Student Competencies: Hard Skills and Soft Skills Their Influence on Students' Job Readiness

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the influence of hard skills and soft skills on student job readiness at a private economics and business faculty in Surabaya. This research is a quantitative descriptive study. The subjects were students who were active in organizations and had participated in internship programs. The sample size was 60 students (Class of 2021). Purposive sampling was used because the subjects had certain characteristics that matched the research objectives. Based on these criteria, the study respondents consisted of 37 students majoring in management and 23 students majoring in accounting. Data analysis was performed using the partial least squares (PLS) method. The results showed that hard skills and soft skills have a positive and significant influence on student job readiness .

INTRODUCTION

Human Resources (HR) are considered the most important and valuable asset for an organization, as the quality of HR is a key factor in determining an organization's success in facing rapid changes and technological advances (Bassett-Jones, 2023). In practice, HR management is not limited to education, particularly in higher education settings.

Human resource management at the faculty level plays a crucial role, especially in equipping students with knowledge to prepare them for entering the workforce. One of the main indicators of job readiness is mastery of hard and soft skills. Hard skills include technical skills such as the ability to operate tools, data processing skills, mastery of information technology, and the ability to prepare reports. Meanwhile, soft skills include interpersonal skills such as cooperation, communication, honesty, responsibility, and adaptation. These skills are important elements that help students adapt to the work environment. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the level of mastery of hard and soft skills and their impact on job readiness, especially for FEB students at University X.

The Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) at University X, a private university in Surabaya, continues to maintain its commitment to producing high-quality, highly competitive graduates. This commitment is supported by the results of a tracer study conducted on the 2019 intake of undergraduate students in the Management program . show that part big graduate of capable get work in short time after graduation. Based on data from Part General Approximately 66.23% of alumni successfully found employment within three months of graduation. This fact reflects a

good level of job readiness, but strengthening hard and soft skills remains a primary focus of the faculty to ensure graduates are competitive in the global job market.

Based on data of these , from 77 students Bachelor of Management Study Program for 2023 graduates for the 2019 intake, as much as 51 student (66.23%) Which Already succeed get work in time 3 month after passed, 3 student (3.90%) in time 4 month, 2 student (2.60%) in time 5 months, And 2 student (2.60%) in 6 month. From data the show that majority of graduates capable adapt with fast in world Work. This reflect readiness Work Which fine from aspect academic and skills practical And interpersonal.

Reason The researcher chose University X as the research location because university This active in push development soft skill and hard work skills through various programs academic And non-academic, like training, organization student affairs, as well as curriculum implementation Independent Study Campus Independent (MBKM) Which relevant with need world According to Hasanuzzaman and Sooraksa (2022) , graduates' job readiness is greatly influenced by the integration of skills technical And skills interpersonal like Work The same team, communication, And critical thinking . According to Nugroho and Prabowo (2022), universities that provide a forum for developing like organization student affairs tend produce graduate of Which more ready to work. According to Mustari (2021) state that Job readiness is the initial preparation a person possesses before entering the workforce. Meanwhile, according to Nurussyifa and Listiadi (2021), job readiness is defined as a condition encompassing knowledge, skills, and behaviors relevant to the tasks or work to be performed. Furthermore, according to Riyanti and Kasyadi (2021), job readiness can reflect an individual's ability to finish task in a way effective Which in accordance with standard Which has been determined without any experience difficulty, as well as produce output Work Which optimal. Meanwhile, Setiarini et al. (2022) stated that career readiness refers to a student's ability to successfully transition into the workforce after completing their studies, requiring little or no adjustment time.

Based on the findings of the Pre-Survey conducted by researchers at University X, related participation student in activity organization, known that Part large number of respondents active follow activity organization from total 30 Respondents student force end, known that 80% answer "Yes (student active follow organization)" And temporary the remaining 20% answer "No (No active)". Data This describe that involvement in organization becomes part important in activities student.

The pre-survey results in the diagram above show that 80% of students consider participation in campus organizations very important for improving job readiness, while 20% consider academic learning more dominant. This indicates that the majority of students understand the importance of honing soft skills, such as communication, leadership, and teamwork skills, which are generally acquired through involvement in organizational activities . According to Yusof et al. (2022), campus organizations are also an effective forum for training the social and emotional aspects needed in the world of work. Putra and Nurtanto (2023) strengthen these results by stating that active student involvement in extracurricular organizations contributes to increasing their employability levels.

Data on students involved in organizations shows that those who are active in organizations, such as BEM, HIMA Accounting, And Student Association Management participate contribute in development skills Technical. This data can reflect the distribution of student involvement in organizational activities related to soft skill development.

The results of the data from students who participated in the above organizations can reflect that those who Already active in various organization campus. Like an organization Student Executive Board 24 Students (23.08%), For Student Association Accountancy 27 Students (25.96%), And Hima Management 31 Students (29.81%). This involvement can reflect the high level of student participation in activities that have the potential to strengthen soft skills. According to Byrne (2020), soft skills are abilities that are difficult to measure objectively because they are subjective, invisible, and not easily quantified. Therefore, organizational activities are an effective means of developing these skills through direct experience in group dynamics. In line with this, according to Kustini, K. and Damayantie, AA, (2022) stated that *soft skills* include aspects of personality, attitudes, and behaviors that enable individuals to establish effective interactions and be able to adapt to various work conditions. These skills play an important role in building harmonious work relationships, increasing productivity, and supporting one's future career success. According to Spencer and Spencer (2023), it explains that Soft skills have main characteristics that differentiate them from hard skills.

In addition to impacting soft skill development, student participation in organizational activities is also believed to encourage the development of hard skills. Technical activities such as proposal preparation, document management, and software use require practical skills. To obtain an overview of the hard skill capabilities of students active in extracurricular organizations, researchers conducted a pre-survey of 30 respondents.

The pre-survey results showed that the majority of students active in organizations stated their involvement in technical activities that support the development of hard skills. As many as 66.7% of students reported being frequently involved in the preparation of activity proposals, and 73.3% stated they had mastered computer operating skills. These findings indicate that student participation in extracurricular campus organizations provides a significant learning space for practical skills. Overall, these findings reinforce that organizational activity not only shapes social character but can also be a strategic medium for directly training and improving students' technical skills.

Mahendra and Wulandari (2023) noted that students who actively participate in organizations demonstrate better technological competency than those who are inactive , as they are more accustomed to facing practical challenges and structural responsibilities. According to Lyu and Liu (2021), hard skills are technical skills that can be objectively measured and directly observed through individual performance, such as the ability to operate devices, use software, and apply specific methods to complete tasks. These skills are usually acquired through training, direct experience, or repeated practice in work contexts or organizational activities. Therefore, extracurricular organizational experience involving technical activities such as report preparation, administrative management, and the use of information technology is an important part of developing students' hard skills. This further reinforces the strategic role of participation in campus extracurricular organizations in supporting job readiness through the development of applicable technical skills that meet the needs of today's industrial world. Putro and Yuliadi (2022) explain that hard skills are technical skills that can be applied in the workplace and continue to develop along with technological advances. According to Hardy (2020) explain that hard skills is a method to identify students' technical skills, such as the ability to operate tools, the ability to process data, mastery of information technology, the ability to compile reports.

Study This aims to analyze the extent to which mastery of hard skills and soft skills influences student readiness, as well as supporting efforts to strengthen core competencies through internship programs, extracurricular organizations, and training.

METHOD

This research is a quantitative research using a descriptive approach. Quantitative research aims to gain understanding through the analysis of numerical data used as a measuring tool for certain phenomena (Kasiram, 2010). This research was conducted using a questionnaire distributed through *Google Form* and measured using a 5-point Likert scale, using SmartPLS software. The research population was 104 final year students (21) of the Faculty of Economics and Business. The sample size was 60 students. Purposive sampling was used for this study because the subjects had certain characteristics that were in accordance with the research objectives. Respondents consisted of 37 management students and 23 accounting students. Based on these criteria, the students were selected from the Class of 2021, had completed internships, and were members of extracurricular organizations .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Outer Loading

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)
X1.1 <- Hard Skill (X1)	0.903	0.902	0.048	18,714
X1.2 <- Hard Skill (X1)	0.905	0.902	0.050	18,041
X1.3 <- Hard Skill (X1)	0.928	0.924	0.046	20,291
X1.4 <- Hard Skill (X1)	0.869	0.863	0.055	15,843
X2.1 <- Soft Skills (X2)	0.873	0.863	0.107	8.155
X2.2 <- Soft Skills (X2)	0.892	0.888	0.100	8,897

X2.3 <- Soft Skills (X2)	0.825	0.784	0.156	5,280
X2.4 <- Soft Skills (X2)	0.817	0.768	0.172	4,740
X2.5 <- Soft Skills (X2)	0.732	0.685	0.192	3,814
Y1 <- Readiness Work (Y)	0.904	0.904	0.032	28,304
Y2 <- work readiness (Y)	0.897	0.891	0.038	23,639
Y3 <- work readiness (Y)	0.898	0.894	0.038	23,344
Y4 <- work readiness (Y)	0.906	0.906	0.034	26,344

Table 1 shows that for the three variables of hard skills (X1), soft skills (X2), and job preparation (Y), the external loading values for all indicators are above 0.70, indicating that all indicators meet the requirements of convergent validity. Indicator X1.3 has the highest loading value, namely 0.928. Indicator X2.2 contributes the most to the soft skills variable, namely 0.892. In the Job Readiness variable, indicator Y4 recorded the highest figure of 0.906. All T-statistic values exceed 1.96. This means that all indicators are declared valid and significant in forming the variable construct.

Table 2 Discriminant Validity

	Hard Skill (X1)	Soft Skills (X2)	Readiness Work (Y)
X1.1	0.903	0.417	0.354
X1.2	0.905	0.420	0.350
X1.3	0.928	0.421	0.359
X1.4	0.869	0.323	0.341
X2.1	0.445	0.400	0.873
X2.2	0.522	0.426	0.892
X2.3	0.136	0.267	0.825
X2.4	0.127	0.176	0.817
X2.5	0.092	0.177	0.732
Y1	0.417	0.904	0.387
Y2	0.357	0.897	0.295

Y3	0.282	0.898	0.295
Y4	0.489	0.906	0.394

Table 2 shows the factor loadings for each indicator in the hard skills (X1), soft skills (X2), and work readiness (Y) variables. All indicators show the highest factor loadings on their respective constructs relative to the other constructs. The results above indicate that each indicator accurately and consistently represents the concept being measured. Therefore, based on the results of the cross-loading analysis, it can be concluded that the research model meets the criteria for discriminant validity.

Table 3 Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	**Composite reliability**
Hard Skill (X1)	0.924	0.946
Soft Skills (X2)	0.898	0.917
work readiness (Y)	0.924	0.945

Based on Table 3, all research variables have high composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values. The Hard Skill variable (X1) shows a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.924 and a composite reliability of 0.946, indicating good internal consistency. The Soft Skill variable (X2) has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.898 and a composite reliability of 0.917, indicating a strong level of reliability. Meanwhile, the work readiness variable (Y) also has high reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.924 and a composite reliability of 0.945.

As a result, all constructs used in this study were declared to have adequate reliability, so that the research instrument is suitable for use in testing the structural model at the next stage.

Table 4 R-Square

	R-square
Work Readiness (Y)	0.251

Based on Table 4 above, the R-squared value indicates the model's ability to explain variation in the dependent variable. In this study, the dependent variable tested was "work readiness." Based on the data processing results, the R-squared value was 0.251.

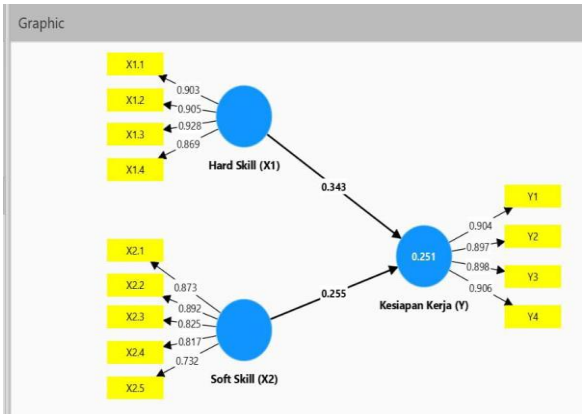
The R-squared value of 0.251 means that 25.1% of the variation or change in "work readiness" can be explained by the independent variables in the research model, while the remaining 74.9% is caused by other factors not examined. This indicates that the model only has a relatively low ability to explain the Work Readiness variable as a whole. Nevertheless, this result still shows the contribution of the studied variables to Work Readiness, although the influence is not yet dominant. The low R-square value can be caused by various factors, such as the influence of other variables outside the model, the diverse conditions of respondents, or the characteristics of the Work Readiness variable which is indeed influenced by many aspects.

Table 5 Hypothesis Testing

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Hard Skill (X1) -> Job Readiness (Y)	0.343	0.338	0.122	2,809	0.005
Soft Skills (X2) -> Job Readiness (Y)	0.255	0.281	0.112	2,285	0.022

Based on the hypothesis testing, the results of the analysis can be concluded as follows:
Hypothesis 1: Hard Skills have a positive influence on Job Readiness. The hypothesis is accepted because the T-statistic value of 2.809 exceeds 1.96 and the P-value of 0.005 is below 0.05, so the result **is significant (positive).**
Hypothesis 2: Soft Skills have a positive effect on Job Readiness. The hypothesis is accepted because the T-statistic value of 2.285 exceeds 1.96 and the P-value of 0.022 is below 0.05, making the result **significant (positive).**

Figure 1 Outer Loading



The PLS output image above shows the dimensions of the loading factor values for each indicator, indicated by arrows pointing to the latent variable construct and its constituent indicators. The path of the relationship between the exogenous and endogenous variables also includes a path coefficient indicating the magnitude of the direct influence between the variables. Furthermore, within the circle representing the endogenous variables (organizational commitment and internship variables), the R-Square value indicates the extent to which the

variance of the endogenous construct can be explained by the exogenous construct in the model. Based on the results of the loading value analysis, the most influential indicators for each construct are X1.3 with a loading of 0.928 on the Hard Skill construct, which represents mastery of information technology; X2.2 with a loading of 0.892 on the Soft Skill construct, which indicates cooperation; and Y4 with a loading of 0.906 on the Work Readiness construct, which reflects a positive work attitude. These findings confirm that technical skills, teamwork, and professional attitudes are key factors in shaping students' work readiness.

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Hard Skills on Job Readiness

In this study, the most influential factor affecting job readiness was the indicator related to information technology proficiency. Respondents found that students who were proficient in using technology, such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, were more likely to be job-ready. This skill is crucial because technology can support nearly every aspect of work, leading to better performance.

This also aligns with the field, where many students state that mastering information technology can help them develop positive work attitudes, such as work ethic, responsibility, and discipline. This positive work attitude is a crucial factor in strengthening students' overall work readiness. The better the mastery of information technology and the more positive work attitudes they demonstrate, the better their chances of achieving success in the professional world.

This research is in line with the opinion of Lyu and Liu (2021) who stated that hard skills are the main foundation in work readiness, because technical skills greatly determine the extent to which individuals are able to complete work tasks effectively.

In addition, according to Mahendra and Wulandari (2023), mastery of hard skills can also increase students' self-confidence in facing job selection processes, internships, and real work assignments.

The Influence of Soft Skills on Job Readiness

Analysis shows that soft skills have a positive impact on students' job readiness. This means that the higher the soft skills of students at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya, the better prepared they are to enter the workforce. Conversely, if students have low soft skills, their job readiness tends to decline.

In this study, the most influential factor influencing work readiness was the indicator related to collaboration. According to respondents, students who are able to collaborate well and play effective roles within a team according to their respective responsibilities tend to demonstrate a higher level of work readiness. This ability reflects mastery of important soft skills such as collaboration, communication, honesty, responsibility, and adaptability, which in turn, enhances students' readiness to face the world of work .

This also aligns with the field, where many students state that collaboration can help them develop positive work attitudes, such as work ethic, responsibility, and discipline. This positive work attitude is a crucial factor in strengthening students' overall work readiness. The better the collaboration and positive work attitudes demonstrated, the better the students' chances of achieving success in the professional world.

This research aligns with Byrne's (2020) opinion, which explains that soft skills are a crucial

factor influencing job readiness because they relate to how individuals build relationships, cope with work pressure, and maintain professionalism. Furthermore, according to Damayantie and Kustini (2022), developing soft skills through collaborative learning, student organizations, and effective communication training also contribute significantly to optimal job readiness.

CONCLUSION

1. The Influence of Hard Skills on Readiness Work
   The higher the hard skills that students possess, the better their level of preparedness in facing the world of work.
2. The Influence of Soft Skills on Readiness Work
   The higher the soft skills that students have, the better their level of readiness to enter the world of work .

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