
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PREDICTORS OF VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' EMPLOYABILITY: THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Dira Inavatin, Alif Muarifah*, Nurul Hidayah

***Correspondent Author**

Dira Inavatin
Universitas Ahmad Dahlan
Jalan Pramuka No. 42, Sidikan
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Email: dirainavatiin@gmail.com

Alif Muarifah
Universitas Ahmad Dahlan
Jalan Ring Road Selatan Yogyakarta,
Indonesia
Email: alif_muarifah@yahoo.co.id

Nurul Hidayah
Universitas Ahmad Dahlan
Jalan Pramuka No. 42, Sidikan
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Email: nurul.hidayah@psy.uad.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to depict the vocational high school students' employability. Family support and self-confidence were examined as predictors that can enhance students' readiness to enter the working world. Ninety-two students of Class XII of a vocational high school participated in this correlational study. They were recruited using cluster random sampling technique. In collecting the data, employability, self-confidence, and family support scales were administered. The collected data were analyzed using multiple regression technique. The result of the study showed that self-confidence and family support are positively correlated with employability, either partially or simultaneously. This study found that self-confidence, as the internal factor, give greater contribution to students' employability. The result of this study could be used as a reference for school counselors to provide guidance and counseling services to enhance students' employability.

Keywords: employability, family support, self-confidence

INTRODUCTION

Employability is a must-have attribute of vocational school students. In addition to influencing one's career progress and professionalism, it helps individuals understand what they need to do to obtain a paid work (Wang & Tsai, 2014). Employability is viewed as a basic skill required to maintain and perform a good

work (Mason, Williams, & Cranmer, 2009; Azmi, Hashim, & Yusoff, 2018). Some studies prove that low employability become a barrier for individuals to enter the working world (Pool & Sewell, 2007; Dollinger & Lodge, 2020). Hence, industry researchers around the world begin to pay attention to study employability (e.g., Alvarez-Gonzalez, López-Miguens, & Caballero, 2017; Okay-

Somerville & Scholarios, 2017; Qenani, MacDougal, & Sexton 2014).

However, in Indonesian context, a study on employability is still scarce. This may be accounted for by the fact that career planning has not been considered important to be internalized as early as possible at school level (Ronnås & Shamchiyeva, 2011). It is important for educational institutions to develop and enhance their students' employability (Jameson, 2008). In many developed countries, employability has become the primary focus of the related parties (Pearce & Wu, 2018), including school counselors whose functions and duties are closely related to the guidance of students' future career.

Employability allows individuals to obtain a job in the future and manage their careers more optimally (Helens-Hart, 2019; Hess, Jepsen, & Dries, 2012). It is also proven to enhance business basic skills, such as teamwork skill, communication, self-management, analysis, and critical thinking skills (Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011).

Employability allows individuals to do self-identification and be aware of their potential careers (Rose, McIntyre, & Rimes, 2018). Individuals with good employability may prepare themselves to face market competition and understand the required specialization to apply their knowledge and skills at diverse, dynamic market situation. Furthermore, such individuals possess desires to continue developing special knowledge and skill (Bennett, 2019; De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011). Accordingly, such individuals are capable of taking an appropriate and effective action, exhibit clear purpose, and show willingness to keep learning from experiences, either as individual or social being (Römogens, Scoupe, & Beausaert, 2020).

Employability reflects how individuals perceive employment opportunities (Julià, Vanroelen, Bosmans, Van Aerden, & Benach, 2017). It may determine one's job-seeking behaviors, career choice, and job search outcome (Bennett, 2019). It is also related to a job quality (Rzepka, 2018). Individuals are possible to obtain a job that

does not suit their skill level, or be trapped in a low-paying, unsustainable work (Ruge & McCormack, 2017), which does not reflect employability (Hillage & Pollard, 2017). Individuals with good employability are able to use their knowledge, skills, and understanding to find a job (Berg, Osher, Same, Nolan, Benson, & Jacobs, 2017). Such individuals may optimize their competence to work independently in a labor market and develop their potentials to perform a sustainable work (Choi, Jeong, & Kim, 2019; Van der Heijden, Notelaers, Peters, Stoffers, De Lange, Froehlich, & Van der Heijde, 2018). Individuals may seek information related to a working environment and identify diverse alternative career potential since they are aware of career options that fit their competence (Froehlich, Beausaert, & Segers, 2015). When individuals perform such a process, they would be able to minimize job uncertainty or business failure (Chen, Hou, Persson, & Zhang, 2019).

The presence of vocational school as an institution that prepares middle-skill workers should be evaluated since many vocational school graduates have not been able to meet the demands of the working world in their field (Wijaya, Sudjimat, & Nyoto, 2016). Indonesia Statistics Bureau (BPS) reports that in February 2018, there were 133.94 million labor force in Indonesia, while the open unemployment rate was reported to reach 6.87 million people (5.13%). The first and second highest open unemployment rate was found among vocational school and high school graduates, where they contribute up to 20.72% and 24.02% of the total open unemployment rate (Sulistianingsih, et al, 2018). They are higher than unemployment rate among elementary school graduates (14.02%), junior high school graduates (18.18%), associate's degree graduates (4.3%), and university graduates. This problem is caused by several reasons, including the inability of vocational school to adjust to the development of the working world, resulting in students' unpreparedness for work.

The problem related to unpreparedness is also faced by one of the vocational schools in Purbalingga. Following the result of interview with the school counselors and teachers, many vocational school graduates find it difficult to obtain a job that fits their skills, which also results in frustration. These graduates' difficulties and frustration may be primarily accounted for by their psychological condition and minimum work preparedness (Baiti & Munadi, 2014).

To respond to this issue, the present study aimed to extend the understanding of Indonesian vocational school students' employability by considering its internal factor (i.e., self-confidence) and external factor (i.e., family support) as the predictors of employability. Three hypotheses are proposed. First, the present study expects a positive relationship between self-confidence and family support and employability. Second, there is a positive relationship between self-confidence and employability. Third, there is a positive relationship between family support and employability. Family support and self-confidence were examined as predictors that can enhance students' readiness to enter the working world. The result of this study could be used as a reference for school counselors to provide guidance and counseling services to enhance students' employability.

METHODOLOGY

This correlational study was participated by 92 students of class XII of a vocational school. They were recruited using cluster random sampling technique. Employability, self-confidence, and family support scales were employed to collect the data. In analyzing the data, multiple regression technique was applied.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Some prerequisite tests were conducted, including normality, linearity, and multicollinearity tests. The result of the normality test was displayed in Table 1. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z scores of

employability, self-confidence, and family support were 1.12, 0.64, and 0.81 with Asymp. sig. (p) of 0.166, 0.807, and 0.532, respectively. These scores indicate that the recruited sample may represent the population and the data were distributed normally.

Table 1
Normality Test Analysis

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. sig.	Description
Employability	1.12.	0.166.	Normal
Self-Confidence	0.64.	0.807.	Normal
Family support	0.81.	0.532.	Normal

The next step was to perform linearity test, as displayed in Table 2, the F value between self-confidence and employability was 18.04, while the F value between employability and family support was 10.06. The significance levels were 0.000 and 0.003 ($p < 0.05$) This result indicate that each variable possess a linear relationship with employability.

Table 2
Linearity Test Analysis

Variable	F Linearity	sig.	Description
Self-confidence and Employability	18.04.	0,000.	Linear
Family support and employability	10.06.	0,003.	Linear

The last prerequisite test was multicollinearity test, the result of the test is displayed in Table 3. As displayed in the table, the tolerance value of self-confidence and family support was 0.92 ($> .1$) and the VIF was 09 (< 10), indicating that there is no multicollinearity.

Table 3
Multicollinearity Test Analysis

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Description
Self-Confidence	0.92.	1.09	No multicollinearity
Family support	0.92.	1.09	No multicollinearity

The partial relationships of the variables of this study are displayed in Table 4, showing

the Standardized coefficient between self-confidence and employability of 0.32 and standardized coefficient between family support and employability of 0.23. The p values were 0,002 ($p < 0.01$) and 0.023 ($p < 0,05$), indicating a partial relationship between each variable and employability.

Table 4
Partial Correlation Analysis

Variable	Standardized Coefficients	sig.	Description
Self-Confidence	0.32.	0.002.	Significant relationship
Family support	0.23.	0.023.	Significant relationship

As displayed in Table 5 the R value between self-confidence and family support and employability was 0.45 with significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.01$) This result indicates a significant relationship between self-confidence and family support and employability. In other words, the higher the self-confidence and family support, the higher the *employability* of an individual. Simultaneously, these variables contribute 20% of one's employability.

Table 5
Multiple Linear Regression

Variable	R	R Square	sig.
Self-confidence and family support and employability	0.45.	0.20.	.000

Employability is not a stand-alone variable, rather, it is related to internal and external factors within its development and formation process (Rothwell, Herbert & Rothwell, 2008; Tentama, Subardjo, & Abdillah, 2019; Clarke, 2018). While internal factors deal with attributes within individual's self, the external factors cover items outside individuals' self. These two factors were found to individually and simultaneously affect individuals' preparedness for entering the working world. The present study found that students with good self-confidence and family support to work in the field that fits their interest tend to possess higher working

opportunity. Accordingly, the first hypothesis of this study is accepted. The finding of the study also supports the second hypothesis, where students with higher self-confidence exhibit higher employability. Self-confidence is fundamentals in learning process, it positively affects the students' participation and progress in learning process (Voitovska & Tolochko, 2019). Self-confidence represent one's quality, perception that he or she could perform a work in accordance with the standard (Perkins, 2018). Self-confidence may also motivate individuals to seek a job and to reach the expected performance. Individuals with higher level of confidence tend to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses (Akdeniz & Saytekin, 2020). A confident individual feels free to do anything they want, to be responsible for their actions, and has strong urge towards achievements. Individuals with adequate confidence are dare to take risks without worrying about the result (Kanza, 2016).

Self-confidence is one of the internal factors that influence individuals' employability. It is one of the important personality traits to enter business environment (Sitar & Mihelič, 2018). It is defined as one's recognition of his/her own ability, love, and emotions (Park, 2019). As a wide concept, self-confidence explains the process where individuals prefer to believe in him/herself to take risks of what he/she has done (Loke, 2005). This concept determines how much efforts an individual will put and how long he/she maintains it to face challenges or difficulties (Perkins, 2018). Industry observers argue that individuals' frequent failure to find a job is caused by low self-confidence. Self-confidence emerges when individuals are aware that they possess abilities required to complete the given tasks successfully (Oney & Uludag, 2013). Self-confidence may be reflected by one's high hopes, willingness to work hard to increase working opportunity, and preparedness to face competitions to obtain a job (Yıldırım, 2013). Self-confidence may minimize the anxiety of each action, allowing individuals to be more calm, relaxed, focused on more positive thoughts (Grobbelaar, Duthie, &

Fanton, 2018). Self-confidence helps individuals to keep up their effort until the purposes are achieved.

Indeed, self-confidence does not always reflects' one's competency. However, it affects one's willingness to keep showing effort and improve their employability (Bucholz, Sue, Yeo, Roman, Bell, & Sosa, 2011; Dehmer, Amos, Farrell, Meyer, Newton, & Meyers, 2013). Several studies reported that individuals' competence does not necessarily determine their problem-solving skills, as it was found that individuals with same skills may also reported different achievement (Fang, Huang, Zhang, Huang, Li, & Yuan, 2018; Pulford, Woodward, & Taylor, 2018). A confident individual may be dare to act to find a solution related to the working world's problems (Gökner, 2007; White, 2009). Self-confidence is effective in motivating one's self and directing one's behavior to be more positive (Ibrahim, & Jaafar, 2017). Accordingly, lack of it may result in difficulties in implementing self-potential (Özkan & Özen, 2008). Akbari and Shabizada (2020) found that individuals lack participation when facing job opportunities. In the same vein, Krueger (2020) found that individuals are reticent to initiate job search effort while find it difficult to control business environment. They feel helplessness in facing tight business competition (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019; Irons, & Lad, 2017). Thus, it is not a surprise when Eraydin and Karagözoğlu (2017) found that low self-confidence leads to individuals' inability to develop themselves and failure to obtain a job.

One of the external factors affecting individuals' employability includes family support. The present study found that students find it easier to plan their career and prepare themselves for entering the working world when their family provides them with information, guidance, attention, and experience. Thus, the third hypothesis of this study was supported. However, this finding is in contrast with some previous studies (e.g., Adler & Kwon, 2002; Bridge, 2013) that found that family support does not always provide

the required social model such as accommodation and career management. Nevertheless, the importance of family support is inevitable (Masdonati, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2009).

Family support is found to have both direct and indirect effect on job search success (Van Hoyer, Van Hooft, & Lievens, 2009). Family support may serve as a bank of psychological resources and information that facilitates individuals' decision-making process related to their career (Jiang, 2017). Individuals highly rely on helps from their surroundings, especially family who understand them (Wolff and Moser, 2009). Family's role is inseparable in job search and career development processes (Patel, Salahuddin, & O'Brien, 2008). As Creed, Fallon, and Hood (2009) argues, family helps individuals to deal with changes in the working worlds by, among others, reducing the required financial burdens, strengthening self-regulation capacity, and finding required information. Without adequate family support, individuals may find it difficult to enter the working world and adjust themselves to various issues in the business world (Bernstrøm, Drange, & Mamelund, 2019). Family support is defined as the provision of assistance or comfort in order to help individuals to face various biological, psychological, and social stressors (APA, 2007). This process may be facilitated by social activities within the family, such as developing positive relations, giving suggestions, listening to individuals' problem, and cheering up them (Mantai & Dowling, 2015). Family support may improve individuals' coping strategy, respect, knowledge, and problem-solving skill through actual resources exchanges (Batistic & Tymon, 2017).

It is a social model that affects one's employability. In the most modest form, individuals can depend on their family's social network (Huggins, 2010). Such a network then provides exclusive accesses to various resources (Forret, 2018). Through family support, individuals may obtain rare information that contains higher success rate

(Pan, Guan, Wu, Han, Zhu, Fu, & Yu, 2018). Thus, it can be said that a powerful information network may enhance the job search credibility and make the future seems more predictable (Huggins, Johnston, & Thompson, 2012; Cenciotti, Alessandri, & Borgogni, 2017). Individuals may also obtain moral and emotional support, or even services related to their business needs (Adraki, Allotey, & Yeboah, 2018). Through family emotional support, individuals may enhance their self-control and reduce anxieties related to career uncertainty (Kramer, 2014).

From family social and development perspective, family is responsible for helping its member to enter the working world (Wittekind, Raeder, & Grote, 2010). Individuals need family support when facing career-related situations such as job preparedness, action implementation, self-exploration, and decision-making process (Difabio & Kenny, 2012; Rogers, Creed, & Glendon, 2008). With this regard, family plays a role to navigate its member career transition and student-to-worker status, where unstructured situations are frequently faced (Jiang, 2014). Family support facilitates individuals' positive psychological condition during career exploration (Jiang, 2017). It drives individuals to be more proactive in career-related activities (De Vos, & Van der Heijden, 2017). When necessary, family would be willing to spend money to smooth the career-learning process (Ma and Yeh, 2010). Individuals with family support perceive themselves as more respected, cared, and possess positive self-evaluation, thus allowing individuals to overcome career hindrances easier (Jiang & Jiang, 2015). Family basically functions to help individuals to grow optimism in career management process (Abebe & Alvarado, 2018).

At school setting, the role of school counselor is pivotal in preparing students' quality employability so that they can direct themselves to a career that fits their capacity and potential. School counselors play a strategic role related to the formation and development of students' employability, they are obliged to observe the school

atmosphere or situation, design programs, provide services, evaluate the programs, and provide preventive, preservative, or curative services.

As an effort in designing guidance and counseling services for enhancing students' employability, school counselors may conduct an assessment, either test- or non-test assessment, to find out their potentials. To deal with students' employability, school counselors may develop a career guidance and counseling service, Through the provision of services and evaluations of career programs, students' employability may be developed, thus allowing them to be more prepared to enter the working world that fits their potential.

CONCLUSION

Despite the dominant effect of self-confidence to students' employability, the present study confirms that self-confidence and family support are interrelated. Students would be more prepared to enter the working world when they possess high self-confidence and family supports that suits their needs.

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