

READY TO CONQUER THE WORLD OF WORK: THE ROLES OF SELF-EFFICACY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

Work readiness is essential for high school students who may enter employment immediately after graduation, particularly in industrial regions where youth unemployment remains high. This study examined whether self-efficacy and perceived social support predict work readiness among students at a public high school in Karawang, Indonesia. A quantitative correlational design was employed with a population of 1,284 students. Using stratified random sampling and the Krejcie-Morgan sample-size table, 296 students were selected. Data were collected using the Work Readiness Scale, the 12-item General Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. The instruments were reviewed through a tryout involving 31 respondents before the main data collection. Multiple linear regression was conducted with JASP. Self-efficacy significantly and positively predicted work readiness ($t = 5.079$, $p < .001$), and perceived social support was also a significant positive predictor ($t = 2.963$, $p = .003$). Jointly, both variables significantly predicted work readiness, $F(2, 293) = 28.78$, $p < .001$. The model explained 16.4% of the variance in work readiness ($R^2 = .164$), indicating that personal confidence and supportive relationships contribute to students' preparation for employment, although other career-related factors remain influential. Schools and families should therefore strengthen sustained career guidance, confidence-building activities, and supportive communication to improve students' transition into work.

Keywords: Career Guidance; Perceived Social Support; Self-Efficacy; Senior High School Students; Work Readiness

INTRODUCTION

A country's development is strongly influenced by the quality and employability of its human resources. Despite economic growth, unemployment among the working-age population remains a persistent concern in developing countries, including Indonesia (Rompas et al., 2025). The national open unemployment rate was reported at 4.85% in 2025, while West Java recorded a higher rate of 6.77% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). Karawang Regency, although widely recognized as a strategic industrial area, continued to experience an unemployment rate of 7.99%. Senior high school graduates represented the educational group with the highest unemployment rate in the regency, at 10.05% (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Karawang, 2025). These figures indicate a mismatch between the availability of industrial employment and the readiness of new labor-market entrants, especially students graduating from general senior high schools.

General senior high schools typically emphasize academic knowledge and preparation for further education, whereas vocational high schools prioritize occupational skills and practical competencies (Mardiyati & Yuniawati, 2015). Nevertheless, not all senior high school graduates continue to higher education. Some enter employment because of personal aspirations, financial circumstances, or family expectations. Consequently, general high school students also require adequate preparation to adapt, compete, and perform in the workplace. Permatasari et al. (2024) identify work readiness as a key construct that supports the transition from education to employment. Without sufficient preparation, graduates may experience difficulty meeting employer expectations, adjusting to workplace norms, and sustaining productive employment.

Work readiness refers to an individual's comprehensive preparedness to enter and function effectively in the workplace. It includes attitudes, personal attributes, relevant knowledge, practical skills, interpersonal competence, motivation, resilience, and psychological maturity. Wardani et al. (2021) emphasize resilience, maturity, motivation, and interpersonal skills as central dimensions that enable individuals to respond to workplace demands and challenges. Conversely, low work readiness is associated with greater difficulty in fulfilling job requirements and an increased risk of unemployment or unstable employment (Wardoyo et al., 2024). Effendi et al. (2025) similarly explain that work readiness reflects personal qualities such as knowledge, persistence, competence, and mental maturity that help individuals obtain and retain

employment. Thus, work readiness is not limited to technical ability; it also involves the confidence, emotional regulation, and social functioning required to undertake occupational responsibilities.

A preliminary assessment conducted through observation and an interview with the school counselor at Senior High School X indicated that approximately 60% of students were considering direct employment after graduation. However, several students were reported to have limited confidence, difficulty cooperating with others, low tolerance for pressure, and insufficient initiative in building professional relationships. These conditions suggest a discrepancy between the number of students who may enter the labor market and their current level of preparation. In other words, students are expected to make an effective transition into employment, yet some still lack the psychological and social resources required for that transition. This gap between expected readiness and observed conditions provides a practical basis for examining factors that may strengthen work readiness among high school students.

Work readiness is shaped by both internal and external factors (Azky & Mulyana, 2024). One important internal factor is self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in the ability to organize and carry out actions necessary to achieve a particular outcome. Bandura's theory positions self-efficacy as a cognitive mechanism that affects behavioral choice, effort, persistence, and responses to obstacles. Lestari and Marsofiyati (2024) describe self-efficacy as confidence in one's capacity to face difficulty, overcome barriers, and take purposeful action toward a goal. Soetjipto et al. (2023) further define it as a person's belief in the ability to regulate behavior, sustain motivation, and persist despite adversity. Their Indonesian General Self-Efficacy Scale for high school students comprises initiative, effort, and persistence, all of which are highly relevant to employment preparation.

Students with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to approach career tasks proactively, seek information, practice required skills, and continue trying after setbacks. In a work-readiness context, they may be more willing to participate in interviews, communicate with unfamiliar people, learn from feedback, and handle demanding tasks. Previous studies have generally reported a positive relationship between self-efficacy and work readiness. Lestari and Marsofiyati (2024) found that self-efficacy contributed to employment preparation, while Elfranata et al. (2022), Pratama et al. (2023), Rompas et al. (2025), and Kian et al. (2025) reported significant associations between self-efficacy and work readiness among vocational students or university students. However, most of these studies focused on groups already closely connected to employment, leaving the role of self-efficacy among general senior high school students less thoroughly examined.

In addition to internal beliefs, perceived social support may function as an external resource that facilitates work readiness. Perceived social support concerns an individual's belief that assistance, affection, attention, and appreciation are available from significant people. The construct commonly includes support from family, friends, and significant others (Zimet et al., 1988; Saragih et al., 2026). When students perceive that they are supported, they may feel safer in exploring career choices, more confident in making decisions, and better able to cope with uncertainty. Mulyadi et al. (2020) describe perceived social support as the belief that a person is valued, respected, and included in mutually supportive relationships. Sarafino and Smith, as cited in Sari (2017), also emphasize emotional comfort, practical assistance, and attention as components that help individuals interpret themselves as cared for and supported.

Empirical findings concerning social support and work readiness are not fully consistent. Winata and Saraswati (2022) and Effendi et al. (2025) found positive relationships between social support and readiness to work. Indrayana and Kumaidi (2021) likewise showed that supportive psychological resources were associated with students' preparation for employment. In contrast, Lestari and Marsofiyati (2024) reported that social support did not significantly affect work readiness in their sample. Such inconsistency suggests that the contribution of social support may depend on the developmental stage, educational setting, or characteristics of the social environment. High school students may rely more heavily on family, peers, teachers, and counselors than university students, making this variable particularly relevant to study in an adolescent population.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett, provides an appropriate framework for understanding how personal and environmental resources interact in career development (Dianto et al., 2025). SCCT proposes that career interests, choices, goals, and actions emerge from the interaction of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, learning experiences, and contextual supports or barriers. Within this framework, self-efficacy is a central cognitive factor that shapes the level of effort

and persistence invested in career preparation. Perceived social support represents a contextual resource that may reinforce confidence, reduce barriers, and encourage goal-directed behavior. Examining these two variables together therefore offers a more comprehensive account of work readiness than focusing exclusively on either personal confidence or environmental support.

The state of the art indicates three important gaps. First, work-readiness studies have predominantly involved final-year university students and vocational high school students, while research among general senior high school students remains limited. Second, relatively little evidence is available from industrial areas with high graduate unemployment, such as Karawang. Third, prior findings regarding perceived social support are inconsistent. The novelty of the present study lies in jointly testing self-efficacy and perceived social support as predictors of work readiness among general high school students in an industrial context. This design integrates an internal psychological resource and an external social resource under the SCCT perspective.

Accordingly, this study aimed to determine whether self-efficacy and perceived social support predict work readiness among students at Senior High School X. Three hypotheses were proposed: self-efficacy significantly predicts work readiness (H1); perceived social support significantly predicts work readiness (H2); and self-efficacy and perceived social support jointly predict work readiness (H3).

METHOD

This study used a quantitative correlational design. The design was selected because the research sought to estimate the predictive relationships between self-efficacy, perceived social support, and work readiness without manipulating the participants' conditions. Self-efficacy and perceived social support served as the independent variables, while work readiness was the dependent variable. The study was conducted at Senior High School X in Karawang Regency.

The population consisted of 1,284 students enrolled in Grades X, XI, and XII. Probability sampling was applied through proportionate stratified random sampling so that each grade level was represented according to its share of the population. Based on the Krejcie-Morgan sample-size determination, 296 students were selected. The sample included 119 Grade X students, 91 Grade XI students, and 86 Grade XII students. Participation was voluntary, and the questionnaire administration was coordinated with the school while protecting the confidentiality of individual responses.

Three psychological scales were used. Work readiness was measured with the 24-item Work Readiness Scale developed by Wardani et al. (2021) based on the framework of Caballero et al. (2011). The scale assesses resilience, maturity, motivation, and interpersonal ability. It includes 11 favorable items and 13 unfavorable items, with responses ranging from 1 (very inappropriate) to 5 (very appropriate). The original study reported a reliability coefficient of .809 and valid item performance.

Self-efficacy was measured using the Indonesian 12-item General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES-12) developed by Soetjipto et al. (2023) from Bandura's self-efficacy theory. Its dimensions are initiative, effort, and persistence. The instrument contains five favorable and seven unfavorable items rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The original validation reported a reliability coefficient of .769 and acceptable validity evidence among Indonesian high school students.

Perceived social support was assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), originally developed by Zimet et al. (1988) and examined in an Indonesian context by Saragih et al. (2026). The 12 items measure perceived support from family, friends, and significant others. Responses are scored on a seven-point scale from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). The Indonesian assessment reported a reliability coefficient of .797 and valid construct indicators.

Before the main study, the instruments were tried out with 31 respondents to evaluate item functioning, validity, and reliability. After the instruments were considered suitable, the questionnaires were distributed to the selected participants. Favorable and unfavorable items were scored according to their respective directions, and composite scores were calculated for each variable. Data screening included descriptive analysis, distributional checks using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and linearity tests for each predictor in relation to work readiness.

Multiple linear regression was then used to estimate the simultaneous and partial contributions of self-efficacy and perceived social support to work readiness. The overall model was evaluated with the F test, each predictor was evaluated with the t test, and the proportion of explained variance was interpreted using

the coefficient of determination (R^2). All analyses were performed using JASP version 0.96 with a significance level of .05. Figure 1 summarizes the research procedure.

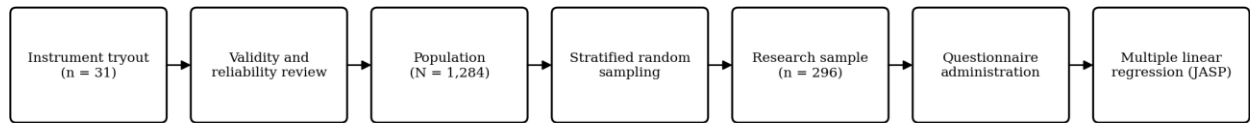


Figure 1. Research procedure

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Characteristics

The demographic profile of the 296 participants is presented in Table 1. The sample was distributed across all three grade levels, with the largest proportion in Grade X. Most participants were 16 or 17 years old, and female students represented more than two-thirds of the sample. Regarding post-graduation plans, most students intended to continue to higher education, while more than one-third planned to work immediately after graduation.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Grade level	X	119	40.2
	XI	91	30.7
	XII	86	29.1
Age (years)	15	17	5.7
	16	115	38.9
	17	102	34.5
	18	62	20.9
Gender	Male	90	30.4
	Female	206	69.6
Plan after graduation	Work	112	37.8
	University study	180	60.8
	Entrepreneurship	2	0.7
	Government academy	2	0.7

Grade X students accounted for 40.2% of the sample, Grade XI students for 30.7%, and Grade XII students for 29.1%. This pattern reflects the use of proportionate stratified random sampling, in which the sample from each stratum was adjusted to the size of the grade-level population (Sugiyono, 2023). The resulting distribution therefore provides broader representation than selecting the same number of students from each grade.

The age distribution was consistent with the developmental stage of senior high school students. The predominance of 16- and 17-year-olds is important because middle and late adolescence are periods in which individuals intensify identity exploration and begin making decisions about further education and employment. Ellis and Sampe (2022) found that high school students actively consider future study and career alternatives during this period. The gender distribution was unequal, with 69.6% female participants. This may reflect the school's enrollment profile and the tendency for some male students to choose vocational programs that emphasize technical and practical training (Werdiningsih, 2020).

Although 60.8% planned to continue to university, 37.8% planned to work directly after graduation. This substantial employment-oriented group confirms that work readiness is relevant even in a general high school setting. The finding also reinforces the practical need for career guidance that serves both students pursuing higher education and those preparing for immediate labor-market entry.

Assumption Tests

Distributional screening was performed for the three study variables. As shown in Table 2, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov significance values for self-efficacy, perceived social support, and work readiness were all greater than .05. These results indicated no statistically significant departure from normality in the observed variable distributions.

Table 2. Normality test results

Variable	Test	Statistic	p
Self-efficacy	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	.062	.208
Perceived social support	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	.052	.391
Work readiness	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	.073	.084

Linearity was also examined before the regression analysis. The deviation-from-linearity significance value for the relationship between self-efficacy and work readiness was .786, while the value for perceived social support and work readiness was .068. Because both values exceeded .05, the relationships were treated as linear, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Linearity test results

Variable relationship	p	Conclusion
Work readiness and self-efficacy	.786	Linear
Work readiness and perceived social support	.068	Linear

Hypothesis Testing

The simultaneous regression test evaluated whether self-efficacy and perceived social support jointly predicted work readiness. Table 4 shows that the model was statistically significant, $F(2, 293) = 28.78$, $p < .001$. Thus, the combination of the two predictors was associated with significant variation in students' work readiness, supporting H3.

Table 4. Simultaneous regression test

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
Regression	6,470	2	3,235.0	28.78	< .001
Residual	32,930	293	112.4		
Total	39,400	295			

The partial regression coefficients are presented in Table 5. Self-efficacy was a significant positive predictor of work readiness ($B = .692$, $SE = .136$, $\beta = .330$, $t = 5.079$, $p < .001$). Perceived social support also significantly and positively predicted work readiness ($B = .204$, $SE = .069$, $\beta = .175$, $t = 2.963$, $p = .003$). Therefore, H1 and H2 were supported. The larger standardized coefficient for self-efficacy indicates that it made the stronger unique contribution in the model.

Table 5. Partial regression coefficients

Predictor	B	SE	beta	t	p
Constant	50.920	5.040	-	10.100	< .001
Self-efficacy	.692	.136	.330	5.079	< .001
Perceived social support	.204	.069	.175	2.963	.003

The model summary in Table 6 indicates a multiple correlation of $R = .405$ and a coefficient of determination of $R^2 = .164$. Thus, self-efficacy and perceived social support jointly explained 16.4% of the variance in work readiness. The adjusted R^2 was .159, and the model root mean square error was 10.60. The remaining 83.6% of variance was associated with factors not included in the model.

Table 6. Model summary and coefficient of determination

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE	R ² change	df1	df2	p
Regression model	.405	.164	.159	10.60	.164	2	293	< .001

The findings demonstrate that self-efficacy and perceived social support jointly predict work readiness among students at Senior High School X. This result confirms that readiness to enter employment is not generated by a single competency. Instead, it reflects the interaction of internal psychological resources and external social conditions. Self-efficacy helps students believe that they can manage career tasks, whereas perceived social support provides emotional reassurance, information, encouragement, and practical assistance. Together, these resources may strengthen motivation, adaptability, persistence, and willingness to face unfamiliar work demands. This interpretation is consistent with Azky and Mulyana's (2024) review, which classifies self-efficacy as an internal determinant and social support as an external determinant of work readiness.

The significant contribution of self-efficacy supports H1 and aligns with Bandura's social cognitive perspective. Individuals who believe they can perform effectively are more likely to initiate action, exert effort, and persist when difficulties arise. These mechanisms directly correspond to the initiative, effort, and persistence dimensions measured by the GSES-12 (Soetjipto et al., 2023). For high school students, self-efficacy may be expressed through confidence in completing job applications, learning workplace procedures, communicating during interviews, cooperating with colleagues, and managing failure. Students with stronger self-efficacy are also more likely to interpret challenges as manageable rather than threatening, thereby sustaining preparation even when they lack prior work experience.

This finding is consistent with several previous studies. Pratama et al. (2023) identified a relationship between self-efficacy and work readiness among final-year undergraduate students. Rompas et al. (2025) reported that self-efficacy influenced the work readiness of final-semester psychology students. Elfranata et al. (2022) found that self-efficacy contributed to work readiness among vocational high school students, and Kian et al. (2025) reported a similar relationship in a vocational technology program. The present study extends those findings to students in a general senior high school, a group whose curriculum is not primarily designed for direct occupational preparation. The result indicates that confidence in personal capability remains relevant even when students have had limited formal vocational training.

Self-efficacy also showed a larger standardized regression coefficient than perceived social support. This does not imply that social support is unimportant, but it suggests that students' own judgments about their ability may be more proximal to readiness behaviors. A supportive family can encourage a student,

for example, but the student must still believe that he or she can undertake an interview, learn a task, adapt to rules, and persist under pressure. In SCCT terms, contextual support may create opportunities and reduce perceived barriers, while self-efficacy more directly influences goal pursuit and action. Therefore, interventions should not only provide information but also create mastery experiences through simulations, practice, feedback, and gradual exposure to career tasks.

Perceived social support was also a significant positive predictor, supporting H2. Support from family, friends, teachers, counselors, and other significant people can help students feel valued and secure when making career decisions. Adolescents often face uncertainty about whether to work, continue their education, or pursue entrepreneurship. Supportive relationships may provide emotional comfort, advice, role models, information about vacancies, and assistance in evaluating alternatives. These functions can reduce anxiety and encourage students to take constructive steps toward employment. Zimet et al. (1988) conceptualize perceived support as the availability of help from family, friends, and significant others, while Mulyadi et al. (2020) emphasize the sense of being respected and included in reciprocal relationships.

The result is consistent with Winata and Saraswati (2022), who found that social support was related to work readiness among students who had completed an internship, and with Effendi et al. (2025), who reported a relationship between social support and work readiness in Generation Z. It also accords with Indrayana and Kumaidi (2021), who demonstrated that social support, optimism, and hope were associated with students' readiness for work. Perceived support may act as a psychological buffer that helps individuals cope with uncertainty and work-related anxiety (Santo & Alfian, 2021). In a school context, this buffering function may be particularly important because adolescents have limited employment experience and continue to depend on adults and peers for guidance.

However, the present finding differs from Lestari and Marsofiyati (2024), who reported no significant effect of social support on work readiness. Differences in participant characteristics, educational level, regional context, measurement, and the type of support available may explain the inconsistency. General high school students may be more dependent on family and school-based support than university students, who typically have greater autonomy and broader access to professional networks. In Karawang's industrial environment, social contacts may also provide highly practical benefits, such as information about recruitment, workplace expectations, or training opportunities. These contextual factors may increase the relevance of perceived support to work readiness.

The model explained 16.4% of the variance in work readiness. This proportion is statistically meaningful but also indicates that work readiness is multidimensional. The remaining variance may be associated with career planning, occupational information, soft skills, academic competence, work motivation, prior work exposure, organizational ability, psychological capital, economic circumstances, and access to training (Azky & Mulyana, 2024). The finding cautions against assuming that confidence and social support alone are sufficient. Students may feel capable and supported yet remain unprepared if they lack job-search skills, communication practice, digital competence, or knowledge of workplace standards.

The results have practical implications for schools. Career guidance should be continuous rather than limited to a single seminar near graduation. Counselors can organize self-assessment, career exploration, curriculum vitae preparation, interview simulations, workplace communication exercises, and problem-solving activities. Mastery-oriented activities are especially useful for strengthening self-efficacy because they provide students with direct evidence of competence. Schools can also invite alumni, employers, and employment-service representatives to offer realistic information and role models. Peer mentoring and group career projects may simultaneously build confidence and social support.

Families also play a central role. Supportive communication should help students clarify interests and evaluate options without imposing unrealistic expectations. Parents can encourage independence, recognize progress, and assist students in accessing information or networks. Support should be autonomy-supportive rather than controlling, because students need to develop personal agency for career decision-making. Collaboration between families, counselors, and teachers can ensure that students receive consistent encouragement and accurate information.

This study has several limitations. The correlational and cross-sectional design does not establish causal direction, even though regression identifies statistically significant predictors. The data were collected from one school, so generalization to other regions or school types should be made cautiously. All variables were measured through self-report scales, which may be influenced by social desirability or common-method

variance. Furthermore, the model did not include career knowledge, socioeconomic background, academic achievement, internship experience, or other contextual barriers. Future research should use multi-school samples, longitudinal designs, and additional predictors. Intervention studies could also test whether structured career guidance and mastery-based training produce measurable improvements in self-efficacy and work readiness.

CONCLUSION

Self-efficacy and perceived social support significantly and positively predicted work readiness among students at Senior High School X, both individually and simultaneously. Self-efficacy made the stronger unique contribution, indicating that confidence, initiative, effort, and persistence are central resources for preparing students to enter employment. Perceived support from family, friends, teachers, and significant others also contributed by providing encouragement, security, information, and assistance during career preparation. Together, the two variables explained 16.4% of the variance in work readiness, confirming that other personal, educational, and contextual factors remain important. Schools should therefore implement sustained career-guidance programs that combine mastery experiences, interview and communication practice, career information, and supportive collaboration with families and external partners. Future studies should involve broader samples and examine additional predictors through longitudinal or intervention-based designs.

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