

Work Motivation, Career Prospects, and Employment Decisions among Alfa Class Graduates: Intention and Digital Readiness

Diva Azahra¹, M. Fathur Rahman^{2*}

^{1,2} Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

Abstract

This study examined the influence of work motivation and perceived career prospects on employment decisions among Alfa Class graduates at SMK Negeri 9 Semarang, with employment intention as a mediating variable and digital readiness as a moderating variable. A quantitative explanatory design was employed using a survey method. The respondents consisted of 107 Alfa Class graduates from the 2023–2025 cohorts, selected through a census sampling technique. The research instrument was pilot-tested on 39 Alfa Class graduates at SMK Negeri 1 Kendal, and the main data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The findings showed that work motivation did not have a significant effect on either employment intention or employment decision. In contrast, perceived career prospects had a strong and significant effect on employment intention ($\beta = 0.589$; $p < 0.001$), while employment intention significantly influenced employment decision ($\beta = 0.584$; $p < 0.001$). Employment intention fully mediated the relationship between perceived career prospects and employment decision, indicating that graduates's perceptions of career opportunities are translated into employment decisions primarily through the formation of work intention. Digital readiness also had a significant direct effect on employment decision ($\beta = 0.205$; $p = 0.024$), but it did not significantly moderate the relationships among the proposed variables. These findings imply that industry-based vocational programs should not only provide recruitment pathways, but also strengthen students' perceptions of career prospects, employment intention, and digital readiness to support more effective school-to-work transitions.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 13 January 2026

Revised : 21 April 2026

Accepted : 1 July 2026

KEYWORDS

Alfa Class; Career Prospect Perception; Digital Readiness; Employment Decision; PLS-SEM; Work Motivation

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license.



CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

*M. Fathur Rahman, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia. Email: Fathur@mail.unnes.ac.id

Introduction

The transition from vocational education to employment remains a critical issue in Indonesia, particularly because vocational high school graduates are expected to become skilled, adaptive, and job-ready human resources for industry. However, national employment data continue to show that vocational high school graduates still face a relatively high risk of open unemployment, indicating that vocational education outcomes are not always fully aligned with labour-market absorption and industry expectations (Andriansyah & Kamalia, 2021; Yoana et al., 2024; Zuo et al., 2025). This condition suggests that the effectiveness of vocational education should not only be measured by curriculum delivery, internship implementation, or technical competence, but also by the extent to which graduates are psychologically, professionally, and digitally prepared to make employment decisions after graduation (Adam & Mengistie, 2026; Kholifah, Nurtanto, Sutrisno, et al., 2025; Yan, 2025). In this context, industry-based vocational programs have become increasingly important because they offer a more direct connection between school-based learning and workplace

requirements, particularly through curriculum alignment, industrial practice, competency strengthening, and recruitment pathways (Chen et al., 2025; Kayyali, 2025; Massi et al., 2026).

One of the most concrete examples of school–industry partnership in Indonesian vocational education is the Alfa Class program, which was developed through collaboration between PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk and vocational high schools. The program is designed to introduce students to modern retail management, workplace culture, retail technology, and career opportunities within the Alfamart business ecosystem (Anggia et al., 2017; Yusan et al., 2025). Through retail laboratories, industry-oriented curricula, internships, and recruitment opportunities, Alfa Class represents a “link and match” model intended to reduce the gap between vocational education and employment needs (Muharam et al., 2025; Ohara et al., 2020; Wahyuningsih et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the availability of a direct employment pathway does not automatically guarantee that all graduates will decide to work after graduation. Some graduates may choose to continue their education, seek employment in other companies, start entrepreneurial activities, or delay entry into the labour market. Therefore, the employment decision of Alfa Class graduates should be understood as a complex behavioural outcome shaped by motivational, cognitive, contextual, and technological factors rather than merely by the availability of job vacancies (Ajzen, 1991; Kholifah, Nurtanto, Mutohhari, et al., 2025; L’Abate, 2013).

Work motivation is frequently considered an important psychological factor in career and employment behaviour because it reflects an individual’s internal drive, effort orientation, and willingness to engage in work-related goals. Prior studies have shown that motivation contributes to work readiness, performance, and career commitment, particularly when individuals perceive work as meaningful, attainable, and relevant to their future development (Anugrah Rossytasari et al., 2026; Elamalki et al., 2024; Hosen et al., 2024). From the perspective of self-determination and career development, motivated individuals are generally more likely to show persistence, goal-directed behaviour, and readiness to face occupational challenges (Chuang et al., 2022; Yaban & Gaschler, 2025; Yiming et al., 2025). However, motivation may not always directly determine employment decisions because career behaviour is also influenced by perceived opportunity, outcome expectations, social support, and perceived control over future work conditions (Joseph Mofokeng et al., 2025; M. Pham et al., 2024; Vo et al., 2022). This makes it necessary to examine whether work motivation directly shapes employment decisions or whether its influence becomes meaningful only when combined with other factors, such as intention, perceived career prospects, and digital readiness.

Perceived career prospects are also central to understanding vocational graduates’ employment decisions because they reflect how graduates evaluate future opportunities, promotion possibilities, income stability, professional development, and long-term career sustainability. Social Cognitive Career Theory explains that career-related choices are shaped by outcome expectations, self-efficacy, and perceived environmental support, meaning that graduates are more likely to develop employment intentions when they believe that a particular career path offers realistic and valuable future outcomes (Makola et al., 2025; M. Pham et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2026). In vocational education, students’ and graduates’ perceptions of career prospects are strongly associated with career choice, work readiness, and transition-to-work confidence because they help individuals connect present educational experiences with future occupational goals (Keijzer et al., 2022; Kholifah, Nurtanto, Mutohhari, et al., 2025; Otermans et al., 2025). For Alfa Class graduates, positive

perceptions of career prospects may emerge from their direct exposure to retail operations, knowledge of career ladders, familiarity with workplace practices, and awareness of employment opportunities in Alfamart. Therefore, perceived career prospects may become a stronger determinant of employment intention than general work motivation because they provide concrete expectations about the benefits and feasibility of entering the workforce (Galanakis & Tsitouri, 2022; Smirnova et al., 2025; Yerdaw & Berhanu, 2026).

Employment intention plays a crucial mediating role in explaining how psychological and cognitive factors are translated into actual employment decisions. The Theory of Planned Behavior states that intention is the most immediate predictor of behaviour because it represents an individual's readiness, willingness, and commitment to perform a specific action (Ajzen, 1991b; Bosnjak et al., 2020; Yasir et al., 2021). In the employment context, graduates who have stronger intentions to work are more likely to make concrete decisions to enter the labour market, particularly when they perceive the job as relevant to their skills, career expectations, and future aspirations (Akkermans et al., 2024; Habets et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2024). Thus, employment intention may serve as a psychological bridge between perceived career prospects and actual employment decisions. This mediating mechanism is important because vocational graduates may have positive perceptions of career opportunities but still require a strong intention before converting those perceptions into real employment choices (Ma et al., 2024; Ran et al., 2023; Tee et al., 2025).

In addition to motivational and cognitive factors, digital readiness has become increasingly important in modern vocational employment, especially in the retail sector, which relies on digital systems for transactions, inventory control, customer service, logistics, and data-based operations. Digital readiness refers to the extent to which individuals feel prepared, confident, and capable of using digital technologies required in the workplace (Etim & Daramola, 2023; Kusuma et al., 2024; Mirzaye & Mohiuddin, 2025). Previous studies indicate that digital competence and digital self-confidence can strengthen work readiness because graduates who are familiar with workplace technologies are more confident in adapting to industry demands (Fjeldheim et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2026; Rahmawati et al., 2025). In the Alfa Class context, digital readiness is particularly relevant because students are introduced to modern retail technologies, including point-of-sale systems, inventory applications, and technology-supported service processes. Therefore, digital readiness may not only directly influence employment decisions but may also strengthen the relationship between work motivation, employment intention, and the decision to work (Dao et al., 2025; Höyng & Lau, 2023; Yani et al., 2026).

Although previous studies have discussed work motivation, career choice, work readiness, digital competence, and school–industry collaboration, several research gaps remain. First, prior studies have generally examined these variables separately and have not sufficiently integrated work motivation, perceived career prospects, employment intention, and digital readiness into one comprehensive structural model in the context of an industry-based vocational partnership program (Arik Harianto et al., 2025; Dao et al., 2025; Silva et al., 2026). Second, most studies on vocational graduate employment focus on work readiness or career choice, while empirical evidence explaining actual employment decisions through the mediating role of employment intention remains limited (Arik Harianto et al., 2025; Ho et al., 2023; Kholifah, Nurtanto, Sutrisno, et al., 2025). Third, digital readiness has often been treated as a component of competence or work readiness, but its possible role as a moderator in the relationship between psychological factors and employment decisions has

not been adequately tested in vocational retail education (Höyng & Lau, 2023; Zehui et al., 2025; Zervas & Triantari, 2025). To address these gaps, this study aims to analyze the influence of work motivation and perceived career prospects on employment intention and employment decisions among Alfa Class graduates of SMK Negeri 9 Semarang, examine the mediating role of employment intention in the relationship between work motivation, perceived career prospects, and employment decisions, and investigate the moderating role of digital readiness in the proposed research model.

Method

This study employed a quantitative explanatory design to examine the structural relationships among work motivation, perceived career prospects, employment intention, digital readiness, and employment decisions among graduates of the Alfa Class program at SMK Negeri 9 Semarang. A survey approach was selected because the study aimed to test a theoretically derived causal model and estimate both direct and indirect relationships among latent variables, which is consistent with explanatory quantitative research designs used to examine vocational graduates' work readiness, motivation, and employment-related outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Megasari et al., 2023; Supriyanto et al., 2023). The research population comprised all Alfa Class graduates from the 2023, 2024, and 2025 cohorts, with a total of 107 individuals. Because the population size was relatively limited and accessible, this study applied a census or total sampling technique, meaning that all members of the population were involved as respondents. This approach was considered appropriate because it minimized sampling bias and enabled the study to capture the overall characteristics of Alfa Class graduates who had completed the industry-based vocational program. This decision is also aligned with recent vocational education studies emphasizing the importance of examining graduate readiness, employability, and industry alignment within specific school-to-work transition contexts (Nurjanah et al., 2022; Waluyo et al., 2025).

The research instrument was developed in the form of a structured closed-ended questionnaire using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. The use of a four-point scale without a neutral option was intended to encourage respondents to provide a clearer evaluative position regarding each statement, as even-numbered Likert scales can reduce central tendency bias and force respondents to choose a more definite attitudinal direction (Kusmaryono et al., 2022). The questionnaire measured five main constructs: work motivation as the first independent variable, perceived career prospects as the second independent variable, employment intention as the mediating variable, digital readiness as the moderating variable, and employment decision as the dependent variable. These constructs were selected because recent studies have shown that motivation, employability skills, digital competence, self-efficacy, and perceived career opportunities are important factors in explaining vocational students' and graduates' readiness for work and career decision-making (Kholifah et al., 2025; Kholifah et al., 2025; Rahmat et al., 2024; Supriyanto et al., 2023). Each construct was represented by five indicators consisting of three positively worded items and two negatively worded items, which were formulated based on the context of the Alfa Class program, vocational graduate employment, and modern retail work requirements. Before being administered to the main respondents, the instrument was pilot-tested on 39 graduates of the Alfa Class program at SMK Negeri 1 Kendal. This pilot test was conducted to evaluate the clarity, validity, and reliability of the instrument before its use in the main study, following the principle that survey instruments should be empirically checked

before being used in the main data collection process (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Kusmaryono et al., 2022).

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 version 4.1.1.8. PLS-SEM was selected because it is suitable for predictive and exploratory causal modeling, particularly when the research involves latent variables, mediation analysis, moderation testing, and a relatively limited sample size. This approach is widely recommended for examining complex predictive models and has been used in recent vocational education studies investigating motivation, employability skills, digital competence, and work readiness (Hair et al., 2022; Kholifah et al., 2025; Supriyanto et al., 2023). The analysis was carried out in two stages: evaluation of the measurement model and evaluation of the structural model. The measurement model was assessed using outer loading values, Average Variance Extracted, Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability, rho_a, collinearity statistics, and discriminant validity. Indicators were considered valid when their outer loading values reached the recommended threshold of 0.70, while constructs were considered reliable when Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values were equal to or greater than 0.70. Convergent validity was assessed through Average Variance Extracted, with values of 0.50 or above indicating that the construct explained an adequate proportion of indicator variance. Discriminant validity was examined using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio criterion to ensure that each construct was empirically distinct from the others. These criteria are consistent with recent PLS-SEM guidelines and empirical vocational education studies using reflective measurement models (Hair et al., 2022; Supriyanto et al., 2023).

After the measurement model met the required validity and reliability criteria, the structural model was evaluated to test the proposed hypotheses. The structural model assessment included the coefficient of determination, path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, specific indirect effects, total effects, and effect size estimation. The coefficient of determination was used to examine the explanatory power of the model in predicting employment intention and employment decision. Mediation analysis was performed to determine whether employment intention mediated the relationship between work motivation, perceived career prospects, and employment decisions. Moderation analysis was conducted by forming interaction terms involving digital readiness, using the two-stage approach in SmartPLS. The significance of all direct, indirect, and moderation effects was tested through a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples at a significance level of 0.05. A hypothesis was considered supported when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05. Through this analytical procedure, the study was able to provide a comprehensive empirical assessment of how psychological, career-related, and digital factors contribute to the employment decisions of Alfa Class graduates. This analytical procedure is relevant because recent vocational education research increasingly emphasizes the interaction between digital readiness, employability skills, career expectations, and industry-oriented learning as key determinants of graduates' transition to employment (Kholifah et al., 2025; Kholifah et al., 2025; Rahmat et al., 2024; Waluyo et al., 2025).

Result and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 107 graduates of the Alfa Class program at SMK Negeri 9 Semarang from the 2023, 2024, and 2025 cohorts. The distribution of respondents was relatively balanced across the three graduation years, consisting of 36 graduates from the 2023 cohort, 35 graduates from the 2024

cohort, and 36 graduates from the 2025 cohort. This proportional distribution indicates that the respondent composition adequately represents the population of Alfa Class graduates across recent graduation periods. Therefore, the data provide a relevant empirical basis for examining the determinants of employment decisions among graduates of an industry-based vocational education program.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated to ensure that all constructs used in the structural model met the requirements of validity and reliability. Figure 1 presents the Partial Least Square construct model, which illustrates the relationships among work motivation, perceived career prospects, employment intention, digital readiness, and employment decision. The model shows that employment intention functions as a mediating variable, while digital readiness is positioned both as a direct predictor and as a moderating variable in the relationship between selected constructs and employment decision.

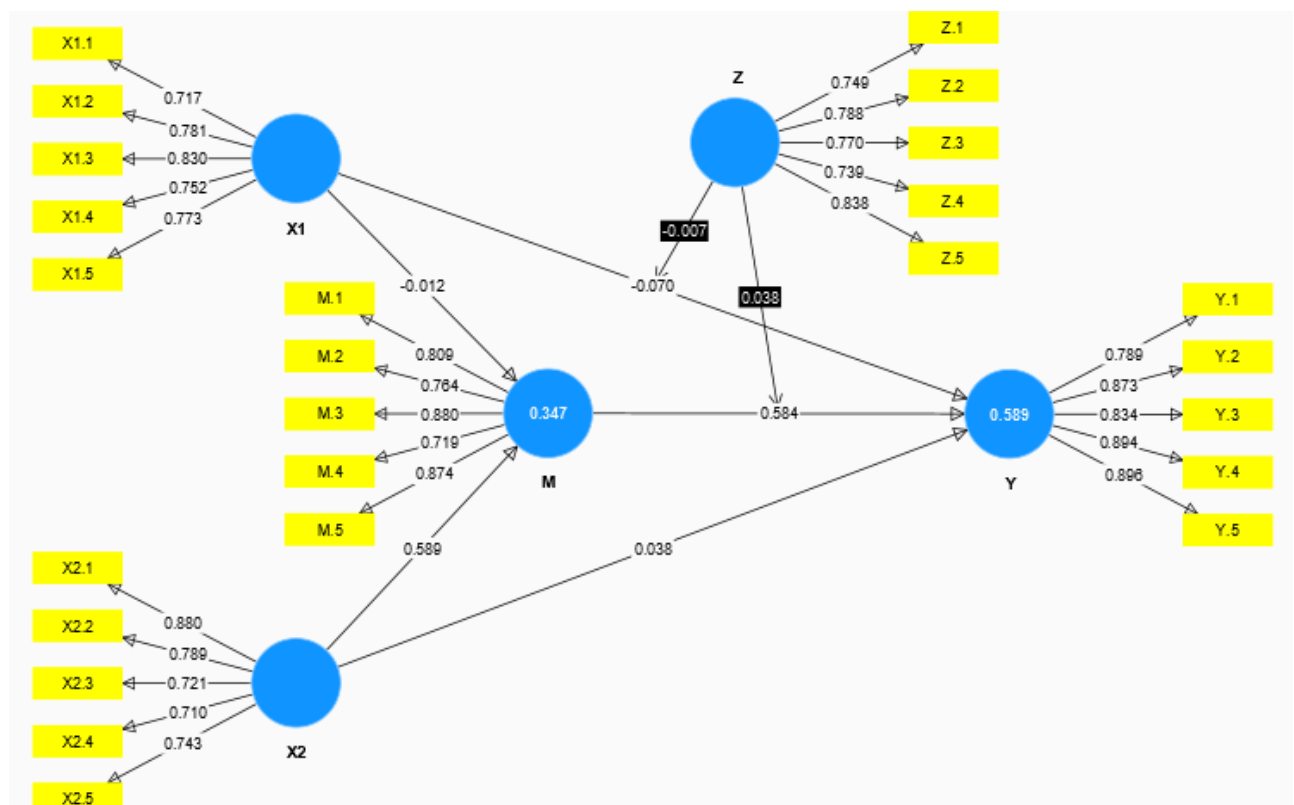


Figure 1. Partial Least Square (PLS) Construct Model

The convergent validity test was first assessed through outer loading values. As shown in Table 1, all constructs consisted of five indicators, and all loading values were above the recommended threshold of 0.70. The loading range for employment intention was 0.719–0.880, work motivation 0.717–0.830, perceived career prospects 0.710–0.880, employment decision 0.789–0.896, and digital readiness 0.739–0.838. These results indicate that all indicators have sufficient ability to explain their respective latent constructs and can therefore be retained in the model.

Table 1. Result of Outer Loading Convergent Validity Test

Variable	Number of Indicators	Loading Range	Remarks
M	5	0.719 – 0.880	Valid
X1	5	0.717 – 0.830	Valid
X2	5	0.710 – 0.880	Valid
Y	5	0.789 – 0.896	Valid
Z	5	0.739 – 0.838	Valid

Reliability was then examined using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. As presented in Table 2, all variables achieved Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70. Employment decision showed the highest internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.910 and Composite Reliability of 0.933, followed by employment intention, digital readiness, perceived career prospects, and work motivation. These findings confirm that all constructs have strong internal consistency and are reliable for further structural analysis.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability Values

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Remarks
M	0.869	0.906	Reliable
X1	0.833	0.880	Reliable
X2	0.836	0.879	Reliable
Y	0.910	0.933	Reliable
Z	0.841	0.884	Reliable

Discriminant validity was evaluated to ensure that each construct measured a conceptually distinct phenomenon. Table 3 shows that the discriminant validity values met the required criteria, indicating that the constructs in the model do not overlap excessively. The Average Variance Extracted values also exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50, with employment intention at 0.659, work motivation at 0.595, perceived career prospects at 0.595, employment decision at 0.736, and digital readiness at 0.604. These results demonstrate that the measurement model has adequate convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 3. Value of Discriminants Validity

Variable	M	X1	X2	Y	Z	AVE	Stuttgart
M	1.000	0.112	0.627	0.828	0.746	0.659	Valid
X1	0.112	1.000	0.087	0.100	0.123	0.595	Valid
X2	0.627	0.087	1.000	0.537	0.690	0.595	Valid
Y	0.828	0.100	0.537	1.000	0.683	0.736	Valid
Z	0.746	0.123	0.690	0.683	1.000	0.604	Valid

The construct reliability and validity results in Table 4 further strengthen the measurement model evaluation. All constructs met the criteria for Cronbach's Alpha, rho_a, rho_c, and AVE. The HTMT results were also below 0.90, indicating that discriminant validity was achieved according to the recommended PLS-SEM criterion. Therefore, the overall measurement model can be considered valid, reliable, and appropriate for testing the proposed structural relationships.

Table 4. Result of Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_a	rho_c	AVE
M — Intention to Work	0,869	0,877	0,906	0,659
X1 — Work motivation	0,833	0,869	0,880	0,595
X2 — Perception of Career Prospects	0,836	0,890	0,879	0,595
Y — Decision to Work	0,910	0,914	0,933	0,736
Z — Digital Readiness	0,841	0,864	0,884	0,604

Structural Model Evaluation

After confirming that the measurement model fulfilled the validity and reliability criteria, the structural model was evaluated using R-square values, path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, mediation effects, and moderation effects. Table 5 presents the contribution test results. The R-square value for employment intention was 0.347, indicating that work motivation, perceived career prospects, and digital readiness explained 34.7% of the variance in employment intention. This value reflects moderate explanatory power. Meanwhile, the R-square value for employment decision was 0.589, meaning that 58.9% of the variance in employment decision was explained by the constructs included in the model. This result indicates that the proposed model has a relatively strong explanatory ability in predicting graduates employment decisions.

Table 5. Contribution Test Result (R^2)

Var. Dependencies	R-square	R-square adjusted
M	0.347	0.334
Y	0.589	0.564

The hypothesis testing results are presented in Table 6. Work motivation did not have a significant effect on employment decision, as indicated by a negative path coefficient and a p-value above 0.05. Work motivation also did not significantly influence employment intention. These results suggest that, in the context of Alfa Class graduates, individual motivation alone was not sufficient to determine whether graduates intended to work or decided to enter employment after graduation. By contrast, perceived career prospects had a significant influence on employment intention, with a path coefficient of 0.589, t-statistic of 8.150, and p-value of 0.000. This indicates that graduates who perceived stronger career prospects in the retail industry were more likely to develop stronger intentions to work.

Table 6. Path Coefficient Test Results

Hypothesis	Path coefficient	T statistics	P values	Remarks
H1: X1 -> Y	-0.077	0.730	0.466	Rejected
H2: X2 -> Y	0.382	3.920	0.000	Accepted
H3: X1 -> M	-0.012	0.089	0.929	Rejected
H4: X2 -> M	0.589	8.150	0.000	Accepted
H5: M -> Y	0.584	6.682	0.000	Accepted
H6: Z -> Y	0.205	2.260	0.024	Accepted
H7: Z x X1 -> Y	-0.007	0.079	0.937	Rejected
H8: Z x M -> Y	0.038	0.821	0.412	Rejected

Employment intention had a significant effect on employment decision, with a path coefficient of 0.584, t-statistic of 6.682, and p-value of 0.000. This result confirms that intention is a strong psychological predictor of employment decision. Digital readiness also had a significant direct effect on employment decision, with a path coefficient of 0.205 and p-value of 0.024. This finding indicates that graduates who felt more prepared to use digital tools and retail technologies were more likely to decide to work. However, the interaction effects involving digital readiness were not significant. The interaction between digital readiness and work motivation did not influence employment decision, and the interaction between digital readiness and employment intention was also not significant. Therefore, digital readiness functioned as a direct predictor rather than as a moderating variable in this model.

Table 7 provides a consolidated summary of the path coefficients, mediation test, and hypothesis decisions. The results confirm that the strongest relationship in the model was the effect of perceived career prospects on employment intention, followed by the effect of employment intention on employment decision. The indirect pathway from perceived career prospects to employment decision through employment intention indicates that employment intention plays an important mediating role. In other words, perceived career prospects influence employment decisions primarily by strengthening graduates's intention to work. This finding highlights the importance of psychological readiness and career expectation in explaining the employment behaviour of vocational graduates.

Table 7. Path Coefficient

H	Hypothesis Path	β	T-Stat	P-Value	Decision
H1	X1 $\rightarrow$ Y	-0,070	0,881	0,388	Rejected
H2	X2 $\rightarrow$ Y	0,382	3,920	0,000	Accrepted
H3	X1 $\rightarrow$ M	-0,012	0,089	0,929	Rejected
H4	X2 $\rightarrow$ M	0,589	8,150	0,000	Accrepted
H5	M $\rightarrow$ Y	0,584	6,682	0,000	Accrepted
H6	Z $\rightarrow$ Y	0,205	2,260	0,024	Accrepted
H7	Z $\times$ X1 $\rightarrow$ Y	-0,007	0,079	0,937	Rejected
H8	Z $\times$ M $\rightarrow$ Y	0,038	0,821	0,412	Rejected

Table 7 shows that four hypotheses were accepted and four were rejected. Perceived career prospects had a significant positive effect on employment decisions ($\beta = 0.382$; $p = 0.000$) and employment intention ($\beta = 0.589$; $p = 0.000$). Employment intention also significantly influenced employment decisions ($\beta = 0.584$; $p = 0.000$), while digital readiness had a significant positive effect on employment decisions ($\beta = 0.205$; $p = 0.024$). However, work motivation did not significantly affect employment decisions or employment intention. In addition, digital readiness did not moderate the relationships between work motivation and employment decisions, nor between employment intention and employment decisions. Overall, employment decisions were mainly influenced by perceived career prospects, employment intention, and digital readiness.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that work motivation did not have a significant effect on either employment intention or employment decision among Alfa Class graduates. This result is relatively different from previous studies that have emphasized the positive contribution of motivation to work readiness, job performance, and workforce participation. Dinh Van Thang & Nguyen Quoc Nghi (2022), for example, found that work motivation significantly improves employee performance, while Ramadan Wardiansyah et al. (2024) demonstrated that employee motivation contributes to job performance through job satisfaction and engagement. Similarly, Taufan et al. (2025) reported that motivation plays an important role in shaping vocational graduates' readiness to enter the workforce. However, the present study suggests that, in the specific context of Alfa Class graduates, motivation alone is not sufficient to explain employment intention and employment decision. This difference may be caused by the relatively homogeneous motivational background of Alfa Class students, who have been exposed to similar vocational training, industrial culture, and employment-oriented learning experiences. Therefore, motivation may no longer function as a differentiating factor among graduates because most respondents already possess a comparable level of work orientation.

The non-significant effect of work motivation can also be understood through the Theory of Planned Behavior, which argues that behaviour is not determined merely by motivation, but also by intention, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991b). This finding is also consistent with Zuo et al. (2025), who showed that motivation in vocational education may support long-term learning goals and well-being, but does not always directly translate into short-term career decisions. In this study, graduates may have motivation to work, but their actual decision to enter employment is more strongly shaped by whether they perceive the available career pathway as promising and whether they have a strong intention to work. Thus, this study expands the discussion of work motivation by showing that motivational factors may become less decisive when graduates are situated in a structured industry-based vocational program that already provides similar motivation-building experiences for all participants.

Perceived career prospects were found to have a strong influence on employment intention. This finding supports Social Cognitive Career Theory, which explains that career choices are shaped by self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and perceived environmental support. The result is also in line with Kholifah, Nurtanto, Mutohhari, et al. (2025), who found that students' career choices in Indonesian vocational education are influenced by perceived career opportunities through psychological mechanisms such as self-efficacy. In the Alfa Class context, graduates who perceive that working in Alfamart provides clear promotion pathways, stable employment, skill development, and future career growth are more likely to develop a stronger intention to work. This finding confirms that career prospect perception is not merely an external judgement about job availability, but a cognitive evaluation of whether a certain job can support future personal and professional development.

This study further confirms that employment intention has a significant effect on employment decision. This finding is consistent with Ajzen, (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, which positions intention as the closest predictor of actual behaviour. It also aligns with LUC (2020), who emphasized that intention is a central mechanism in career-related behaviour within Social Cognitive Career Theory. In the context of vocational graduates, employment intention becomes a crucial

psychological bridge between career perception and actual labour-market entry. Graduates may be offered direct recruitment access, but they will not necessarily decide to work unless they have already developed a strong intention to do so. This finding supports Nuraini et al. (2025), who argued that career decision-making self-efficacy and psychological readiness are important for preparing vocational students to enter the workforce. Therefore, the success of an industry-based vocational program should not only be evaluated from the availability of job pathways, but also from its ability to strengthen graduates' intention to take those opportunities.

The mediation finding shows that employment intention plays an important role in linking perceived career prospects with employment decision. This means that graduates's perception of promising career prospects does not automatically lead to employment decisions unless it first strengthens their intention to work. This result reinforces the integration of Social Cognitive Career Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior. From the SCCT perspective, perceived career prospects reflect outcome expectations that shape career interest and intention. From the TPB perspective, intention is the immediate antecedent of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991b). This finding is also comparable to Nurullayev Firuz Fayzilloyevich (2025), who found that psychological mediators are important in explaining vocational students' career choices. Thus, the present study provides empirical evidence that employment intention is a key mechanism through which perceived career prospects are transformed into real employment decisions among vocational graduates.

Digital readiness was found to have a significant direct effect on employment decision. This finding supports Kholifah, Nurtanto, Sutrisno, et al. (2025), who explained that digital readiness reflects an individual's preparedness and confidence to function in a technology-based work environment. It is also consistent with Pham (2024), who found that digital readiness contributes to vocational graduates' work readiness, and with Lubis et al. (2025), who emphasized that confidence in one's career-related competence strengthens readiness to enter employment. In the modern retail sector, digital readiness is particularly important because employees are required to operate point-of-sale systems, inventory applications, digital transaction tools, and technology-supported customer service systems. Therefore, graduates who feel digitally competent may have greater confidence in entering the workforce because they perceive themselves as capable of adapting to the technological demands of modern retail employment.

However, digital readiness did not significantly moderate the relationship between work motivation, employment intention, and employment decision. This finding indicates that digital readiness does not strengthen or weaken the influence of psychological factors on employment decisions, but rather functions as an independent predictor. This result differs from the assumption that digital readiness should amplify the effect of motivation or intention on work-related behaviour. A possible explanation is that Alfa Class graduates received relatively similar digital training through the same program structure, including exposure to modern retail technology and work-based learning. As a result, the variation in digital readiness among respondents may not be strong enough to produce a moderating effect. This finding offers an important theoretical contribution by showing that, in standardized vocational-industry partnership programs, digital readiness may operate more as a direct employment resource than as a conditional variable.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated model that examines work motivation, perceived career prospects, employment intention, digital readiness, and employment decision within the specific context of the Alfa Class industry-based vocational education program. Previous studies have

generally examined motivation, work readiness, career choice, or digital competence separately, while this study positions employment intention as a mediating mechanism and digital readiness as both a direct and moderating variable. The findings reveal that perceived career prospects and digital readiness are more decisive than general work motivation in shaping employment decisions among Alfa Class graduates. This provides a new perspective that vocational graduate employment is not only influenced by internal motivation, but also by concrete career expectations, intention formation, and perceived readiness to work in a digitalized industry environment.

The theoretical implication of this study is that it strengthens the relevance of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Career Theory in explaining vocational graduates' transition into employment. The findings show that intention remains a central mechanism in converting career perception into employment behaviour, while digital readiness emerges as an additional predictor in the context of technology-based work environments. Practically, the results imply that vocational schools and industry partners should strengthen career guidance, career pathway communication, digital skills training, and workplace exposure. For the Alfa Class program, the findings suggest that students should not only be trained in retail operations but also be given clearer information about promotion systems, long-term career development, income prospects, and the digital competencies required in modern retail work. These efforts may strengthen graduates's employment intention and increase the likelihood that they will make concrete employment decisions after graduation.

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted only among Alfa Class graduates at SMK Negeri 9 Semarang, so the findings may not be fully generalizable to other vocational schools, other regions, or other industry-based partnership programs. Second, the study used a cross-sectional survey design, which limits the ability to examine changes in motivation, career perception, digital readiness, intention, and employment decision over time. Third, the data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, which may contain subjective bias or socially desirable responses. Fourth, this study focused only on work motivation, perceived career prospects, employment intention, and digital readiness, while other possible factors such as family expectations, socioeconomic status, salary expectations, workplace distance, peer influence, higher education aspirations, and labour-market conditions were not included in the model. Future research should involve broader samples, compare different vocational partnership models, use longitudinal designs, and include additional contextual variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of vocational graduates' employment decisions.

Conclusion

This study concludes that employment decisions among Alfa Class graduates of SMK Negeri 9 Semarang are shaped more strongly by perceived career prospects, employment intention, and digital readiness than by general work motivation. The findings demonstrate that perceived career prospects significantly strengthen graduates's intention to work, and this intention subsequently becomes a decisive psychological mechanism that translates career perceptions into actual employment decisions. In other words, graduates are more likely to decide to enter employment when they perceive clear career pathways, professional development opportunities, and future prospects within the retail industry. Employment intention was also found to fully mediate the relationship between perceived career prospects and employment decisions, confirming the relevance of intention as a central predictor of behaviour in vocational graduate employment. Meanwhile, digital readiness had a significant direct effect on employment decisions, indicating that

graduates who feel prepared to use digital tools and retail technologies are more confident in entering technology-supported workplaces. However, digital readiness did not function as a moderating variable, suggesting that it operates as an independent employment resource rather than a condition that strengthens or weakens the effects of motivation or intention. Theoretically, this study extends the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Career Theory in the context of industry-based vocational education by showing that employment decisions are influenced not only by motivational factors but also by concrete career expectations, intention formation, and digital preparedness. Practically, the findings imply that vocational schools and industry partners should strengthen career guidance, communicate career pathways more clearly, provide intensive workplace exposure, and enhance digital readiness training to support graduates' transition into employment. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its single-school context, cross-sectional design, and reliance on self-reported data; therefore, future studies should involve broader samples, compare different school–industry partnership models, and include additional contextual variables such as family expectations, socioeconomic background, salary expectations, workplace location, and higher education aspirations.

References

- Adam, D. B., & Mengistie, B. M. (2026). Challenges and strategies in implementing technical and vocational education subjects in vocationalized secondary schools. *Discover Education*, 5(1), Article 228. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-026-01203-8>
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
- Akkermans, J., Tomlinson, M., & Anderson, V. (2024). Initial employability development: Introducing a conceptual model integrating signalling and social exchange mechanisms. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 33(1), 54–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2023.2186783>
- Andriansyah, E. H., & Kamalia, P. U. (2021). National standards of education affect the employment opportunities of vocational high school graduates. *Jurnal Pendidikan Vokasi*, 11(2), 112–124. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jpv.v11i2.40791>
- Anggia, S. P., Rahayu, W. P., Indratno, D., Rahayu, P., & Mutmainah, S. (2017). The role of Business Center Alfamart in improving student marketing competencies. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bisnis dan Manajemen*, 3(2), 65–72. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um003v3i12017p065>
- Anugrah Rossytasari, Sugiharto, S., Achmad Daengs GS, Istanti, E., & Zuhro, D. (2026). The impact of motivation and organizational commitment on employee work performance. *Journal of Economic and Business Advancement*, 1(3), 365–375. <https://doi.org/10.65310/r0s5x520>
- Arik Harianto, Buwani Buwani, Faradina, E., & Tuwoso Tuwoso. (2025). Factors affecting work readiness of vocational school graduates: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Studies in International Education*, 2(2), 90–106. <https://doi.org/10.62951/ijisie.v2i2.281>
- Bosnjak, M., Ajzen, I., & Schmidt, P. (2020). The theory of planned behavior: Selected recent advances and applications. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 16(3), 352–356. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v16i3.3107>
- Chen, Y., Li, S., & Chen, R. (2025). Impact of industry and education integration on employment quality in higher vocational colleges: Moderating role of faculty qualifications and curriculum development capacity. *Education Sciences*, 15(10), Article 1316. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15101316>
- Chuang, Y.-T., Huang, T.-H., Lin, S.-Y., & Chen, B.-C. (2022). The influence of motivation, self-efficacy, and fear of failure on the career adaptability of vocational school students: Moderated by meaning in life. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 958334. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.958334>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dao, T. H. A., Sisavath, C., Bui, H. T. T., Bui, T. Q., & Le, T. H. (2025). Digital workforce training, employee motivation, job satisfaction, digital behavior as determinants of employee performance: Empirical research from Vietnam. *SAGE Open*, 15(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251395698>

- Dinh Van Thang, & Nguyen Quoc Nghi. (2022). The effect of work motivation on employee performance: The case at OTUKSA Japan company. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 13(1), 404–412. <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2022.13.1.0047>
- Elamalki, D., Kaddar, A., & Beniich, N. (2024). Impact of motivation on the job performance of public sector employees: The case of Morocco. *Future Business Journal*, 10(1), Article 53. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43093-024-00342-4>
- Etim, E., & Daramola, O. (2023). Investigating the e-readiness of informal sector operators to utilize web technology portal. *Sustainability*, 15(4), Article 3449. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043449>
- Fjeldheim, S., Kleppe, L. C., Stang, E., & Støren-Vaczy, B. (2025). Digital competence in social work education: Readiness for practice. *Social Work Education*, 44(3), 600–616. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2024.2334800>
- Galanakis, M. D., & Tsitouri, E. (2022). Positive psychology in the working environment: Job demands-resources theory, work engagement and burnout: A systematic literature review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 1022102. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1022102>
- Habets, O., Stoffers, J., van der Heijden, B., & Peters, P. (2020). Am I fit for tomorrow's labor market? The effect of graduates' skills development during higher education for the 21st century's labor market. *Sustainability*, 12(18), Article 7746. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12187746>
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2022). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Ho, T. T. H., Le, V. H., Nguyen, D. T., Nguyen, C. T. P., & Nguyen, H. T. T. (2023). Effects of career development learning on students' perceived employability: A longitudinal study. *Higher Education*, 86(2), 297–315. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00933-6>
- Hosen, S., Hamzah, S. R., Ismail, I. A., Alias, S. N., Abd Aziz, M. F., & Rahman, M. M. (2024). Training and development, career development, and organizational commitment as the predictor of work performance. *Heliyon*, 10(1), Article e23903. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e23903>
- Höyng, M., & Lau, A. (2023). Being ready for digital transformation: How to enhance employees' intentional digital readiness. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 11, Article 100314. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2023.100314>
- Ibrahim, I. A., Mounib, S. A., Eldesoky, E. S., Elsayed, R. S., Abou Zeid, M. A. G., & Elatroush, H. G. (2026). Digital competence and career adaptability among nurses: The parallel mediating roles of technological self-efficacy and learning agility. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 2026(1). <https://doi.org/10.1155/jonm/7770229>
- Joseph Mofokeng, T., Amoa-Gyarteng, K., & Dhliwayo, S. (2025). Demographic influences on employee perceptions: Performance management, motivation, and career advancement. *Cogent Business & Management*, 12(1), Article 2480242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2025.2480242>
- Kayyali, M. (2025). Aligning vocational education with industry needs. In *Innovative approaches in vocational and regional education* (pp. 1–48). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-9496-0.ch001>
- Keijzer, R., van Schooten, E., van der Rijst, R., & Admiraal, W. (2022). Individual characteristics of students in vocational education moderating the relationship between school engagement and vocational identity. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 37(4), 1255–1283. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-021-00580-y>
- Kholifah, N., Nurtanto, M., Mutohhari, F., Hamid, M. A., Mutiara, I., Setiawan, D., & Saputro, I. N. (2025). Factors influencing student career choice in vocational education in Indonesia: A mediating effect of self-efficacy. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 11, Article 101369. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101369>
- Kholifah, N., Nurtanto, M., Sutrisno, V. L. P., Majid, N. W. A., Subakti, H., Daryono, R. W., & Achmadi, A. (2025). Unlocking workforce readiness through digital employability skills in vocational education graduates: A PLS-SEM analysis based on human capital theory. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 11, Article 101625. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101625>
- Kusmaryono, I., Wijayanti, D., & Maharani, H. R. (2022). Number of response options, reliability, validity, and potential bias in the use of the Likert scale education and social science research: A literature review. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, 8(4), 625–637. <https://doi.org/10.12973/ijem.8.4.625>
- Kusuma, A. R., Syarief, R., Sukmawati, A., & Ekananta, A. (2024). Factors influencing the digital transformation

- of sales organizations in Indonesia. *Heliyon*, 10(5), Article e27017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e27017>
- L'Abate, L. (2013). *Clinical psychology and psychotherapy as a science*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-4451-0>
- Lubis, A. L., Rais, S., Rini, R. O. P., & Friadi, J. (2025). The effect of entrepreneurship education on career readiness as a job creator with self-efficacy as a mediating variable. *Annals of Human Resource Management Research*, 5(3), 51–67. <https://doi.org/10.35912/ahrmr.v5i3.2895>
- Luc, P. T. (2020). Outcome expectations and social entrepreneurial intention: Integration of planned behavior and social cognitive career theory. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 7(6), 399–407. <https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2020.vol7.no6.399>
- Ma, Y., Hou, L., Cai, W., Gao, X., & Jiang, L. (2024). Linking undergraduates' future work self and employability: A moderated mediation model. *BMC Psychology*, 12(1), Article 160. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-01530-1>
- Makola, Z. S., Dube, I., Khanya, M. P., & Tabane, R. (2025). Applying the social cognitive career theory to understand rural high school learners' interest in agriculture as a subject and career field. *The Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1389224X.2025.2592570>
- Massi, J. W., Anangisye, W. A. L., & Sarakikya, A. M. (2026). Examining the alignment of vocational education curricula with labour market demands for youth employability in Tanzania: Bridging the skills gap. *Cogent Education*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2026.2626623>
- Megasari, R., Ana, A., & Jayadi, J. (2023). Predicting graduate employment: The relationship among social skills, performance and motivation in cosmetology education graduates. *Jurnal Pendidikan Teknologi Kejuruan*, 6(3), 190–201. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jptk.v6i3.33523>
- Mirzaye, S., & Mohiuddin, M. (2025). Digital transformation in international trade: Opportunities, challenges, and policy implications. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 18(8), Article 421. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm18080421>
- Muharam, R. S., Afrilia, U. A., & Sudarma, S. (2025). Integrating vocational education and industry through public policy: Towards excellent and competitive human capital. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences and Arts*, 4(2), 65–74. <https://doi.org/10.47709/ijmdsa.v4i2.6097>
- Nuraini, A. D., Harahap, D. H., & Lekahena, F. (2025). Building bridges to the workforce: The role of career decision-making self-efficacy in vocational students' work readiness. *Psikostudia: Jurnal Psikologi*, 14(3), 376. <https://doi.org/10.30872/psikostudia.v14i3.19655>
- Nurjanah, I., Ana, A., & Masek, A. (2022). Systematic literature review: Work readiness of vocational high school graduates in facing the industrial 4.0 era. *Jurnal Pendidikan Teknologi dan Kejuruan*, 28(2), 139–153. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jptk.v28i2.48552>
- Nurullayev, F. F. (2025). The role of psychological factors in career choice and the development of abilities in schoolchildren. *Emergent: Journal of Educational Discoveries and Lifelong Learning*, 6(4), 6. <https://doi.org/10.47134/emergent.v4i2.70>
- Ohara, E., Harto, S. P., & Maruanaya, R. F. (2020). Policy shift to reduce unemployment of vocational school graduates in Indonesia: A national study. *Jurnal Pendidikan Teknologi dan Kejuruan*, 26(2), 129–139. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jptk.v26i2.33144>
- Otermans, P., Small, S., Pereira, M., Sridharan, P., & Aditya, D. (2025). Students' and graduates' perspectives on skill development in higher education. *Journal of Education and Work*, 38(1–4), 84–112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2025.2576858>
- Pham, L. T. T. (2024). Work readiness of graduates in the digital age: A literature review. *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science—Social Sciences*, 14(2), 113–120. <https://doi.org/10.46223/HCMCOUJS.soci.en.14.2.2820.2024>
- Pham, M., Lam, B. Q., & Bui, A. T. N. (2024). Career exploration and its influence on the relationship between self-efficacy and career choice: The moderating role of social support. *Heliyon*, 10(11), Article e31808. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31808>
- Rahmat, T., Ashshiddiqi, M. T., & Apriliani, D. (2024). Urgency of digital literacy to improving work readiness in the Industrial Revolution 4.0. *The Journal of Society and Media*, 8(1), 307–326. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jsm.v8n1.p307-326>
- Rahmawati, S., Prestridge, S., Abdullah, A. G., & Widiaty, I. (2025). Unpacking the digital competence challenge in vocational education: A case from Indonesia. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 12, Article 101803.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101803>

- Ramadan Wardiansyah, D., Khusniyah Indrawati, N., & Tri Kurniawati, D. (2024). The effect of employee motivation and employee engagement on job performance mediated by job satisfaction. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 13(1), 220–231. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v13i1.3133>
- Ran, J., Liu, H., Yuan, Y., Yu, X., & Dong, T. (2023). Linking career exploration, self-reflection, career calling, career adaptability and subjective well-being: A self-regulation theory perspective. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 16, 2805–2817. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S420666>
- Silva, C. D. S., Marujo, L. G., & Senna, P. (2026). How should workers be prepared for Industry 4.0? Antecedents of employee readiness for digital transformation. *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, 106, Article 102538. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2026.102538>
- Smirnova, I., Shannon, A., & Teplitskiy, M. (2025). The effect of trainee career intentions on mentor's interest in the trainee: Experimental evidence from academia. *Research Policy*, 54(5), Article 105232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2025.105232>
- Supriyanto, S., Munadi, S., Daryono, R. W., Tuah, Y. A. E., Nurtanto, M., & Arifah, S. (2023). The influence of internship experience and work motivation on work readiness in vocational students: PLS-SEM analysis. *Indonesian Journal on Learning and Advanced Education*, 5(1), 32–44. <https://doi.org/10.23917/ijolae.v5i1.20033>
- Taufan, S., Jayanti, A. R. B., Susita, D., & Frannita, E. L. (2025). Influence of self-efficacy and motivation on work readiness in vocational education students. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Kesatuan*, 13(5), 3787–3798. <https://doi.org/10.37641/jimkes.v13i5.3501>
- Tee, P. K., Kaur, D., Song, B. L., & Gharleghi, B. (2025). Assessing career success: The role of protean career attitude, organizational learning practices, and employability perception. *Cogent Business & Management*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2025.2453021>
- Vo, T. T. D., Tulliao, K. V., & Chen, C.-W. (2022). Work motivation: The roles of individual needs and social conditions. *Behavioral Sciences*, 12(2), Article 49. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12020049>
- Wahyuningsih, R., Joyoatmojo, S., Wardani, D. K., & Noviani, L. (2025). Work-integrated learning to improve work readiness of vocational education in school and madrasah. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 6(4), 586–602. <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v6i4.1928>
- Waluyo, S. D., Rustanto, A. E., Winanti, Y. K., Onn, C. W., Sufian, M., & Mesina, J. R. (2025). Digital transformation in teacher performance assessment: Development and implementation of E-PKG system for enhancing vocational education quality and industry alignment. *Journal of Educational Technology and Learning Creativity*, 3(2), 348–366. <https://doi.org/10.37251/jetlc.v3i2.2490>
- Wang, D., Liu, B., Jiang, Y., Zhang, D., Duan, Y., Liang, Y., & Song, C. (2026). The impact of career social support on employability of university students from low-income families in China: The chain mediating roles of career decision-making self-efficacy and career goals. *Current Psychology*, 45(3), Article 300. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-025-08913-6>
- Yaban, E. H., & Gaschler, R. (2025). Autonomous motivation, self-efficacy, and developmental regulation processes in distance education across diverse age groups. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08923647.2025.2484047>
- Yan, C. (2025). Long-duration vocational education's effects on individuals' vocational identity, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(9), Article 1161. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15091161>
- Yani, A., Pawirosumarto, S., & Ridwan, M. (2026). Digital readiness and work engagement as drivers of academic productivity in Islamic higher education. *Discover Education*, 5(1), Article 349. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-026-01385-1>
- Yasir, N., Mahmood, N., Mehmood, H. S., Rashid, O., & Liren, A. (2021). The integrated role of personal values and theory of planned behavior to form a sustainable entrepreneurial intention. *Sustainability*, 13(16), Article 9249. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13169249>
- Yerdaw, B. A., & Berhanu, K. Z. (2026). Factors influencing employee engagement. *Discover Psychology*, 6(1), Article 123. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44202-026-00624-8>
- Yiming, Y., Ma, R., & Saiyidu, Y. (2025). The mediating effect of psychological well-being on self-efficacy and career development of physical education major students. *BMC Psychology*, 13(1), Article 862. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-03168-z>
- Yoana, Auwalin, I., & Rumayya. (2024). The role of vocational education on unemployment in Indonesia.

Cogent Education, 11(1), Article 2340858. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2340858>

- Yusan, B. O., Trisandy, Y., Lu, C., Saragih, J. S., & Tjandrasa, B. B. (2025). Competitive advantage of Alfamart: A SWOT and PESTEL analysis. *JIPower: Journal of Intellectual Power*, 2(2), 15–45. <https://doi.org/10.63786/jipower.v2i2.45>
- Zehui, M., Tianyang, Z., Jiayuan, J., & Li, W. (2025). Transformational leadership and future work readiness among Chinese vocational college students: AI literacy and career self-regulation as dual mediators. *Frontiers in Education*, 10, Article 1664939. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1664939>
- Zervas, I., & Triantari, S. (2025). Digital HRM practices and perceived digital competence: An analysis of organizational culture's role. *Digital*, 5(3), Article 34. <https://doi.org/10.3390/digital5030034>
- Zuo, H., Zhang, M., & Huang, W. (2025). Lifelong learning in vocational education: A game-theoretical exploration of innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, and strategic challenges. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, 10(3), Article 100694. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2025.100694>