



The Role of Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Enhancing the Job Readiness of Vocational High School Students: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Work readiness is one of the key competencies for vocational high school (SMK) graduates to enter the dynamic world of work in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Society 5.0. Guidance counsellors have a strategic role in facilitating work-readiness through orientation services, career information, group guidance, individual counselling, and collaboration with the business and industrial worlds. This article aims to systematically analyse the results of recent research on the role of guidance counsellors in improving the work readiness of SMK students. The study used a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Articles were searched for through Google Scholar, the SINTA-indexed national journal portal, DOAJ, and university repositories for the period 2020–2025. From the initial 50 documents, across the identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion stages, 20 empirical studies were analysed. The synthesis results showed five main themes of the role of guidance counsellors, namely: (1) strengthening motivation and work attitude, (2) career information and planning services, (3) facilitation of Special Job Fairs and industrial work practices, (4) development of employability skills and digital literacy, and (5) counselling and group guidance interventions targeting career self-efficacy and work readiness. These findings confirm that guidance counsellors play the roles of career educators, career coaches, and career facilitators, and that they need to be supported by a strong guidance counselling management system integrated with link-and-match policies for vocational education.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational High Schools (SMK) are designed to prepare graduates who are ready to enter the workforce with adequate technical and non-technical competencies. However, various national and global reports indicate that changes in the labour market and the demands of 21st-century competencies

pose new challenges for vocational education graduates. The world of work demands not only hard skills, but also soft skills such as communication, cooperation, problem-solving, adaptability, and continuous learning. The Future of Jobs report emphasises that these skills will determine the workforce's competitiveness in the future (Nay et al., 2025).

In Indonesia, SMK graduates still face a mismatch between their competencies and industry needs. Various studies show that the work-readiness of vocational school students is influenced by personal factors (e.g., self-efficacy, motivation, emotional intelligence, future orientation), school factors (quality of learning, industrial work practices, guidance and counselling services), and social and work-environment factors. Studies on emotional intelligence and future time perspective, for example, show that these two variables contribute positively to the work readiness of vocational school students (Mutmainnah et al., 2025).

In this context, guidance counsellors play a strategic role. Based on Permendikbud No. 111 of 2014, guidance counsellors are responsible for facilitating the personal, social, learning, and career development of students in primary and secondary education units (Casmat et al., 2024). In vocational schools, the career dimension is particularly prominent because it is directly related to the institution's goal of preparing graduates who are ready for work. Various studies show that career guidance services, whether in the form of career information, career counselling, group guidance, or technology-based programmes, positively contribute to the work-readiness and employability skills of vocational school students (Uyun & Sinta, 2023).

Several studies in Indonesia have examined the relationship between career guidance and work readiness, the influence of industrial work practices and career guidance, and the development of career guidance programmes based on employability skills for vocational school students. However, these findings are generally still fragmented and have not been systematically synthesised into a comprehensive study focusing on the role of guidance counsellors in improving the work readiness of vocational school students (Nihayah & Mustaufidah, 2023). Some studies focus on a specific variable (e.g., employability skills, digital literacy, work motivation). In contrast, others highlight specific intervention designs (group guidance, virtual services, educational cinema) without explicitly linking them to the overall role of guidance counsellors.

Based on these findings, this article aims to identify the forms of guidance counsellor roles examined in studies related to the work readiness of vocational high school students between 2020 and 2025, synthesise empirical findings on

the relationship between guidance counselling services/guidance counsellors and work readiness, employability skills, and related career variables, and develop conceptual and practical implications for the development of guidance counselling services in vocational schools, particularly within the framework of the link and match policy between vocational education and the world of work. To achieve these objectives, this study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach guided by PRISMA 2020, ensuring that the identification, selection, and synthesis of studies are conducted in a more transparent and structured manner.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The aim was to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesise empirical studies on the role of guidance counsellors in improving the work readiness of vocational high school students.

Data were collected from Google Scholar, SINTA-indexed journals, DOAJ, and university repositories. The search covered publications from 2020 to 2025 using keywords related to guidance counselling, employability skills, and work readiness in vocational education contexts.

Studies were included if they focused on vocational students, examined guidance counselling roles or services, and addressed work readiness or related constructs such as employability skills and career orientation. Only empirical studies published in Indonesian or English and available in full text were selected. Studies outside the vocational context or lacking empirical data were excluded.

The selection process followed PRISMA stages, including identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. An initial search yielded 50 records. After removing irrelevant and duplicate studies, 41 articles remained. Title and abstract screening reduced the number to 38 studies. Full-text assessment resulted in 30 eligible studies, and finally, 20 studies were included for analysis.

Data extraction focused on study characteristics, research design, variables examined, and key findings related to guidance counselling and work readiness. The data were analysed using a narrative and thematic synthesis approach due to variations in research designs and measurement across studies. Methodological quality was assessed to support interpretation of findings, without excluding studies from the analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Included Studies

A total of 20 empirical studies (studies no. 1–20) published between 2020 and 2025 were included in the final synthesis. Table 1 presents a summary of each study, including the authors, methods, subjects, focus, and main findings.

Table 1.

Summary of 20 Studies on the Role of Guidance Counsellors, Employability, and Work Readiness of Vocational School Students (2020–2025)

| No | Author & Year | Type & Sample | Focus of Study | Key Findings Related to Work Readiness / Role of Guidance Counsellors |
|----|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Mutmainah et al. (2020) | Quantitative; vocational high school students | The effectiveness of Donald Super's theory-based career information services on work readiness | Structured career information services significantly improve vocational high school students' work readiness scores, emphasising the importance of the role of guidance counsellors as providers of career information. |
| 2 | Pujiastuti et al. (2020) | R&D; vocational high school students | Development of career guidance and counselling programmes to improve employability skills | Specially designed career guidance programmes can improve employability skills (communication, cooperation, problem solving), which form the foundation of vocational high school graduates' work readiness. |
| 3 | Yusuf & Karend (2020) | Quantitative; Year 12 Accounting | The influence of career guidance and | Career guidance and school environment have |

| No | Author & Year | Type & Sample | Focus of Study | Key Findings Related to Work Readiness / Role of Guidance Counsellors |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | vocational high school students | school environment through work motivation on work readiness | a positive influence on work readiness through the mediation of work motivation, emphasising the role of career guidance services in vocational high schools. Work readiness is influenced by personal potential (talent, interest), personality (confidence, motivation, independence), and school factors (internship opportunities, facilities) - providing a conceptual basis for the role of career guidance. |
| 4 | Istiqamah & Jalal (2020) | Literature study | Overview of factors affecting the work readiness of vocational school students | |
| 5 | Pasaribu (2021) | Quantitative; Year 12 students at agricultural vocational schools | The relationship between employability skills and career planning among vocational school students | Employability skills are positively related to career planning maturity; career guidance services are recommended to strengthen students' employability. |
| 6 | Miftahuddin & Robani (2023) | Quantitative; vocational high | The role of emotional | Emotional intelligence, future |

| No | Author & Year | Type & Sample | Focus of Study | Key Findings Related to Work Readiness/ Role of Guidance Counsellors |
|----|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 | Amirullah et al. (2023) | school students Quasi-experimental; vocational high school students | intelligence, future time perspective, and attitude towards counselling on work readiness The effectiveness of virtual career guidance in developing employability skills | orientation, and positive attitudes towards counselling contribute significantly to work readiness; reinforcing the importance of student-counsellor interaction. Virtual career guidance is effective in improving employability skills; demonstrates the potential of technology-based career guidance services in vocational high schools. Guidance counsellors play an important role in identifying potential, providing vacancy information, assisting with selection, and collaborating with industry through job fairs; strengthening links and matches between schools and the world of |
| 8 | Edmawati et al. (2023) | Qualitative: guidance counsellors & vocational school job fair counsellors at Muhammadiyah 2 Bantul Vocational School | The role of guidance counsellors in special job fair activities | |

| No | Author & Year | Type & Sample | Focus of Study | Key Findings Related to Work Readiness/ Role of Guidance Counsellors |
|----|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9 | Sari et al. (2022) | Quasi-experimental; students of SMK N 2 Lubuklinggau | Group guidance using modelling techniques to improve work readiness | work. Group guidance using modelling techniques significantly improves work readiness; guidance counsellors function as facilitators of work behaviour training. There is a significant positive relationship between the intensity of career guidance and student work readiness; clarifying the direct contribution of career guidance counselling services. IPTS has a significant effect on work readiness; emphasising the importance of guidance counsellor facilitation in introducing and developing students' transferable skills. |
| 10 | Fitri & Rahmi (2022) | Correlational quantitative; students of SMK N 1 X Koto Diatas | The relationship between career guidance and work readiness | |
| 11 | Fatima (2022) | Quantitative; students of SMK N 2 Tarakan | The influence of Identifying Personal Transferable Skills (IPTS) on work readiness | |
| 12 | Bhakti & Ardiningrum (2024) | Mixed methods; Muhammadiyah | Level of employability | The majority of students have good |

| No | Author & Year | Type & Sample | Focus of Study | Key Findings Related to Work Readiness/ Role of Guidance Counsellors |
|----|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13 | Paramitha & Harmanto (2024) | Quantitative; XII AKL students of SMKN Kasiman | skills of vocational school students The influence of career planning and employability skills on work readiness | employability skills, but there are still weak indicators; the study recommends career guidance programmes to strengthen the lacking aspects. Career planning and employability skills have a significant influence on work readiness; guidance counselling services need to target both aspects simultaneously. Found variations in work readiness levels; factors of practical experience and school guidance (including career guidance) are determining factors; strengthening of career programmes in career guidance is recommended. |
| 14 | Sunandar et al. (2024) | Quantitative; students of SMK Kusuma Wardhana | Work readiness of vocational school students in facing the world of work | Vocational competence, soft skills, and career maturity have a significant influence; guidance |
| 15 | Oktavia & Dwijayanti (2024) | Quantitative; State Vocational School 2 (Accounting) students | The influence of vocational competence, soft skills, and career maturity on | |

| No | Author & Year | Type & Sample | Focus of Study | Key Findings Related to Work Readiness / Role of Guidance Counsellors |
|----|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16 | Nirmalasari et al. (2025) | Quantitative; students of SMK Tata Boga SMKN 1 Praya Barat | work readiness The influence of industrial work experience on work readiness | counselling services are advised to focus on facilitating career maturity and soft skills. Work experience has a significant effect on work readiness; the role of guidance counselling is to prepare, monitor, and reflect on work experience with students. |
| 17 | Biaf (2024) | Quasi-experimental; students of SMK Swastisari Kupang | Effectiveness of group guidance using the educational cinema method for work readiness | Group guidance services using educational cinema media are effective in improving students' understanding of the world of work and work readiness; demonstrating the innovation of guidance counselling media. |
| 18 | Raharja & Budiani (2025) | Correlational quantitative; vocational school students | The relationship between future orientation and the work readiness of vocational school | Future orientation is positively related to work readiness; guidance counsellors need to develop interventions that strengthen students' future |

| No | Author & Year | Type & Sample | Focus of Study | Key Findings Related to Work Readiness/ Role of Guidance Counsellors |
|----|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 19 | Septian (2025) | Quantitative; vocational high school students | students The influence of career guidance and counselling services on work readiness | time perspective. Career guidance and counselling services have a significant effect on work readiness; this confirms the position of career services as a key component of the vocational high school guidance and counselling system. |
| 20 | Syawalia et al. (2025) | Quantitative; public vocational school students | The influence of employability skills and digital literacy on work readiness | Employability skills and digital literacy are both important predictors of work readiness; as a result, guidance and counselling needs to include digital literacy in career programmes. |

In terms of research design, most studies used a correlational or explanatory quantitative approach (studies no. 1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20) to examine the influence of career guidance, employability skills, work experience, and psychological factors on the work readiness of vocational school students. Several studies adopted a quasi-experimental design (studies no. 1, 7, 9, 17) to assess the effectiveness of career guidance interventions (e.g., technical modelling group guidance, educational cinema, virtual career services).

There are also R&D and descriptive qualitative studies (studies no. 2 and 8) that focus on the development of career guidance programmes and the

meaning of the role of guidance counsellors in BKK. Contextually, all studies were conducted with vocational high school students enrolled in various expertise programmes (accounting, office administration, engineering, health, agriculture, culinary, etc.) across multiple regions in Indonesia. Several studies explicitly highlight the role of guidance counsellors and career guidance services (e.g. studies nos. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 19), while other studies emphasised factors supporting work readiness such as employability skills, future orientation, work experience, and digital literacy (studies nos. 5, 6, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20).

Thematic Synthesis

Based on an analysis of studies nos. 1–20, the findings can be grouped into the following five main themes:

1. Strengthening Motivation and Work Attitude

The dimensions of motivation and work attitude emerged as important factors in the work readiness of vocational school students. Studies nos. 3, 6, 10, 14, and 18 showed that students with high work motivation, a clear future orientation, and a positive attitude towards the world of work had better work readiness. In study no. 3, career guidance and the school environment influence work readiness through the mediation of work motivation. Study no. 6 confirms the role of emotional intelligence, future time perspective, and attitudes towards counselling in predicting work readiness. Studies no. 14 and no. 18 reinforce that guided learning experiences and a clear future orientation are associated with more mature work readiness.

2. Career Information and Planning Services

The second theme is the role of career information and planning services. Studies 1, 3, 5, 10, 11, 13, and 19 show that structured career guidance services have a positive impact on students' understanding of the world of work, career planning, and work readiness. Study 1 proves the effectiveness of career information services based on career development theory in increasing work readiness. Studies 5 and 13 show that employability skills and career planning influence work readiness, while study 10 confirms the positive relationship between the intensity of career guidance and work readiness. Study 11 emphasises the importance of introducing transferable skills, and study 19 confirms that career guidance services have a direct influence on work readiness.

3. Facilitation of Special Job Fairs (BKK) and Industry Partnerships

The third theme relates to the involvement of guidance counsellors in linking and matching with the world of work. Studies 8 and 16, supported

by studies 3 and 14, describe the role of guidance counsellors in BKK activities, industrial work practices (PKL), and partnerships with the business/industrial world. Study No. 8 shows that guidance counsellors play a role in managing BKK, disseminating vacancy information, and assisting students in the recruitment process. Study No. 16 confirms that PKL experience has a significant effect on work readiness, and guidance counsellors are involved in the preparation, monitoring, and reflection of PKL experiences. Studies No. 3 and 14 highlight the importance of synergy between field experience and school support, including guidance and counselling services.

4. Development of Employability Skills and Digital Literacy

Many studies place employability skills as a key variable in work readiness. Studies nos. 2, 5, 7, 12, 13, and 20 highlight the role of guidance counselling services and learning experiences in developing employability skills such as communication, cooperation, problem solving, and work ethic. Study no. 2 developed a career guidance programme based on employability skills and obtained positive results. Study no. 7 proved the effectiveness of virtual career guidance, while study no. 12 mapped the employability skills profile of Muhammadiyah vocational school students and recommended strengthening the career guidance programme. Studies 13 and 5 show that employability skills predict work readiness, and study 20 adds that digital literacy, combined with employability skills, significantly influences work readiness in the digital era.

5. Counselling and Group Guidance Interventions

The final theme is career guidance interventions designed to improve work readiness directly. Studies 1, 7, 9, 11, 17, and 19 show that interventions such as technical modelling group guidance (study 9), group guidance with educational cinema (study 17), virtual career guidance (study no. 7), and the Identifying Personal Transferable Skills approach (study no. 11) can improve students' knowledge, attitudes, and work readiness. Study no. 19 reaffirms the influence of career guidance services on work readiness.

Discussion

A synthesis of 20 empirical studies (studies no. 1-20) published between 2020 and 2025 indicates that the role of guidance counsellors in improving vocational students' work readiness is comprehensive and multidimensional. The findings consistently show that guidance counsellors contribute not only through career information services but also through psychological support, skill development, and industry linkage. Therefore, guidance counsellors

should be positioned as key actors in the vocational education system who function as career educators, career coaches, and career facilitators.

1. Guidance Counsellors as Career Educators

The findings from studies no. 1, 3, 5, 10, 11, 13, and 19 show that career guidance services significantly improve students' understanding of career options, career planning, and work readiness. These studies indicate that structured career information and guidance interventions help students develop clearer career goals and more informed decision-making. This finding is consistent with career development theory proposed by Donald Super, which emphasises the role of self-concept and career exploration in shaping career decisions. Through career guidance services, students are supported in understanding their interests, abilities, and career opportunities. In addition, John Holland explains that career choices depend on the fit between personality and work environment, which can be facilitated through structured career guidance.

2. Guidance Counsellors as Career Coaches

The results of studies no. 3, 6, 14, and 18 indicate that psychological factors such as motivation, emotional intelligence, and future orientation play a significant role in shaping students' work readiness. These studies show that students with stronger motivation and clearer future goals tend to demonstrate higher levels of readiness for work. These findings support the Social Cognitive Career Theory developed by Robert W. Lent, which states that self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and environmental support are key determinants of career development. Guidance counsellors contribute by strengthening students' confidence, shaping positive expectations, and providing continuous support through counselling and group guidance activities.

3. Guidance Counsellors as Career Facilitators in Link and Match

Studies no. 8, 16, 14, and 3 highlight the role of guidance counsellors in bridging the gap between vocational schools and the world of work. These studies show that involvement in BKK activities, industrial work practice (PKL), and collaboration with industry partners enhances students' exposure to real work environments and recruitment processes. This role is closely related to the concept of career adaptability proposed by Mark Savickas, which emphasises concern, control, curiosity, and confidence as key dimensions in preparing individuals for career transitions. Through real-world exposure and structured support, guidance counsellors help students develop adaptive competencies required in dynamic labour markets.

4. Contribution of Guidance Counselling to Employability Skills and Digital Literacy

Findings from studies no. 2, 5, 7, 12, 13, and 20 confirm that guidance counselling services play a significant role in developing employability skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and work ethics. In addition, digital literacy emerges as an important factor influencing work readiness in the current labour market. These results align with the employability framework, which emphasises that work readiness depends on a combination of technical skills, soft skills, and digital competencies. Guidance counsellors support this development through structured programmes, career interventions, and technology-based services, including virtual career guidance.

5. Innovative Guidance Counselling Interventions

Studies no. 1, 7, 9, 11, 17, and 19 demonstrate that various innovative interventions can effectively improve students' work readiness. These include group guidance using modelling techniques, educational cinema, virtual career services, and transferable skills identification approaches. These findings indicate that guidance counsellors have a strategic role in designing relevant and engaging interventions. The effectiveness of these approaches shows that career guidance extends beyond information delivery and involves experiential learning that strengthens students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural readiness.

Policy Implications

From a policy perspective, these findings highlight the importance of strengthening guidance and counselling systems in vocational schools, as outlined in Indonesian Ministry of Education Regulation No. 111 of 2014. The system should support the role of guidance counsellors as career educators, coaches, and facilitators through integrated programme planning, implementation, and evaluation aligned with vocational education policies and industry needs.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. Most of the reviewed studies employed cross-sectional designs, which limit the ability to draw long-term causal conclusions. In addition, the distribution of studies is concentrated in specific regions, which may affect the generalisability of the findings across vocational schools in Indonesia. Variations in instruments used to measure work readiness and employability skills also present challenges in comparing results across studies.

Future research should focus on developing standardised instruments for measuring work readiness, conducting longitudinal studies to examine long-term impacts of guidance counselling services, and testing innovative intervention models, including digital-based and career adaptability approaches. Further studies are also needed to examine the professional competencies required for guidance counsellors to effectively perform their roles in vocational education.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review concludes that guidance counsellors play a strategic and multidimensional role in improving the work readiness of vocational school students, encompassing career education, psychological support, and facilitation of school-to-work transitions. Various guidance services, including career information, career planning, group guidance, counselling, and work experience facilitation, contribute significantly to students' work readiness and employability skills.

In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Society 5.0, guidance counsellors need to integrate employability skills and digital literacy into career service programmes. Strengthening their role also requires institutional support, professional competency development, and collaboration with industry. Therefore, vocational education policies should position career guidance services as a core component within the link-and-match framework to ensure graduates' readiness for an evolving labour market.

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