



Work Character Readiness of Vocational High School Students Post Covid-19 Outbreak

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Abstract: Work character is a critical issue for vocational high school students in addition to their knowledge and competencies. This study described the level of work character readiness of vocational high school students' during the Covid-19 outbreak. The subjects of this study were third-grade vocational high school students in five vocational high schools at Padang City in the spectrum: (1) fisheries and marine, (2) business and management, (3) performing arts, (4) tourism, and (5) information and communication technology. Respondents were 75 students consisting of 40 females, and 35 males were selected using the proportional stratified random sampling technique. Instrument development refers to two indicators, namely moral character and work character. The instrument was validated by experts and through validity and reliability testing. The results testing showed that validity and reliability with the respective rho count $0.927 > \rho$ table 0.648 and r results in $0.907 > r$ table 0.514 . Data analysis used simple statistics to determine the respondent's level of achievement level (RAL) from the readiness of male and female students' moral and work characteristics. The results showed that the achievement level of job readiness of vocational high school students in Padang city had reached 85.5%. The result of this study has inference that the distance learning system (online learning) during the Covid-19 pandemic did not harm the readiness of the work character of vocational high school students.

Abstrak: Karakter kerja merupakan isu kritis bagi siswa sekolah menengah kejuruan selain pengetahuan dan kompetensi mereka. Penelitian ini mendeskripsikan tingkat kesiapan karakter kerja siswa SMK pasca wabah Covid-19. Subyek penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas III SMK di lima SMK di Kota Padang pada spektrum: (1) perikanan dan kelautan, (2) bisnis dan manajemen, (3) seni pertunjukan, (4) pariwisata, dan (5) teknologi informasi dan komunikasi. Responden sebanyak 75 siswa yang terdiri dari 40 perempuan, dan 35 laki-laki yang dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik proporsional stratified random sampling. Pengembangan instrumen mengacu pada dua indikator, yaitu karakter moral dan karakter kerja. Instrumen divalidasi oleh ahli dan melalui uji validitas dan reliabilitas. Hasil pengujian menunjukkan

validitas dan reliabilitas dengan masing-masing rho hitung 0,927 > rho tabel 0,648 dan r hasil 0,907 > r tabel 0,514. Analisis data menggunakan statistik sederhana untuk mengetahui tingkat pencapaian (RAL) responden dari kesiapan moral dan karakteristik kerja siswa laki-laki dan perempuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tingkat pencapaian kesiapan kerja siswa SMK di kota Padang telah mencapai 85,5%. Hasil penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa sistem pembelajaran jarak jauh (online learning) di masa pandemi Covid-19 tidak merugikan karakter kesiapan kerja siswa SMK.

Keywords: Character, High school, Student, Vocational, Student

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of vocational education is always to prepare themselves adaptively and competitively with the times. The success of the education program in vocational high schools can be measured by absorption in the world of work (Putri et al., 2016; Wahyuni & Safitri, 2018; Wening, 2017). Vocational high school is aimed at producing graduates who are ready to work, both independently and in certain industries. Vocational secondary education is required to be able to produce graduates as expected by schools, communities, and the world of business (Fajar & Hartanto, 2019; Nurdina et al., 2019; Putri et al., 2016; Triyono, 2017). The success of vocational high school graduates is not only determined by the knowledge and skills they have, but is also determined by the values of the work character. Facing the challenges of increasing industrial demands, vocational education institutions as one of the workforce-producing educational institutions need to prepare their graduates not only with knowledge and skills, but also well work character readiness.

Educated the students for a period of 3 to 4 years with the competencies and attitudes needed by the demands of the era, open a simple method Given the age of students who at that time entered a transitional phase in their development, from adolescence to adulthood which of course had the potential to cause clashes on tasks developments that affect the process of education and learning (Dhin, 2016; Diananda, 2019; Zaini, 2018). Furthermore,

completeness of practical tools, curriculum, teacher competence, and school collaboration with industry, and soft skill development are still basic problems in the management of vocational high schools (Kamdi, 2017; Made Sudana et al., 2019; Muchtar, 2019; Rusdinal et al., 2019; Sohidin, 2018). These problems are certainly a big challenge for vocational high school managers to survive with all the shortcomings and limitations to educate and train students to be ready to face job challenges.

The number of vocational high school graduates who are not absorbed in industrial is quite high. This is due to the low competence of graduates, the mismatch of competencies trained in schools with industrial needs, and the lack of readiness of the work character of graduates. On the other hand, the types of new worker skills needed by the industry are changing, namely to become new workers who have more logical thinking abilities, while vocational high schools supply more graduates with the types of skills that have not changed. This shows that vocational high schools have not been sufficiently empowered to overcome national unemployment. National statistics agency data show that vocational high school graduates are the biggest contributor to unemployment in Indonesia. The number reached 813,776 people or 11.24 percent of the total open unemployment rate (National Statistics Agency; 2022). Another problem is that vocational education is not really in demand. Vocational school is still the second choice after high school. Based on the results of

an interview with one of the principals of a maritime spectrum high school in the city of Padang, information was obtained that only 25% of graduates who were accepted in the industry were following their vocational education. Furthermore, 30% continue their education to higher education, and the rest 45% work not according to their fields and do not work unemployment (interview, 16/07/2023). Furthermore, the results of interviews by researchers with several school students who won the vocational spectrum of Arts and Creative Industries can deny that most of them choose to continue their education to higher education with different majors. They admitted this was because the expertise in the program they chose was not reduced, and some of them stated that they were not ready to enter the world of work and the job opportunities in the expertise program they chose were inexperienced (interview, 24/07/2023). This indicates that the low readiness of graduates from competence and attitude/character in work.

The government has determined learning outcomes for vocational high school students from the aspects of their moral character and work character. Moral character is the moral capacity of students which is related to moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. It allows them to have basic values regarding right and wrong, good and bad in the actions they choose. Moral character is related to values such as honesty, piety, courtesy and politeness, manners, and so on. Work characteristics are closer to the values students place on each skill they have in work. Work character is implied by the values of hard work, tough, thorough, tenacious, self-confident, disciplined, diligent, and so on. Previous research has proven that moral character contributes to work character; and work character is a strong variable that determines students' absorption and success in industry. The government has determined learning outcomes for vocational high school

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The Covid-19 pandemic has an equally serious impact on vocational education. Distance education is implemented so that students continue to learn most effectively, far from what is expected. Especially in vocational high schools that require more direct practice and education to develop students' hard skills and soft skills at work, moreover industrial work practices are also eliminated. During the Covid-19 pandemic, vocational high school students learn like public school students. Has the Covid-19 pandemic affected the work readiness of vocational high school students? On the other hand, the economic instability during the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly reduced the industry's absorption of labor. Even those industries that we're unable to survive have closed, and those that are still able to survive have laid off their jobs as workers (Thaha, 2020; Hanoatubun, 2020; Marpaung et al., 2020; Nasution et al., 2020; Rahmadia & Febriyani, 2020;). The National Statistics Agency noted that as of August 2020 the number of unemployed in Indonesia reached 9.77 million people, graduates of vocational high schools were the biggest

contributor to the open unemployment rate of 13.55%. This situation is certainly a heavy pressure for vocational high school students, whether this situation will decrease the readiness of their work character or challenges make them more rational and trained.

METHOD

The research was conducted with a quantitative approach. This study aims to interpret and describe the data on the readiness level of vocational high school students' work character during the Covid-19 disease outbreak. The research locations are five Padang City state vocational high schools with a spectrum of expertise: (1) fisheries and marine, (2) business and management, (3) performing arts, (4) tourism, and (5) information and communication technology. The subjects of this study were third-level vocational high school students. Determination of research subjects based on the assumption that third-year students are final year students who will jump into the real world of work. The researcher determined proportionally the number of respondents in each school which was determined as the research location, namely 10 students with a randomly determined skill package. The sample selection was done by using the proportional stratified random sampling technique. Respondents in this study consisted of 75 students consisting of 40 female students and 35 male students.

The data were collected using an instrument in the form of a questionnaire based on two indicators, namely moral character and work character. The questionnaire is arranged in the form of a Likert scale with four alternative answers to the students' work character readiness degrees: (1) very ready, (2) ready, (3) less of ready, and (4) not ready. The questionnaire that has been prepared is validated by experts using a validation sheet. The determination of the validity and reliability of the instrument was also carried out through online trials on 20 vocational high school

students. The trial results showed valid and reliable lift with the respective rho count $0.927 > \rho$ table 0.648 and r results in $0.907 > r$ table 0.514. Data analysis was carried out using simple statistics to determine the respondent's level of achievement (CRD) from the readiness of male and female students' moral and work characteristics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the work character readiness of vocational students in terms of two indicators, namely: (1) moral character, and (2) work character (Kemendikbud RI, 2018). Moral character is the principles related to behavior, character, and mentalities that guide a person to determine good and bad, or right and wrong. In this study, the moral character of vocational students in terms of aspects: religious, humble, polite, caring, and tolerance. Meanwhile, work character is the trait that influences a person's mindset/thoughts, behavior, and actions in carrying out a job. The working character of vocational high school students is viewed from the following aspects: discipline, hard work, responsibility, and an entrepreneurial spirit (Kemendikbud RI, 2018; Ratnata, 2012).

The data analysis in Table 1 above shows that the achievement level of the work character readiness of Padang City Vocational School students has reached 85.5%. It can be excluded that the distance learning system (online learning) during the Covid-19 pandemic did not have a negative impact on the readiness of the work character of vocational high school students. The average student stated that he was ready to enter and face the challenges of the world of work after graduating. Students' readiness for the moral character is higher than their work character, but the difference is not too significant. This is natural during the Covid-19 pandemic, students feel they have to study at home and do not come into direct contact with the practical environment both at school and in

industry. Competency skills that have been trained since the first level of vocational training and student motivation and enthusiasm to enter the world of work have a positive effect on the readiness of students' work character (Ihsan, 2018; Winata & Widiyatmoko, 2016).

Based on gender, women who have a work character readiness level are higher than men, with a difference of 1.1%. The data in the table shows that the readiness of the female work character reaches 86.1% while the male is 85.0%. From the aspect of character readiness, the data in table 1 shows that the average moral character readiness of students is higher (3.5) than the work character (3.4). The difference

shown from the results of this study is not too significant. Women do show more concern than men (Donenberg & Hoffman, 1988), but they view justice as equally important. Religious norms influence the moral maturity of male and female students. The results of the study, which is a collection of Gilligan's theory, found that important cultural norms shape male adolescents more firmly than adolescent girls. Cultural factors allow adolescent girls to have subservient, closed, and attentive morals compared to boys (Kalsoom et al., 2012; Silberman & Snarey, 1993), (Yang & Wang, 2013).

Table 1. Work Character Readiness of Vocational High School Students in Padang, Indonesia

Gender (<i>m/f</i>)	Character Readiness		Average	RAL
	Moral Character	Work Character		
<i>m</i>	3,4	3,4	3,4	85,0
<i>f</i>	3,5	3,4	3,4	86,1
Average	3,5	3,4	3,4	85,5

Research also proves that women's work morale is higher than men's when they are in the work environment. Roger Steare, an ethics expert and lecturer on Corporate Ethics and Sustainability at Cass Business School in London, developed the Moral DNA test to measure a person's morality, seen from their value system when entering the workplace (Kompas.com, 2012), (De Pater et al., 2010). The difference in work morale between female and male students is at a developmental stage, there are differences in the system of biological, psychological, and accepted external norm construction to determine their response to the dynamics of the work environment (Sanchhya & Susilawati, 2014), (Zingerle, 1933). The

efforts to develop work character for them cannot be separated from the supportive school and family environment. The results of research on the importance of the role of family, school, and peers in the development of morality in adolescence (Svensson et al., 2017; Wahidin, 2017). Families that play a role in building moral values and education in schools to realize their development so that they are truly internalized in student behavior and behavior. So that they are able to adjust and adjust positively from the social environment of their peers.

Figure 1 below illustrates the comparison of the level of readiness for work character of vocational school students in the city of Padang

between male and female students in the aspects of moral character and work character. This study concludes that there is no significant difference in the work character readiness of vocational students between male and female as well as from the aspects of moral character and work character. As explained above, the readiness of women work character is higher than men. Figure 1 below shows the level of

women's moral character readiness reaching 87.1% and men's readiness level reaching 85.6%, a difference of 2.5% from the level of women's work character retention. From the aspect of work character, women outperformed men only 0.5%, where the level of readiness of women's work character is 85.0% and men are 84.5%.

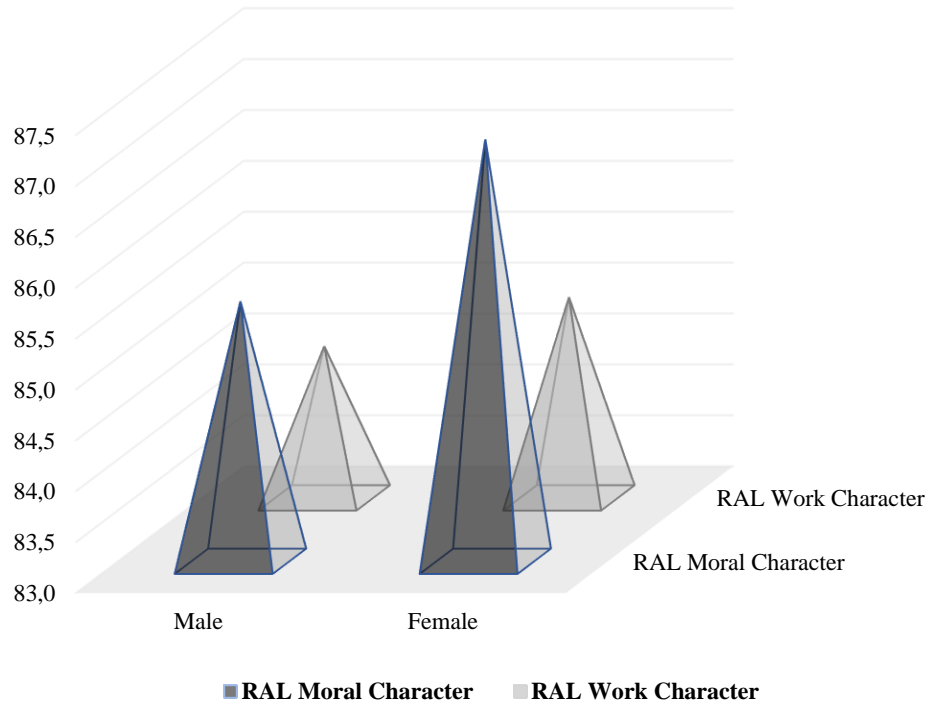


Figure 1. Respondent Achievement Level Chart Work Character Readiness of Vocational High School Student

Strengthening the readiness of work characters in students cannot be taught, but internalized through integration in learning in schools. Integration in learning is intended to mean that character values are internalized in learning activities, both those carried out by students and through the behavior displayed by the teacher. Teacher behavior that contains character values and is displayed repeatedly will be imitated by students so that in the end it will change / shape student behavior. The behavior of students who contain character

values carried out repeatedly will eventually be internalized in students and become the character of the students themselves. Character education in schools can be carried out using various approaches including the five typologies of character education approaches, namely: (1) inculcation approach, (2) cognitive moral development approach, (3) values analysis approach, (4) values clarification approach, and (5) action learning approach (Kemendikbud RI, 2018).

Work character is the values that a person believes in and uses at work. Work character can be categorized as soft skills. These values are abstract, cannot be detected by sight and hearing senses. Manifestations or concrete forms of value can be observed through one's behavior, attitudes, and actions. Adopting a value study from Lipham which indicates that values develop on their own hierarchy. There are three hierarchies of values in secular values, namely core values, secular values, and operational values (Jaski et al., 1969). The core values are in the area of the central value point which is the source of political or legal decision making. These core values include democratic values, individuation values, and equality values. On the outer side of the core value, other values develop, in this case, secular values. The function of secular values is to interpret and apply core values. In another part of the secular value, there is operational value. Operational value is born in everyday actions. Operational value is the behavior and actions of a person directed at achieving the secular value that is his reference (Kemendikbud RI, 2018). Job competence is measured by at least 5 basic components: (1) Knowledge, namely knowledge possessed by individuals in a particular field of work or area, (2) Skills, namely the ability to perform physically or mentally, (3) Self Concept, namely individual attitudes, embraced values and self-image, (4) Traits, namely physical characteristics and consistent responses to certain situations or information, and (5) Motives, namely constant basic thoughts or intentions that encourage individuals to act or behave certain skills and knowledge often called hard skills, while self-concepts, traits, and motives are called soft skills (Francis, 2011).

The results of this study imply that the distance learning system (online learning) during the Covid-19 pandemic did not harm the readiness of the work character of vocational high school students. Both male and female students have a good level of work character

readiness and are ready to enter the workforce after graduating. This optimism needs support from stakeholders, especially the government and industry. Schools, government, parents, and vocational high school stakeholders do not need to worry about the character of student work because the education system is disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Minister of National Education Nadiem Makarim through a web seminar organized by the Center for Strengthening Character Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia emphasized the importance of strengthening the character of vocational education during the Covid-19 pandemic (Astutik, 2020). Fostering student work character during the Covid-19 pandemic must continue to be carried out by adapting the distance learning system. The implementation of education programs in vocational high schools is determined by the skills of school management, especially by the principal in optimizing various resources and strategies. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it has facilitated various programs and standard operating procedures in the implementation of vocational education through web seminars for managers of education units. Various best practices for providing education during the Covid-19 pandemic were also presented in the seminar which of course can be guided by other school principals.

Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on the efficiency of many manufactures/industries. The awkwardness of vocational high school graduates increases due to the deterioration of the national economy which results in low absorption of labor in industry. The task of schools and the government may become very heavy to restore and restore a conducive economic order, establish and strengthen cooperation with relevant manufacturers/industries, and provide education and consulting services for the development of an entrepreneurial spirit for graduates to be able to build a business

independently. Best practice by one of the vocational high schools in Malang City which held project-based learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, which turned out to be able to increase students' entrepreneurial spirit. Like making electric bicycle cones, local wisdom, YouTube content, online culinary, and so on (Astutik, 2020). Many steps can be taken to support the implementation of education during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially by utilizing technology (Sandi, 2020). Creativity needs to be increased to capture various business opportunities by utilizing the simple resources that are around us.

The Directorate General of Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia has prepared a strategic program for the development of vocational education in Indonesia; improvement of students' soft skills and character is one of them. This strategic program is contained in the road map of the Directorate General of Vocational Education which will begin to be held in 2021: (1) creating competent, superior human resources, and by the needs of national and global scale industries, (2) increasing productivity, innovation, and competitiveness. significantly to advance economic growth, (3) improve the welfare and careers of vocational graduates, (4) create a generation of tough and innovative entrepreneurs, (5) input for vocational education students must be passionate about the vocational world, (6) involve industry as much as possible, (7) improve the soft skills and character of graduates to become lifelong independent learners, (8) able to answer the challenges of current and future competency needs, and (9) applied research that produces real products that are delivered to the industrial and community markets (Kemendikbud RI, 2018). Efforts to develop soft skills and character for vocational high school students with distance learning during the covid-19 pandemic can be done virtually and project-based learning. The virtual approach can be

used as an alternative in developing students' moral character; although it also does not rule out the possibility of being used to develop the character of student work. Programs that can be implemented include virtual character camps, virtual video viewing, web seminar series, and so on. To strengthen the character of student work can also be done with a project-based learning model. The learning process with this learning model can train students' creativity, innovation, discipline, hard work, responsibility, and entrepreneurial spirit.

CONCLUSION

This research has produced a quantitative description of the level of occupation of vocational high school students' working character during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of data analysis in this study indicate the level of the achievement level of vocational high school student work readiness in the city of Padang has reached 85.5%. The readiness of students' moral character is higher (3.5) than work character (3,4). Female students have a higher level of work character readiness than male students, with a difference of 1.1%. The results of the data analysis showed that the readiness of the work character of female students reached 86.1% while for men it was 85.0%. The level of readiness for women's moral character reached 87.1% and the level of readiness for men reached 85.6%. Meanwhile, the level of readiness for the work character of women is 85.0% and men are 84.5%. In addition, the distance learning system (online learning) during the long-19 disease outbreak does not have a negative impact on the readiness of vocational high school students' work character. The awkwardness of vocational high school graduates may increase, even resulting in damage to the national economy which low absorption of labor in industry.

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