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The Effectiveness Of Field Work Internships (PKL) In Preparing Vocational High School Alumni During The Food Crops And Horticulture (ATPH) Agribusiness Department At SMKN 4 Gowa To Enter The World Of Work

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of Field Work Internships (Praktik Kerja Lapangan—PKL) in preparing alumni of the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) Department at SMKN 4 Gowa to enter the world of work. The research employed a quantitative descriptive approach using the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) evaluation model to assess the implementation and outcomes of the internship program. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to ATPH alumni who had completed their internships, complemented by documentation and institutional records. The findings indicate that the PKL program was implemented effectively across all evaluation dimensions. The context evaluation demonstrated that the internship objectives were aligned with vocational education goals and industry needs. The input evaluation revealed that adequate planning, relevant industrial partnerships, and sufficient learning resources supported the successful implementation of the program. The process evaluation showed that internship activities were conducted systematically with effective supervision, guidance, and competency-based learning experiences. Furthermore, the product evaluation confirmed that PKL significantly enhanced graduates' work readiness by improving technical competencies, professional attitudes, communication skills, teamwork, adaptability, discipline, and problem-solving abilities required in the agricultural sector. These findings are

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consistent with Experiential Learning Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Employability Theory, which emphasize that authentic workplace experiences strengthen both technical and transferable skills necessary for successful career transitions. The study concludes that PKL serves as an effective strategy for bridging the gap between vocational education and labor market demands while producing competent, confident, and work-ready graduates. The findings provide valuable implications for strengthening school–industry collaboration and improving internship quality to enhance the employability of vocational high school graduates.

Keywords: Field Work Internship (PKL), vocational education, work readiness, agribusiness, ATPH, employability, CIPP evaluation model.

INTRODUCTION

Vocational education plays a strategic role in preparing graduates who are competent, adaptable, and ready to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive labor market. Unlike general education, vocational schools are specifically designed to equip students with practical knowledge, technical expertise, and professional attitudes that correspond directly to industrial needs. However, the effectiveness of vocational education is often questioned due to the persistent mismatch between graduates' competencies and employers' expectations. Rapid technological advancement, industrial modernization, and the transformation of agricultural practices require vocational institutions to continuously improve the relevance of their curriculum and learning strategies. Consequently, strengthening the connection between schools and industry has become a major priority in vocational education systems worldwide, particularly in developing countries where youth employment remains a significant challenge(Alharbi, 2022).

One of the most important strategies implemented in Indonesian vocational education is Field Work Internship (Praktik Kerja Lapangan or PKL). PKL serves as a bridge between classroom learning and real workplace experience by allowing students to participate directly in industrial activities under professional supervision. Through internships, students are expected to apply theoretical knowledge in authentic work settings while simultaneously developing technical competencies, problem-solving abilities, communication skills, teamwork, discipline, and professional ethics. According to experiential learning theory proposed by Kolb (1984), knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, making practical workplace exposure an essential component of effective vocational learning. Similarly, human capital theory emphasizes that investment in practical skills and workplace experience enhances an individual's productivity

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and employability, thereby increasing opportunities for successful career entry(Allafi, 2022).

The implementation of PKL is particularly significant in vocational schools offering agricultural education, especially in the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) program. Indonesia's agricultural sector continues to contribute substantially to national food security, rural development, and economic growth while simultaneously undergoing modernization driven by mechanization, precision agriculture, digital farming technologies, and sustainable production practices. These developments demand graduates who possess not only agricultural knowledge but also practical competencies aligned with current industrial standards. Consequently, ATPH students are expected to master crop cultivation techniques, post-harvest handling, agribusiness management, environmental sustainability, and technological adaptation. Field Work Internships provide opportunities for students to experience these professional environments directly, enabling them to understand industrial workflows, production systems, quality control procedures, and organizational culture that cannot be fully replicated within school laboratories(Alkhawaldeh & Saleem Khasawneh, 2023).

SMKN 4 Gowa is one of the vocational high schools committed to producing skilled graduates in the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture program through the implementation of PKL. The school collaborates with various agricultural enterprises, government agencies, and farming institutions to provide students with authentic workplace experiences. During the internship period, students participate in agricultural production activities, apply modern cultivation techniques, operate agricultural equipment, interact with professionals, and solve practical problems encountered in the field. Such experiences are expected to strengthen both technical competence and employability skills, including responsibility, adaptability, leadership, initiative, communication, and collaboration. These competencies have become increasingly important because employers now value soft skills alongside technical expertise when recruiting vocational graduates(Nugroho & Sudira, 2025).

Despite the widespread implementation of PKL, questions remain regarding its actual effectiveness in preparing graduates for employment. Several vocational education studies have reported positive impacts of internships on students' technical competencies, work readiness, self-confidence, and career awareness. Nevertheless, other studies indicate that internship quality varies considerably depending on the relevance of placement institutions, duration of internships, mentoring quality, industrial supervision, and the alignment between internship activities and vocational competencies. In some cases, students are assigned routine tasks unrelated to their specialization, reducing the educational value of the internship. Furthermore, differences in

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industrial facilities, organizational commitment, and collaboration between schools and industry may influence internship outcomes. Therefore, evaluating the effectiveness of PKL within specific vocational programs and institutional contexts remains necessary to ensure continuous improvement and evidence-based policy development(Ashar et al., 2026).

Work readiness itself is recognized as a multidimensional concept encompassing technical competence, cognitive ability, employability skills, career maturity, adaptability, and professional attitudes required to perform effectively in the workplace. Yorke (2006) argues that employability is not merely obtaining employment but also possessing the achievements, understanding, and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain and sustain successful careers. Likewise, employability skills frameworks emphasize communication, teamwork, critical thinking, self-management, and lifelong learning as essential competencies for workforce success. Therefore, assessing PKL effectiveness requires examining not only technical skill acquisition but also broader dimensions of professional preparedness that influence graduates' transition from school to employment(Junaedi et al., 2024).

Although numerous studies have investigated internship programs in vocational education, limited research specifically examines the effectiveness of PKL within the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture department, particularly at SMKN 4 Gowa. The agricultural sector possesses unique characteristics that distinguish it from manufacturing or service industries, including seasonal production cycles, environmental variability, biological processes, technological integration, and sustainability considerations. Consequently, internship experiences in agricultural education may generate different learning outcomes compared to other vocational disciplines. Understanding how PKL contributes to preparing ATPH graduates for employment can provide valuable insights for vocational curriculum development, school–industry partnerships, and workforce preparation strategies in agricultural education(Das et al., 2025).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of Field Work Internships (PKL) in preparing vocational high school alumni from the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) Department at SMKN 4 Gowa to enter the world of work. Specifically, the research investigates the extent to which internship experiences contribute to the development of technical competencies, employability skills, professional attitudes, and overall work readiness among graduates. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the growing literature on vocational education and experiential learning while providing practical recommendations for schools, industry partners, and policymakers to enhance the quality of internship implementation and strengthen the employability of vocational education graduates in Indonesia.

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Field Work Internship (PKL) in Vocational Education

Field Work Internship (Praktik Kerja Lapangan—PKL) is one of the most essential components of vocational education because it serves as a bridge between school-based learning and the realities of professional employment. Unlike conventional classroom instruction, vocational education emphasizes competency-based learning in which students are expected not only to acquire theoretical knowledge but also to demonstrate practical skills that meet industrial standards. PKL enables students to experience authentic workplace situations where they can apply the knowledge, techniques, and procedures learned at school while developing professional attitudes, discipline, responsibility, communication skills, and teamwork. The implementation of internships reflects the principle that vocational education should be closely aligned with labor market demands to reduce the competency gap between graduates and employers' expectations. Through direct involvement in industrial activities, students become familiar with organizational culture, production systems, occupational safety procedures, and technological applications that cannot be fully simulated in school laboratories. Consequently, PKL is recognized as a strategic learning approach that strengthens students' employability and facilitates a smoother transition from education to employment (UNESCO, 2021).

The theoretical foundation of Field Work Internship is strongly supported by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasizes that effective learning occurs through a continuous cycle consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). According to this theory, students develop deeper understanding when they actively engage in real-life experiences rather than merely receiving information through lectures. During internships, vocational students observe professional practices, reflect on workplace challenges, integrate these experiences with previously learned concepts, and subsequently improve their competencies through repeated practice. This experiential process allows students to construct knowledge independently while developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Furthermore, internships encourage students to adapt to dynamic workplace conditions, make decisions under supervision, and respond effectively to practical problems that require both technical competence and interpersonal skills. Therefore, PKL represents an authentic implementation of experiential learning in vocational education because it transforms theoretical instruction into meaningful workplace competence(Irfan et al., 2024).

In addition to experiential learning, the effectiveness of PKL can also be explained through Human Capital Theory proposed by Becker (1993), which argues that education and training are

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investments that increase individuals' productivity, knowledge, and economic value. Vocational internships provide opportunities for students to accumulate practical skills, professional experience, and workplace competencies that significantly enhance their employability after graduation. Employers increasingly prioritize graduates who possess both technical expertise and practical work experience because they require less organizational training and can adapt more quickly to workplace environments. Consequently, internships contribute not only to competency development but also to students' career readiness and long-term employability. This perspective suggests that successful internship programs benefit multiple stakeholders, including students who gain professional competence, schools that improve graduate quality, industries that obtain skilled prospective employees, and governments seeking to reduce youth unemployment through competent vocational graduates.

The successful implementation of PKL largely depends on the quality of collaboration between vocational schools and industry partners. Effective school–industry partnerships ensure that internship activities correspond to curriculum objectives, competency standards, and current industrial practices. Industries function not merely as training locations but also as educational partners responsible for mentoring students, providing constructive feedback, and facilitating competency development throughout the internship period. Likewise, vocational schools play an important role in preparing students before placement, monitoring internship progress, and evaluating learning outcomes after completion. Continuous communication between schools and industries contributes to curriculum improvement by ensuring that educational content remains relevant to technological developments and labor market needs. In agricultural vocational education, particularly the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) program, such collaboration enables students to experience modern farming technologies, agribusiness management, sustainable agricultural practices, and professional work environments that strengthen both technical competence and employability. Therefore, Field Work Internship should not be viewed merely as a graduation requirement but as a comprehensive educational strategy that integrates theory, practice, and professional development to prepare vocational graduates for successful participation in the rapidly evolving world of work(Syaukat, 2024).

Work Readiness of Vocational High School Graduates

Work readiness is a fundamental objective of vocational education because vocational high schools are specifically designed to prepare graduates for immediate entry into the labor market. Unlike general education, which primarily emphasizes academic knowledge, vocational education

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focuses on developing competencies that enable graduates to perform effectively in professional environments. Work readiness extends beyond the possession of technical knowledge, encompassing a combination of practical skills, cognitive abilities, professional attitudes, adaptability, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving capabilities that allow individuals to meet workplace expectations. As industries continue to evolve due to technological advancement, digitalization, and globalization, employers increasingly seek graduates who can quickly adapt to changing work environments while demonstrating initiative, responsibility, and continuous learning. Consequently, vocational education institutions must ensure that students develop both occupation-specific competencies and transferable employability skills that enhance their competitiveness in the labor market. According to Yorke (2006), employability is not merely the ability to secure employment but also the capacity to maintain employment and contribute effectively to organizational success through knowledge, skills, personal attributes, and professional behavior(Omar et al., 2023).

The concept of work readiness is closely associated with the Employability Skills Framework, which identifies the essential competencies required for successful career development regardless of occupational field. Employability skills include communication, teamwork, critical thinking, creativity, leadership, self-management, digital literacy, adaptability, and lifelong learning. These competencies complement technical expertise by enabling employees to collaborate effectively, solve workplace problems, respond to organizational changes, and maintain productive professional relationships. Knight and Yorke (2004) argue that employability develops through an integration of understanding, skilled practice, efficacy beliefs, and reflective abilities acquired during educational experiences. In vocational education, these competencies are cultivated through competency-based instruction, project-based learning, practical laboratory activities, and workplace internships that expose students to authentic industrial situations. Employers consistently report that graduates possessing strong employability skills adapt more rapidly to organizational culture, demonstrate higher productivity, and exhibit greater career resilience than individuals who rely solely on technical qualifications. Therefore, work readiness should be viewed as a multidimensional construct that integrates cognitive, technical, interpersonal, and behavioral competencies.

Human Capital Theory proposed by Becker (1993) further explains the importance of work readiness by emphasizing that education, training, and practical experience constitute investments that increase an individual's productivity and economic value. Vocational education enhances human capital by equipping students with industry-relevant competencies that improve

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employment opportunities and career advancement. Field Work Internships (PKL), competency certification, and industry-based learning experiences contribute significantly to the accumulation of human capital because they provide students with practical exposure to professional work environments. Through these experiences, students strengthen technical proficiency while simultaneously developing discipline, responsibility, work ethics, initiative, and confidence. Such competencies reduce the transition gap between education and employment, enabling graduates to perform effectively from the beginning of their careers. As labor markets become increasingly competitive, employers value graduates who possess practical experience because they require less induction training and demonstrate greater readiness to contribute immediately to organizational objectives(Yusuf, 2023).

Several indicators are commonly used to evaluate work readiness among vocational high school graduates. These indicators include mastery of technical competencies aligned with occupational standards, effective communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving ability, adaptability to technological change, professional ethics, responsibility, time management, self-confidence, and commitment to continuous learning. In vocational programs such as the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH), work readiness also involves competencies related to modern agricultural production, sustainable farming practices, agribusiness management, occupational safety, digital agriculture, and environmental awareness. Graduates are expected to operate agricultural equipment, apply innovative cultivation techniques, manage production processes, and collaborate effectively within multidisciplinary teams. Consequently, work readiness represents the successful integration of knowledge, practical experience, professional attitudes, and employability skills developed throughout vocational education. A high level of work readiness not only improves graduates' opportunities to obtain employment but also supports career sustainability, organizational productivity, and the long-term contribution of vocational education to national economic development in an increasingly dynamic and technology-driven labor market(Wiyanti et al., 2025).

Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) and Workforce Preparation

The Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (Agribisnis Tanaman Pangan dan Hortikultura—ATPH) program is one of the strategic vocational education specializations designed to prepare students with the competencies required to support agricultural productivity, food security, and sustainable rural development. As agriculture continues to evolve through technological innovation, mechanization, and digital transformation, vocational institutions are

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expected to produce graduates who possess not only technical agricultural knowledge but also managerial, entrepreneurial, and technological competencies that correspond to contemporary industry requirements. The ATPH curriculum integrates theoretical instruction with practical learning experiences covering crop cultivation, soil management, plant protection, irrigation systems, post-harvest handling, agribusiness management, and environmental sustainability. Through competency-based education, students are encouraged to develop practical expertise alongside critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills necessary for addressing complex agricultural challenges. Consequently, ATPH vocational education serves as a crucial mechanism for developing a skilled agricultural workforce capable of supporting national economic development while promoting sustainable agricultural practices. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2022), strengthening agricultural education and technical training is essential for improving workforce productivity, enhancing food system resilience, and supporting sustainable agricultural transformation in developing countries(Ma'arif et al., 2025).

The rapid development of Agriculture 4.0 has significantly changed the competency requirements for agricultural workers, making workforce preparation increasingly complex and multidisciplinary. Agriculture is no longer dominated by traditional farming methods but has increasingly adopted advanced technologies such as precision farming, geographic information systems (GIS), unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), Internet of Things (IoT)-based monitoring systems, automated irrigation, artificial intelligence, sensor technology, and digital farm management platforms. These technological advancements require vocational graduates to possess digital literacy, technological adaptability, analytical thinking, and innovation capabilities in addition to conventional farming skills. Consequently, ATPH students must be equipped with competencies that enable them to utilize agricultural technologies efficiently while responding to climate change, resource limitations, environmental sustainability, and market competitiveness. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2021) emphasizes that vocational education must continuously update its curriculum to accommodate technological changes and ensure graduates possess future-oriented competencies that remain relevant in rapidly evolving industries. Therefore, workforce preparation within ATPH education extends beyond technical cultivation practices toward developing adaptable professionals capable of integrating agricultural science with digital innovation.

An essential component of workforce preparation in ATPH vocational education is the implementation of competency-based learning integrated with Field Work Internships (Praktik Kerja Lapangan—PKL). Practical workplace experience enables students to apply classroom

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knowledge in authentic agricultural settings while strengthening both technical competencies and employability skills. During internships, students participate in crop production, nursery management, pest and disease control, harvesting operations, post-harvest processing, agribusiness administration, and the operation of agricultural machinery under professional supervision. These experiences expose students to real production systems, workplace regulations, quality standards, occupational safety procedures, and professional communication within agricultural organizations. Furthermore, internships cultivate responsibility, discipline, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and confidence, all of which are fundamental characteristics of work-ready graduates. The integration of school-based learning with industrial practice reflects competency-based vocational education principles, ensuring that graduates possess knowledge, practical experience, and professional attitudes aligned with employer expectations. Such collaboration between vocational schools and agricultural industries also facilitates curriculum improvement by incorporating current technological developments and industrial standards into educational practice(Ma'arif et al., 2025).

Preparing ATPH graduates for the workforce requires a comprehensive educational approach that integrates technical competence, employability skills, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning. Modern agricultural industries increasingly expect graduates to function not only as skilled employees but also as innovators and entrepreneurs capable of creating sustainable agribusiness opportunities. Therefore, vocational education should foster entrepreneurial competencies, business management skills, environmental awareness, and continuous professional development alongside technical agricultural expertise. Graduates who demonstrate adaptability, creativity, communication skills, digital competence, and professional ethics are better positioned to respond to changing labor market demands and technological innovations. In this context, workforce preparation becomes a multidimensional process involving collaboration among schools, industries, government institutions, and local communities to ensure that educational outcomes correspond to national agricultural development priorities. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the ATPH program can be evaluated through its ability to produce graduates who are technically competent, professionally prepared, technologically adaptable, and capable of contributing to sustainable agricultural development. Such graduates not only enhance their own employability but also strengthen the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and support broader economic growth through increased productivity, innovation, and resilience in the face of future agricultural challenges(Zulkarnaen et al., 2026).

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DISCUSSION

The context of PKL implementation in vocational high schools is reviewed in terms of its alignment with the goals and needs of the workplace

The implementation of Field Work Internships (PKL) at vocational high schools demonstrates a strong alignment with the fundamental objectives of vocational education, namely preparing graduates who possess competencies that correspond to workplace demands. The findings indicate that PKL functions as a strategic bridge between school-based instruction and authentic industrial practice by allowing students to experience real working conditions before graduation. Students in the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) Department at SMKN 4 Gowa are involved directly in agricultural production activities, post-harvest management, the operation of agricultural equipment, and workplace interactions with professionals. These activities illustrate that the internship program is designed not merely as a curricular requirement but as an experiential learning process that facilitates the acquisition of technical competencies, professional behavior, and employability skills. The close collaboration between the school and agricultural industries ensures that internship activities correspond to current industrial standards, enabling students to understand workplace culture, productivity expectations, occupational safety, and technological developments. Therefore, the context of PKL implementation reflects an educational strategy that is responsive to labor market needs while reducing the gap between vocational education outcomes and employer expectations.

This finding is consistent with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which argues that meaningful learning occurs through a cyclical process consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. During PKL, students engage in authentic agricultural work, observe professional procedures, reflect on challenges encountered in the field, integrate practical experiences with theoretical concepts learned in school, and subsequently improve their performance through repeated application. Such experiential learning enables students to construct knowledge more effectively than classroom instruction alone because learning occurs in authentic contexts where problems require immediate and practical solutions. The internship environment also encourages students to develop critical thinking, adaptability, and decision-making skills while responding to unpredictable workplace situations. Consequently, the implementation of PKL supports Kolb's proposition that experience serves as the primary source of learning and competency development, particularly within vocational education where practical performance is the ultimate learning outcome(Putra et al., 2025).

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The findings are also supported by Human Capital Theory proposed by Becker (1993), which views education and workplace training as investments that enhance an individual's productivity and economic value. PKL contributes directly to the development of students' human capital by enriching technical expertise, workplace experience, and professional competencies required by employers. Through practical exposure, students acquire knowledge that cannot be obtained solely through classroom instruction, including communication with supervisors, teamwork, discipline, time management, and responsibility in completing work assignments. These competencies increase graduates' employability because employers generally prefer individuals who possess prior workplace experience and require minimal additional training. From the perspective of Human Capital Theory, the internship program represents an investment that generates long-term benefits for students, educational institutions, industries, and society through improved workforce quality and higher employment readiness. Therefore, the alignment between PKL implementation and workplace requirements reflects an effective strategy for enhancing vocational graduates' competitiveness in the labor market.

Furthermore, the implementation of PKL aligns with the principles of School–Industry Partnership Theory, which emphasizes collaborative responsibility between educational institutions and employers in developing competent human resources. Effective vocational education requires continuous interaction between schools and industry to ensure curriculum relevance, competency standards, and technological adaptation. The collaboration established by SMKN 4 Gowa with agricultural enterprises enables students to participate in meaningful workplace activities under professional supervision while allowing industry partners to contribute to competency development through mentoring and performance evaluation. This partnership also provides valuable feedback for curriculum improvement, ensuring that learning materials remain responsive to evolving agricultural technologies and industrial practices. Such cooperation strengthens the relevance of vocational education because workplace expectations become directly integrated into instructional planning and student assessment. Consequently, PKL serves not only as workplace exposure but also as a mechanism for synchronizing educational objectives with labor market demands(Amalia et al., 2025).

Overall, the context of PKL implementation demonstrates a high level of alignment with workplace goals and industrial needs. The internship program effectively integrates theoretical instruction, practical experience, and professional competency development, enabling students to acquire both occupation-specific skills and broader employability attributes. The combination of experiential learning, human capital development, and school–industry collaboration creates a

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comprehensive educational environment that prepares vocational students to transition successfully into employment. For ATPH students, this alignment is particularly important because the agricultural sector increasingly requires workers who are technically competent, technologically adaptive, environmentally responsible, and capable of working collaboratively within modern agribusiness systems. Therefore, the findings indicate that PKL is an effective educational strategy for preparing vocational high school graduates to meet contemporary workforce expectations while supporting the broader objectives of vocational education in producing competent, productive, and work-ready human resources(Sari, 2026).

The readiness of input (schools, supervising teachers, and industry partners) to support PKL implementation.

The findings indicate that the input readiness of the PKL (Field Work Internship) program—including the readiness of the school, supervising teachers, and industry partners—constitutes a critical determinant of successful internship implementation and students' work readiness. Based on the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation framework proposed by Stufflebeam (2007), the input dimension emphasizes the adequacy of resources available before program implementation, including competent human resources, institutional commitment, industrial partnerships, supervision mechanisms, and assessment instruments. In this study, schools demonstrate relatively good preparedness through curriculum alignment with vocational education policies, the establishment of internship planning procedures, and collaboration with industrial partners relevant to the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) program. However, the document also identifies several weaknesses affecting input quality, including inconsistent supervision by school mentors, varying levels of commitment among industry instructors, limited coordination between schools and partner industries, and unequal quality of internship placements. These conditions indicate that although the institutional framework for PKL has been established, the readiness of supporting stakeholders remains uneven, thereby influencing the effectiveness of students' workplace learning experiences. Such findings are consistent with the CIPP model, which argues that inadequate input resources inevitably reduce the quality of program implementation and ultimately limit program outcomes(Ahmad & Tejawiani, 2026).

From the perspective of Vocational Education Theory, the readiness of schools and industrial partners reflects the fundamental principle that vocational education must integrate classroom instruction with authentic industrial practice. Djojonegoro (1998) emphasizes that

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vocational education can only achieve its objectives when schools and industries function as complementary learning environments rather than separate institutions. In the present context, the school is responsible for preparing students academically, selecting appropriate internship placements, and ensuring continuous supervision, whereas industry partners provide authentic work experiences that enable students to develop occupational competencies according to professional standards. The research findings reveal that schools possessing structured internship planning, clear partnership agreements, and effective communication with industries create more meaningful learning opportunities for students. Conversely, weak collaboration often results in internship activities that are routine, poorly supervised, and insufficiently connected to students' vocational competencies. Therefore, the readiness of educational institutions and industry partners should be viewed as an integrated ecosystem supporting competency development rather than independent contributors to internship success.

The findings can also be interpreted through Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (2012), which explains that individuals develop confidence primarily through mastery experiences, social modeling, verbal encouragement, and constructive feedback. Supervising teachers and industry mentors play essential roles in facilitating these four sources of self-efficacy during internship activities. Effective mentors provide continuous guidance, monitor students' progress, offer corrective feedback, and encourage independent problem-solving, thereby strengthening students' confidence in performing professional tasks. Conversely, inconsistent supervision or minimal interaction with mentors reduces students' opportunities to develop self-confidence and professional identity. The document indicates that insufficient mentoring remains one of the principal challenges affecting PKL implementation. As a result, some students complete internships without fully understanding industrial standards or developing confidence in their occupational abilities. This finding supports Bandura's argument that supportive learning environments significantly influence students' psychological readiness to enter the workforce, suggesting that improving mentor competence is as important as enhancing technical training(Alkhawaldeh & Saleem Khasawneh, 2023).

Furthermore, the results strongly support Work Readiness Theory, which conceptualizes work readiness as a multidimensional construct comprising technical competence, employability skills, professional attitudes, and psychological preparedness (Wagner, 2020). Input readiness directly influences each of these dimensions because students' workplace experiences are shaped by the quality of preparation before and during the internship. Schools that provide comprehensive pre-internship orientation, competent supervising teachers, appropriate

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industrial placements, and systematic monitoring enable students to acquire both hard skills and soft skills more effectively. Likewise, industries that actively involve students in authentic production activities contribute significantly to developing communication skills, teamwork, responsibility, discipline, adaptability, and professional ethics. Therefore, the readiness of schools, supervising teachers, and industry partners should not merely be considered administrative requirements but rather strategic educational resources that determine the extent to which PKL fulfills its objective of preparing vocational graduates for successful transition into the labor market. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that strengthening stakeholder readiness through enhanced collaboration, standardized supervision, continuous mentor training, and sustainable school–industry partnerships will substantially improve the overall effectiveness of PKL implementation and ultimately enhance the employability of ATPH graduates.

The PKL implementation process includes the alignment of work activities, guidance, and evaluation.

The findings indicate that the implementation process of the Field Work Internship (PKL) at SMKN 4 Gowa is systematically organized through three interconnected components: the alignment of work activities with the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) curriculum, continuous guidance provided by both school and industry supervisors, and comprehensive evaluation conducted throughout and after the internship period. The alignment of work activities ensures that students are assigned responsibilities directly related to their vocational competencies, including crop cultivation, nursery management, pest and disease control, harvesting, post-harvest handling, and agribusiness administration. This curriculum–industry alignment enables students to apply theoretical knowledge acquired in classrooms within authentic workplace environments while gaining experience with current agricultural technologies and operational procedures. Such findings demonstrate that PKL at SMKN 4 Gowa is implemented not merely as a mandatory graduation requirement but as an integrated competency-based learning program that facilitates the transition from school to employment. This implementation reflects the principles of competency-based vocational education, which emphasize that learning outcomes should correspond to occupational standards and industry expectations, thereby increasing graduates' employability and professional competence (UNESCO, 2021).

From the perspective of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), the PKL implementation process effectively supports meaningful learning because students engage in the

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complete experiential learning cycle. The internship begins with concrete experience, where students actively participate in real agricultural production activities under industrial conditions. They subsequently engage in reflective observation by discussing workplace challenges and receiving feedback from supervising teachers and industry mentors. Through abstract conceptualization, students connect these experiences with theoretical concepts learned during classroom instruction, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of agricultural practices and agribusiness management. Finally, students enter the active experimentation stage by applying improved techniques and problem-solving strategies throughout the internship period. This continuous learning cycle enhances not only technical competence but also critical thinking, adaptability, and decision-making skills. Therefore, the structured implementation of PKL at SMKN 4 Gowa demonstrates the practical application of experiential learning principles, transforming workplace experiences into sustainable professional competencies(Nugroho & Sudira, 2025).

The guidance system implemented during PKL also reflects the principles of Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs most effectively through social interaction and guided participation. Throughout the internship, students receive continuous mentoring from vocational teachers and industry supervisors who provide technical instruction, monitor progress, and assist in solving workplace problems. This collaborative guidance creates opportunities for students to perform tasks that initially exceed their individual capabilities but become achievable through expert support, corresponding to Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Regular communication between school supervisors and industry mentors further strengthens the learning process by ensuring that internship activities remain aligned with educational objectives while responding to workplace realities. Such collaborative supervision encourages students to develop confidence, professional responsibility, communication skills, and independent work habits, all of which are essential characteristics of work-ready graduates.

Furthermore, the evaluation component of PKL demonstrates the application of Competency-Based Education (CBE) principles, in which student performance is assessed according to clearly defined occupational competencies rather than solely through academic examinations. Evaluation at SMKN 4 Gowa encompasses technical performance, work discipline, communication, teamwork, initiative, responsibility, problem-solving ability, and professional ethics. This multidimensional assessment provides a comprehensive picture of students' readiness to enter the labor market while allowing schools and industry partners to identify strengths and areas requiring further improvement. Such evaluation supports continuous curriculum

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development because feedback obtained from industrial supervisors can be integrated into future instructional planning. The existence of systematic evaluation also strengthens accountability within school–industry partnerships by ensuring that internship outcomes correspond to competency standards required by the agricultural sector(Ashar et al., 2026).

These findings are further supported by Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), which argues that education and workplace training represent investments that increase individuals' productivity and economic value. Through the alignment of work activities, structured guidance, and competency-based evaluation, the PKL program at SMKN 4 Gowa contributes significantly to the development of students' human capital by enhancing both technical expertise and employability skills. Students not only acquire agricultural competencies but also develop discipline, adaptability, teamwork, leadership, communication, and professional ethics that increase their competitiveness in the labor market. Consequently, the implementation process of PKL serves as an effective mechanism for narrowing the gap between vocational education and industry requirements. The collaboration among schools, industry partners, and supervisors ensures that graduates are equipped with relevant competencies, practical experience, and professional attitudes necessary to successfully transition into the workforce, particularly within the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture sector. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the comprehensive implementation of PKL at SMKN 4 Gowa effectively fulfills its primary objective of preparing vocational students to become competent, adaptive, and industry-ready graduates capable of meeting the evolving demands of the modern agricultural workforce(Junaedi et al., 2024).

The results (products) of PKL contribute to improving the work readiness of vocational high school students.

Based on the research findings, the results (products) of the Field Work Internship (PKL) program contribute positively to improving the work readiness of vocational high school students in the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) Department at SMKN 4 Gowa. The internship program has enabled students to develop competencies that extend beyond technical agricultural skills to include employability attributes such as discipline, responsibility, communication, teamwork, and professional ethics. These outcomes indicate that PKL functions as an effective mechanism for narrowing the gap between classroom learning and the expectations of the labor market. Students who participated in authentic workplace activities demonstrated greater confidence in performing job-related tasks, improved understanding of

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industrial work procedures, and stronger readiness to adapt to professional environments. These findings support the primary objective of vocational education, which is to produce graduates who are competent and immediately employable. The positive outcomes also suggest that collaboration between SMKN 4 Gowa and its industrial partners has provided students with meaningful workplace experiences that enhance both technical proficiency and professional behavior(Das et al., 2025).

From the perspective of Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Evaluation Model (1998), the product dimension reflects the final impact of the internship program on students' performance and employability. At the reaction level, students generally perceive the internship experience as valuable because it exposes them to real agricultural production systems and workplace culture. At the learning level, students acquire practical competencies that complement theoretical knowledge obtained at school. Behavioral changes become evident when students demonstrate greater responsibility, improved communication, adherence to workplace discipline, and the ability to work collaboratively during and after the internship. Finally, the product level is reflected in increased work readiness, indicating that PKL has successfully achieved its intended educational outcomes. The improvement in work readiness illustrates that internship experiences have generated measurable benefits for students by enhancing competencies required by employers, thereby validating PKL as an effective educational intervention within vocational education.

The findings are also consistent with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which argues that learning is most effective when individuals acquire knowledge through direct experience followed by reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation. During PKL, ATPH students were actively involved in agricultural production, crop management, post-harvest handling, and agribusiness activities under professional supervision. These authentic experiences allowed students to transform theoretical concepts into practical competencies while developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Rather than merely memorizing agricultural procedures, students experienced the complexity of workplace situations and learned how to respond appropriately to real operational challenges. Consequently, experiential learning enhanced not only students' technical competence but also their confidence and professional identity. The internship therefore became a learning environment where theoretical knowledge was reinforced through repeated practical application, making students better prepared for employment after graduation(Irfan et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the positive contribution of PKL products to work readiness can be explained through Human Capital Theory proposed by Becker (1993). This theory suggests that investments

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in education, training, and practical experience increase individuals' productivity and economic value. The internship program at SMKN 4 Gowa represents an investment in students' human capital because it equips them with competencies that improve employability and reduce the transition period from school to work. Through practical workplace exposure, students accumulate valuable technical expertise and professional experience that employers highly value. The development of work discipline, adaptability, initiative, and teamwork further strengthens graduates' competitiveness in the labor market. As a result, PKL enhances students' readiness not only to obtain employment but also to perform effectively within modern agricultural industries. This finding indicates that practical workplace experience significantly enriches vocational education outcomes beyond what can be achieved through classroom instruction alone(Syaukat, 2024).

The results are equally supported by Yorke's Employability Theory (2006), which defines employability as the combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, and personal attributes that enable graduates to obtain and sustain meaningful employment. The internship outcomes at SMKN 4 Gowa demonstrate that work readiness encompasses both technical competencies and transferable employability skills. Students developed communication abilities, teamwork, adaptability, professional ethics, and self-confidence while simultaneously improving agricultural competencies relevant to the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture sector. These multidimensional competencies increase graduates' ability to respond to dynamic labor market demands and technological developments within modern agriculture. Therefore, the products generated through PKL are not limited to measurable technical achievements but also include the development of professional attitudes and lifelong learning capabilities that are essential for long-term career success. Overall, the findings indicate that the PKL program effectively fulfills its strategic role as a bridge between vocational education and the world of work, producing ATPH graduates at SMKN 4 Gowa who are more competent, adaptable, and prepared to enter the agricultural workforce.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Field Work Internships (Praktik Kerja Lapangan/PKL) is effective in preparing alumni of the Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) Department at SMKN 4 Gowa to enter the world of work. The internship program successfully bridges the gap between classroom-based instruction and the practical demands of the agricultural industry by providing students with authentic workplace experiences that

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strengthen both technical competencies and employability skills. Through PKL, students develop practical expertise in crop cultivation, post-harvest management, agribusiness operations, and the use of modern agricultural technologies while simultaneously enhancing essential professional attributes such as discipline, responsibility, communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities. These findings support the principles of Experiential Learning Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Employability Theory, which emphasize that meaningful workplace experiences significantly enhance knowledge, skills, professional attitudes, and career readiness. Furthermore, the strong collaboration between SMKN 4 Gowa and its industry partners has contributed to the successful implementation of PKL by ensuring that internship activities align with current industry standards and labor market needs. Therefore, PKL serves not only as a compulsory component of vocational education but also as a strategic instrument for producing competent, confident, and work-ready graduates who are capable of adapting to the dynamic demands of the agricultural sector and contributing to sustainable workforce development in Indonesia.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research should focus on expanding the application of the KSP validation Future research should expand the scope of this study by involving multiple vocational high schools and Agribusiness of Food Crops and Horticulture (ATPH) programs across different regions to improve the generalizability of the findings. Comparative studies between vocational schools with different industry partnership models, internship durations, and agricultural sectors would provide deeper insights into the factors influencing the effectiveness of Field Work Internships (PKL). In addition, future research should examine the long-term impact of PKL on graduates' career progression, employment sustainability, entrepreneurial intentions, and adaptation to technological advancements in Agriculture 4.0. Integrating perspectives from industry supervisors, employers, and policymakers through mixed-method or longitudinal research designs would also provide a more comprehensive evaluation of internship outcomes. Finally, future studies should investigate the role of digital agriculture, precision farming technologies, and competency-based assessment systems in enhancing PKL implementation, thereby supporting the continuous improvement of vocational education and strengthening the employability of graduates in the increasingly dynamic agricultural workforce.

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