

## The Benefits of Daily Work Experience in Enhancing the Hospitality Skills of Students at Vocational High School Palembang

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to analyse the benefits of the Daily Worker program in enhancing hospitality students' skills, particularly in terms of mental readiness, time management, and both technical and non-technical competencies.

**Method:** This study employs a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation, and were analysed using thematic and discourse analysis to gain comprehensive insights into students' experiences.

**Result:** The findings reveal that the Daily Worker program significantly enhances students' technical skills, such as guest service and the implementation of standard operating procedures, as well as non-technical skills, including communication, teamwork, discipline, responsibility, and mental readiness. The program also fosters professionalism and adaptability in dynamic work environments.

**Contribution:** This study highlights the effectiveness of work-based learning through the Daily Worker program in bridging the gap between school-based learning and industry needs. It provides valuable insights for improving vocational education programs and strengthening collaboration between schools and the hospitality industry.

**Keywords:** Daily Worker, Student Skills, Vocational Education, Hospitality, Work-Based Learning.

### Introduction

Vocational education, particularly in Vocational High School plays a crucial role in preparing students with practical and industry-relevant skills for workforce entry. In hospitality education, students are expected not only to master technical competencies but also to develop essential soft skills such as communication as Fitriansyah (2025) mentioned that the challenges become more noticeable during internship placements or job interviews, where students are expected to communicate fluently, respond spontaneously; teamwork; discipline; and professional attitude. However, a persistent challenge faced by vocational institutions is the limited opportunity for students to gain authentic industry experience prior to graduation (Billett, 2011). In addition, as Fitriansyah (2025) mentioned that the challenges become more noticeable during internship placements or job interviews, where students are expected to communicate fluently, respond spontaneously, and show window their professional competencies in English.

To address this gap, the Daily Worker program has emerged as a form of work-based learning that provides students with direct exposure to real working environments. As temporary workers employed based on operational needs, students gain hands-on experience in hospitality settings, particularly during peak events such as weddings and large-scale functions. This approach aligns with the concept of work-based learning, which emphasizes the integration of classroom knowledge with real workplace practice (Raelin, 2008).

Beyond technical skill development, participation in the Daily Worker program is closely associated with the development of students' mental readiness and professional



behavior. Mental readiness—encompassing confidence, adaptability, responsibility, and discipline, is a critical determinant of workplace success. From the perspective of experiential learning theory, knowledge is constructed through direct experience and reflection, highlighting the importance of authentic work exposure in fostering meaningful learning (Kolb, 2015).

Although previous studies have examined work-based learning in vocational education, limited research has specifically explored the role of Daily Worker programs within the hospitality sector at the secondary vocational level. Existing literature indicates that industry exposure enhances employability and skill development; however, empirical evidence in the context of SMK remains scarce (Jackson, 2015; Billett, 2009). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the benefits of the Daily Worker program in improving hospitality students' competencies at SMK Negeri 8 Palembang. To fill this gap, the study examines both technical and non-technical skill development, as well as students' readiness, and contributes empirical insights into the effectiveness of work-based learning in vocational education.

### **Research Method**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore in depth the implementation of the Daily Worker program and its contribution to the development of hospitality students' competencies at SMK Negeri 8 Palembang. A qualitative case study is considered appropriate as it enables a comprehensive understanding of students' lived experiences, perceptions, and behavioral changes within authentic work environments (Billett, 2011). The study focuses on examining both technical (hard skills) and non-technical (soft skills), including communication, teamwork, discipline, time management, and mental readiness, as key aspects of students' readiness for the hospitality industry.

The research was conducted at State Vocational High School 8 Palembang, particularly in the Hospitality Department, which actively implements work-based learning through collaboration with industry partners. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance and depth of information. They consisted of hospitality students in Grades XI and XII who have participated in the Daily Worker program, teachers and school coordinators such as the BKK team, as well as industry representatives including hotel supervisors or mentors. This selection enables the study to capture multiple perspectives and provides a comprehensive understanding of the program's implementation and impact.

Although qualitative in nature, this study is guided by several key analytical constructs. The Daily Worker program is defined as a work-based learning activity in which students are employed on a daily basis in hospitality settings without long-term contracts. Technical skills refer to practical competencies related to hospitality operations, such as guest service, food and beverage service, and adherence to standard operating procedures. Non-technical skills include interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies such as communication, teamwork, discipline, responsibility, and adaptability. Mental readiness is understood as psychological preparedness reflected in confidence, professionalism, responsibility, and the ability to adapt to dynamic work environments, while time readiness refers to students' ability to balance academic responsibilities with work commitments effectively. These constructs are aligned with vocational education frameworks that emphasize the integration of practical competence and employability skills (Jackson, 2015).

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to ensure depth and credibility, including in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, challenges, and perceived benefits of the Daily Worker program. Observations were carried out in real work settings using a non-participant approach to examine students' performance, interactions, and application of skills in the hospitality environment. In addition, documentation analysis was conducted on relevant materials such as school policies, program guidelines, student performance reports, and industry standards to provide contextual support and strengthen the interpretation of findings. These methods allow for triangulation and provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis and discourse analysis. Thematic analysis followed the stages of data familiarization, coding, theme identification, theme review, definition, and reporting, enabling the identification of recurring patterns related to students' experiences and skill development (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Discourse analysis was employed to examine how participants construct meaning and represent their experiences through language, providing deeper insight into their perceptions of professionalism, readiness, and workplace adaptation.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were applied, including source and method triangulation, member checking, audit trail, and researcher reflexivity. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from students, teachers, and industry representatives, as well as from interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking was used to validate the accuracy of interpretations by involving participants in reviewing the findings. An audit trail was maintained to ensure transparency in the research process, while reflexivity was applied to minimize researcher bias. Intercoder agreement and pilot testing of research instruments were also conducted to enhance reliability and consistency. As this study is qualitative in nature, it does not involve hypothesis testing; instead, it aims to generate in-depth insights into the role of the Daily Worker program in enhancing students' competencies and readiness for the hospitality industry.

### Result and Discussion

The data analysis indicates that the Daily Worker program provides a significant contribution to the development of hospitality students' competencies at State Vocational High School 8 Palembang. The findings are structured based on the two main research focuses: (1) students' readiness in participating in the Daily Worker program, and (2) the perceived impact after engaging in real industry work. Overall, the results demonstrate that work-based learning through Daily Worker participation plays a crucial role in enhancing both technical and non-technical competencies.

The findings reveal that students generally demonstrate a good level of readiness, particularly in terms of mental readiness and time management. Mental readiness is reflected in discipline, responsibility, confidence, and the ability to adapt to professional work environments. Time readiness is evident in students' ability to balance academic responsibilities with work commitments.

Table 1. Students' Readiness Indicators

Aspect	Indicators Observed	Interpretation
Mental Readiness	Discipline, responsibility, confidence	High level of professional attitude
Time Readiness	Time management, schedule adjustment	Effective role balancing
Adaptability	Adjustment to work culture and SOP	Rapid workplace adaptation

Source: Research result (2025)

The results show a clear improvement in both hard skills and soft skills after students participate in the Daily Worker program. Technical skills such as guest handling, service procedures, and SOP implementation improve through direct exposure. At the same time, non-technical skills such as communication, teamwork, and responsibility develop significantly.

Table 2. Impact of Daily Worker on Student Competencies

Skill Type	Before Program	After Program	Impact Level
Technical Skills	Basic understanding	Applied and improved	High

Communication	Limited interaction	Confident and effective	High
Teamwork	Classroom-based	Real collaboration	Moderate–High
Discipline	School-regulated	Self-regulated	High
Adaptability	Low exposure	Strong workplace adaptation	High

Source: Research result (2025)

An important finding of this study is that the level of student participation influences the degree of skill improvement. Students who are more frequently involved in Daily Worker activities tend to show faster and more significant development.

**Table 3. Relationship Between Participation Intensity and Skill Development**

<b>Frequency of Participation</b>	<b>Skill Development Level</b>	<b>Observation</b>
Low (Occasional)	Moderate	Limited exposure
Medium	Good	Noticeable improvement
High (Frequent)	Very High	Rapid skill mastery

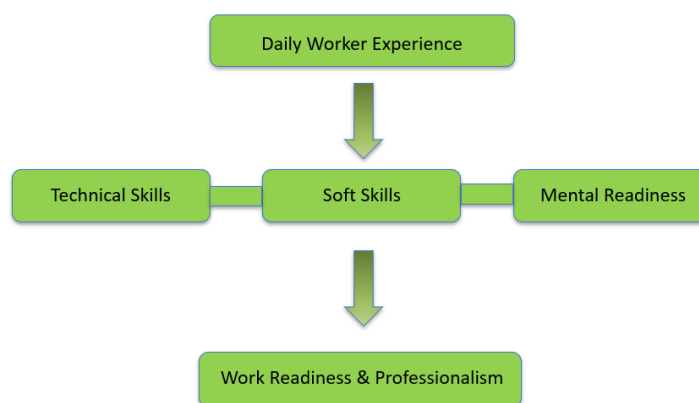
Source: Research result (2025)

The data analysis indicates that the Daily Worker program provides a significant contribution to the development of hospitality students’ competencies. The findings are structured into two main aspects: student readiness and skill development. The findings reveal that students demonstrate strong mental readiness and time management. Mental readiness is reflected in discipline, responsibility, confidence, and adaptability. These findings support the idea that workplace exposure enhances not only technical ability but also professional identity (Billett, 2011).

The results also show significant improvement in both technical and non-technical skills. Technical skills improve through direct operational experience, while non-technical skills such as communication and teamwork develop through real interactions. This aligns with experiential learning theory, which emphasizes learning through direct experience (Kolb, 2015). Another important finding is that the level of participation influences skill development. Students with higher involvement show faster improvement. This supports previous research indicating that continuous workplace exposure strengthens competency development (Billett, 2009).

The findings confirm that the Daily Worker program is an effective implementation of work-based learning. Students are able to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical experience, which enhances learning outcomes (Raelin, 2008). Furthermore, the study highlights that mental readiness plays a central role in determining student success, supporting previous findings on employability skills (Jackson, 2015).

From a contextual perspective, the effectiveness of the program is influenced by school-industry collaboration and the flexibility of the program. However, the variation in participation indicates that outcomes depend on the level of engagement, not merely program availability. The Daily Worker program can be conceptualized as an integrated learning model combining technical training, soft skill development, and mental readiness formation. This model illustrates that student competence is not developed in isolation but through the interaction of multiple dimensions of learning in real work contexts.



**Figure 1.** Daily Worker Learning Impact Model  
**Source:** Research result

## Conclusion

This study concludes that the Daily Worker program plays a significant role in enhancing both the readiness and competencies of hospitality students. Students demonstrate strong mental and time readiness, confirming that industry-based learning effectively prepares them for workplace demands. The program contributes to both technical and non-technical skill development, supporting the principles of work-based learning and experiential learning. These findings emphasize that real work experience is essential in vocational education.

However, this study is limited to a single setting and qualitative design. Future research is recommended to use mixed methods and broader samples to strengthen generalizability. Overall, this study contributes to vocational education by highlighting the importance of structured industry engagement in developing work-ready graduates.

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