number of participants was 79 students. The data collection technique employed a questionnaire consisting of positively worded statements, that was distributed to respondents utilizing the Google Forms platform. The study instrument used by the researcher is a study instrument according to Sugiyono, (2019) by a 1-5 Likert scale in the form of multiple-choice questions. The data analysis technique utilized SmartPLS software version 4.1.1.2. The following section presents the model specification, that includes the design of both the outer model and the inner model.

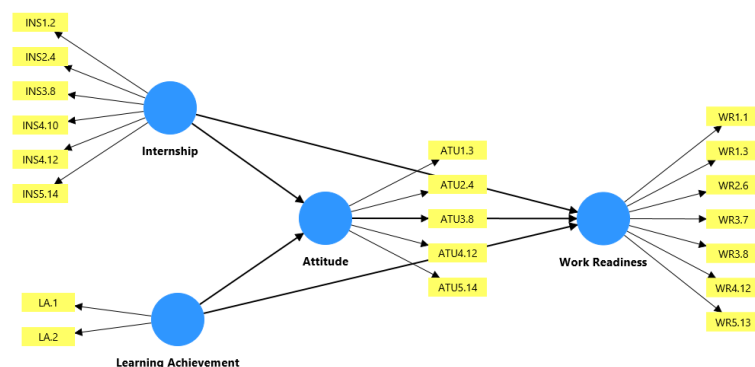


Figure 1. study Model Specifications

Based on the issues statement outlined by the study, the following study hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: There is a significant effect of Internship (X1) on Work Readiness (Y)
- H2: There is a significant effect of learning Achievement (X2) on Work Readiness (Y)
- H3: There is a significant effect of Internship (X1) on Attitude (Z)
- H4: There is a significant effect of learning Achievement (X2) on Attitude (Z)

H5: There is a significant effect of Attitude (Z) on Work Readiness (Y)

H6: There is a significant effect of Internship (X1) on Work Readiness (Y) through Attitude (Z)

H7: There is a significant effect of learning Achievement (X2) on Work Readiness (Y) through Attitude (Z)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Outer Model Analysis (Measurement Model)

The analysis aims to determine the validity and reliability values to assess the suitability of a variable for use as a measuring tool. The outer model analysis employs various tests, including the validity test, that involves a convergent validity test by Outer Loadings > 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.5 values. Subsequently, discriminant validity relies on Cross-Loadings values, that are deemed valid when the targeted indicator exhibits the greatest value among other indicators. Meanwhile, the reliability test uses Cronbach's alpha, Composite reliability (rho_a), and Composite reliability (rho_c) > 0.7 , can be seen to the table 1:

Table 1. Outcomes of Convergent Validity Test utilizing Outer Loadings Score

Indicators	ATU	INS	LA	WR
ATU1.3	0.708			
ATU2.4	0.729			
ATU3.8	0.717			
ATU4.12	0.713			
ATU5.14	0.718			
INS1.2		0.728		
INS2.4		0.707		
INS3.8		0.713		
INS4.10		0.733		
INS4.12		0.719		
INS5.14		0.731		
LA.1			0.889	
LA.2			0.875	
WR1.1				0.722
WR1.3				0.708
WR2.6				0.711
WR3.7				0.737
WR3.8				0.702
WR4.12				0.740
WR5.13				0.718

Based on the test outcomes, it can be summarized that all indicators for each variable—Internship, learning Achievement, Attitude, and Work Readiness—have outer loading values above 0.7. The results can be seen in the table 2.

Table 2. Convergent Validity Test outcomes utilizing Average Variance Extracted (AVE) score

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Attitude	0.514
Internship	0.521
Learning Achievement	0.777
Work Readiness	0.518

The AVE outcomes show that all the indicators for Attitude, Internship, learning Achievement, and Work Readiness have values greater than 0.5. The result can be seen on the table 3.

Table 3. outcomes of Discriminant Validity Test by Cross-Loadings score

Variable	ATU	INS	LA	WR
ATU1.3	0.708	0.653	0.550	0.401
ATU2.4	0.729	0.307	0.358	0.552
ATU3.8	0.717	0.374	0.410	0.462
ATU4.12	0.713	0.434	0.407	0.544
ATU5.14	0.718	0.416	0.332	0.464
INS1.2	0.416	0.728	0.362	0.155
INS2.4	0.518	0.707	0.419	0.344
INS3.8	0.445	0.713	0.333	0.326
INS4.10	0.426	0.733	0.315	0.151
INS4.12	0.398	0.719	0.246	0.157
INS5.14	0.453	0.731	0.285	0.172
LA.1	0.527	0.444	0.889	0.507
LA.2	0.497	0.367	0.875	0.480
WR1.1	0.581	0.351	0.460	0.722
WR1.3	0.517	0.233	0.348	0.708
WR2.6	0.522	0.302	0.440	0.711
WR3.7	0.400	0.119	0.337	0.737
WR3.8	0.479	0.287	0.448	0.702
WR4.12	0.485	0.182	0.449	0.740
WR5.13	0.357	0.056	0.295	0.718

The discriminant validity test outcomes utilizing Cross-Loadings show that each indicator in Internship, learning Achievement, Attitude, and Work Readiness has greater values compared to other indicators. This means they are valid.

Table 4. Reliability Test outcomes by Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (rho_a) and Composite Reliability (rho_c) score

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
ATU	0.765	0.765	0.841
INS	0.818	0.821	0.867
LA	0.714	0.716	0.875
WR	0.845	0.847	0.883

Based on the outcomes of the Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (rho_a) and Composite Reliability (rho_c) tests, it can be summarized that all variables demonstrate reliability and internal consistency, as all values exceed the threshold of 0.7.

Inner Model Analysis (Structural Model)

The inner model analysis is conducted to determine the strength of the connections among constructs or latent variables. The table 5 show the outcomes of the inner model calculations:

Table 5. R-Square (R^2) Test outcomes

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Attitude	0.496	0.483
Work Readiness	0.524	0.504

Based on the R-Square (R^2) test outcomes, the Attitude variable is effected by exogenous variables by 0.496 or 49.6%. This draws a weak stage of effect, as the value is below 0.50. The remaining 50.4% is effected by other variables not included in this study. Meanwhile, the Work Readiness variable is effected by exogenous variables by 0.524 or 52.4%, that falls inside of the moderate category, as it is below 0.75 but above 0.50. The remaining 47.6% is affected by other factors outside the scope of this study.

Table 6. Predictive Relevance (Q^2) Test outcomes

Variable	Q^2 Predict
Attitude	0.398
Work Readiness	0.238

Table 6 shows the Predictive Relevance (Q^2) test, the model in this study has Q^2 values greater than 0, specifically 0.398 for the Attitude variable and 0.238 for the Work Readiness variable. These outcomes draw that the model has acceptable predictive relevance, suggesting that the observed values are well-represented by the model.

Table 7. Effect Size (f^2) Test outcomes

Variable	f-square	stage of effect
ATU -> WR	0.432	Large
INS -> ATU	0.314	Medium
INS -> WR	0.057	Small
LA -> ATU	0.219	Medium
LA -> WR	0.111	Small

Based on the table 7 of the Effect Size (f^2) test, it can be summarized that the Attitude variable has a significant effect on Work Readiness, by an effect size value of 0.432. Since this value is greater than 0.35, it draws a large effect according to conventional interpretation criteria. Meanwhile, the variables that have a moderate effect are Internship on Attitude (0.314) and learning Achievement on Attitude (0.219), as both values exceed the threshold of 0.15. Lastly, the variables by a small effect are Internship on Work Readiness (0.057) and Learning Achievement on Work Readiness (0.111), as these values are greater than 0.02, indicating a small but measurable effect.

Table 8. The Direct Effect Test

Variable	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
ATU -> WR	4,356	0.000
INS -> ATU	3,442	0.001
INS -> WR	1,999	0.046
LA -> ATU	2,427	0.015
LA -> WR	2,078	0.038

Based on the table 8 of the direct effect test, the academicians and practitioners can determine the connections among the hypotheses tested in this study. It can be summarized that Attitude (Z) toward Work Readiness (Y), Internship (X1) toward Attitude (Z), Internship (X1) toward Work Readiness (Y), and Learning Achievement (X2) toward Attitude (Z) all have significant effects, as drawn by P-values less than 0.05, corresponding to a significance stage of 5% (equivalent to a t-statistic value of 1.96).

Table 9. The Indirect Effect Test

Variable	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
INS -> ATU -> WR	2,271	0.023
LA -> ATU -> WR	2,422	0.015

Based on the table 9 of the indirect effect test, it can be summarized that internships (X1) on work readiness (Y) through attitude (Z) and learning achievement (X2) on work readiness

(Y) through attitude (Z) have a significant effect because they have a P-Value < 0.05 (significant stage of 5%, equivalent to 1.96).

Discussions

This study found that internships have a significant effect on work readiness among 12th-grade students at VHS of YPI Darussalam 2 Cerme. The significance of this finding is supported by the indicators used to measure the internship and work readiness variables. Among the internship indicators, the one by the greatest outer loading value was discipline. This shows that discipline is a crucial factor in preparing students for the world of work. For work readiness, communication capabilities had the greatest outer loading value. During their internships, the 12th-grade students at VHS of YPI Darussalam 2 Cerme showed good discipline by finishing their tasks on time, as required by their supervisors or mentors. This shows that students are developing soft capabilities and a sense of responsibility, that are crucial parts of being ready to work. This aligns by study conducted by Chotimah & Suryani, (2020); Sari & Mariyanti, (2024); Ubaidillah et al., (2022); Zahmelinda & Armiaati, (2023) that states that industrial work practice or internships significantly effect students' work readiness. The more experience students get during internships, the more prepared they become for the workplace.

Learning Achievement has a strong effect on Work Readiness for 12th-grade students at VHS of YPI Darussalam 2 Cerme. This is clear by the indicators used for both learning Achievement and Work Readiness. Among the learning Achievement indicators, the greatest outer loading value came by students who got high scores in the Mid-Semester Summative Assessment (STS). On the other hand, the Work Readiness indicator by the greatest outer loading value is communication capabilities. When students perform well in school by utilizing good learning strategies and staying motivated, they also improve their written communication capabilities. This matches the greatest indicator found in the Work Readiness variable. This finding aligns by study conducted by Chintya, (2024); Gholida & Wajdi, (2024); Kurniawan et al., (2023); Sumampouw et al., (2024) that confirms that there is a positive link among Leaning Achievement and Work Readiness. This means that the better a student's academic performance, the more ready they are for the workplace.

The study revealed that internships significantly influence attitude. Discipline is the internship indicator by the greatest outer loadings. On the other hand, the attitude indicator by the greatest outer loading value is the ability to face and manage risks. This shows that 12th-

grade students at VHS of YPI Darussalam 2 Cerme are able to complete tasks properly and on time. Their capability in handling risks also means they are not only willing to take on tasks but can also think critically when dealing by challenges in the workplace. This experience helps prepare them for future jobs, as the students have revealed they can make a good contribution and solve issues well during their internships. This is in line by study conducted by Andriyatno et al., (2023); Ayaz-Alkaya & Öztürk, (2021); Bawica, (2021) that interprets that internships have a significant effect on attitude. The more experience gained during an internship, the more positive the attitude.

The study discovered that learning achievement significantly effects attitude. These results draw that learning achievement has the greatest outer loading values, particularly in the Mid-Semester Summative Test (STS) scores across all subjects—both vocational subjects (specific to each major) and general subjects—among students at VHS of YPI Darussalam 2 Cerme. Meanwhile, the attitude indicator by the greatest outer loading is the ability to face and manage risks. This shows that learning achievement might be an early sign of a person's ability to deal by risks well. Doing well in school often means the student can plan carefully, make good decisions, stay strong under pressure, and learn by experience. This shows that learning achievement has a big impact on students' attitudes, especially in helping them make the right and responsible decisions. This study aligns by the outcome of study conducted by Yulianingsih & Suwanda, (2020); Windiyani & Suchyadi, (2020) who interpreted that academic achievement has a significant connection by students' attitudes. The better students do in school, the more positive their attitudes usually are.

Attitude has a strong effect on work readiness. The attitude indicator by the greatest score shows that being able to face and manage risks is very crucial. On the other hand, the top indicator for work readiness is the ability to communicate well. This shows that 12th-grade students at VHS of YPI Darussalam 2 Cerme are not just building technical capabilities, but also have strong communication capabilities when dealing by risks. Because of this, they are more prepared and stronger as they get ready to enter the workforce. This kind of strength gives them an crucial advantage in a challenging work environment. By combining technical capabilities, the ability to handle risks, and good communication, students can improve their work readiness and have a better chance of success in their future careers. This aligns by study outcome by Kristianto & Sukardi, (2021); Lau et al., (2020); Limpele et al., (2024); Miftahuddin & Robani, (2023) that demonstrate that attitude effects work readiness. The

outcomes show that students by a better attitude are more ready for work. On the other hand, students by a lower attitude stage tend to be less prepared for the workplace.

The outcomes of this study show that internships have a strong effect on work readiness, both directly and through the effect of students' attitudes. The findings also show that attitude employs an crucial role in connecting internship experience to work readiness. This means that internships not only help students gain capabilities but also shape their attitudes, making them more prepared to enter the workforce. This study is supported by Doko, (2023) who states that internships and attitude toward work readiness yield significant outcomes. Furthermore, this study is reinforced by (Priyanto & Inderanata, 2020) who make a similar claim that internships and attitude significantly influence work readiness. A better internship experience and a more positive attitude help students become more ready to work after graduation. Good internship experiences help build a positive attitude, that supports students' growth and makes them more prepared for the workplace. This positive mindset also motivates 12th-grade students at SMK YPI Darussalam 2 Cerme to look for jobs after they graduate. They believe that internships help shape a good attitude and give them useful knowledge to start their careers.

The study demonstrates that learning achievement indirectly impacts work readiness significantly through attitude. Moreover, learning achievement directly and significantly affects work readiness. The study outcomes reveal that the mediating role of attitude affects the learning achievement of 12th-grade students at SMK YPI Darussalam 2 Cerme regarding their work readiness. Individuals by strong academic achievement or performance generally also develop professional attitudes—such as discipline, a sense of responsibility, and high motivation—that are highly valued by employers in the workplace. This study aligns by study conducted by Utami, (2024) that found that academic achievement and attitude have a significant effect on work readiness. The study outcome suggest that the indirect effect observed is due to the fact that many students by strong academic performance and positive attitudes tend to be better prepared for entering the workforce. These positive attitudes employ a crucial role in helping students get ready for work. They help students build the capabilities they need to adapt and succeed in a professional setting.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that internships and learning achievement play critical roles in shaping students' work readiness, both directly and through the mediating influence of attitude. Internship experiences—particularly those that foster discipline—contribute substantially to



the development of soft skills, responsibility, and the ability to complete tasks effectively, which all support stronger work readiness. Likewise, learning achievement, reflected most prominently in students' Mid-Semester Summative Assessment scores, not only indicates academic mastery but also reflects students' capacity to plan, manage pressure, and make responsible decisions. Attitude emerges as a central mechanism linking these variables, as students who demonstrate strong academic performance and positive internship experiences tend to develop more mature, adaptive, and risk-aware dispositions that enhance their preparedness for the workplace.

The implications of these findings highlight the need for vocational education institutions to strengthen the integration of academic learning, experiential training, and character development. Schools must ensure that internship programs are well-structured, aligned with industry expectations, and capable of cultivating discipline and communication skills—two attributes that proved most influential in this study. Likewise, teaching and assessment practices should be designed to reinforce both academic excellence and the formation of professional attitudes, including responsibility, critical thinking, and risk management. These results also imply that vocational education policies must prioritize sustained partnerships between schools and industry, enabling more coherent experiential learning pathways that foster both technical competencies and employability-related dispositions.

Building on these insights, several recommendations can be made for future research. Theoretically, subsequent studies should expand the conceptual framework by incorporating variables such as self-efficacy, career adaptability, or broader employability skills to provide a more comprehensive picture of work readiness. Longitudinal research designs are also encouraged to capture developmental changes in attitudes, academic performance, and the lasting impact of internships beyond graduation. Comparative studies across different vocational programs may reveal how variations in curriculum and industry engagement shape student outcomes. Methodologically, mixed-methods approaches can enrich understanding by integrating qualitative data that illuminate students' lived experiences during internships and academic activities.

Practically, educational institutions should enhance the management of internship programs through more systematic supervision, feedback mechanisms, and alignment with real workplace demands. Teachers are encouraged to implement active and project-based learning strategies that strengthen academic achievement while simultaneously cultivating professional attitudes. Industry partners may also contribute more actively by offering structured mentoring

and soft skills training. For policymakers, these findings underscore the importance of designing vocational education policies that emphasize the synergy between academic competence, experiential learning, and attitude formation. Finally, students are advised to actively engage in internships and academic tasks as opportunities to build the discipline, communication abilities, and risk management skills that will support their success in future employment.

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