



The Effect of Self-Actualization, Internship Experience, and Soft-Skill on the Work Readiness of Students of the Class of 2020 in Bantul Regency

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Abstract. This research is motivated by the low level of student work readiness, particularly among the class of 2020 who experienced online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation has limited field experience and soft skills development, as well as limited opportunities for students to explore one's potential and collaborate in the campus environment, this impacts their readiness to enter the workforce. Students from the class of 2020 are members of Generation Z, born and raised in the digital technology era. Facing increasingly high competency demands, they are required to be adaptive, professional, and ready to compete globally. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of self-actualization, internship experience, and soft skills on the work readiness of students from the class of 2020. Data was collected from 96 respondents who were 2020 class of students. Sampling using accidental sampling technique. The results of the study showed that self-actualization had a positive and significant effect on student job readiness, while internship experience and soft skills had a positive but insignificant effect on student job readiness. Self-actualization, internship experience, and soft skills simultaneously had a positive and significant effect on work readiness. This research contributes to the future of management studies, particularly in human resources, by emphasizing the importance of self-actualization, internship experience, and soft skills as factors shaping students' work readiness.

Keywords: Self-Actualization, Internship Experience, Soft Skills, Work Readiness

1 Introduction

In the era of rapid globalization and technological disruption, human resources (HR) have become a crucial asset for the progress of a nation, which is the main driver for organizations, both institutionally and corporately [1]. Superior and highly competitive human resources are the main drivers of organizational development and economic growth, both locally and globally. Efforts to develop HR require education that is able to foster critical thinking, problem-solving skills, broad insight, and positive contributions to society. Education is a learning process designed to increase a person's potential, knowledge, skills, and character [2], [3]. Universities play a crucial role in producing superior and competitive HR with the knowledge and skills needed to enter

the world of work, while also shaping character, determining career paths, and fostering long-term success [4].

Students from the 2020 intake began their studies amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and participated in online learning for four semesters. In accordance with Circular Letter No. 3 of 2022 from the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology concerning the Implementation of Learning in Higher Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic, face-to-face lectures were implemented in stages using a hybrid system in accordance with the policies of each university. All academic activities were conducted online, which limited learning experiences, observations, and field practice, thus reducing students' opportunities to develop soft skills, participate in organizations, and collaborate on campus to explore their potential.

The class of 2020 is dominated by Generation Z, those born between 1997 and 2012 and raised in the digital [5]. Gen Z is known as a technology-savvy, dynamic, innovative, creative, and knowledgeable generation with idealistic and realistic personalities regarding work. They are expected to possess adequate work skills and competencies to become work-ready graduates who can adapt to the demands of a constantly evolving and increasingly complex job market [6]. Gen Z prefers a flexible, hybrid work system, multitasking, and a dynamic and professional work environment [7]. However, job preferences often do not align with the high demands of the job, which can reduce opportunities to secure the desired job. Therefore, high work readiness is crucial for every individual in preparing themselves to face the challenges of the modern workplace.

Work readiness is a person's ability to develop in the world of work, both in knowledge, skills and behavior [8]. Work readiness is characterized by mastery of knowledge, skills, work attitudes, and a balance between physical and mental maturity and learning experiences. [9], [10]. Strong job readiness enables students to adapt and perform well in the workplace. Meanwhile, an awareness of exploring one's potential is the first step toward self-actualization.

Self-actualization is a psychological concept that refers to the process of developing human potential to the maximum and realizing it in practical life activities for the advancement of society [11]. Self-actualization encompasses personal and professional growth and development related to each individual's skills and talents to meet their own needs [12], [13]. The results of research at PT Bukit Angkasa Makmur Bengkulu Tengah, shows that self-actualization has a positive and significant influence on career development [14]. However, research at the RRI Ambon broadcasting office, showed that self-actualization had a positive but insignificant effect on performance [15].

In addition to self-actualization, students need to develop other skills and abilities, such as internship experience. Internship experience is the experience and skills students gain while undertaking work experience for a specific period of time [16]. Internship experience is crucial for students because it provides them with the opportunity to learn directly and apply their acquired knowledge in real-world work practices, helping them become familiar with the workplace environment and build

professional networks. Internship experience has a positive and significant influence on work readiness [17], [18], [19]. However, this is different from the results of research conducted by [20] shows that internship experience does not have a positive and significant effect on work readiness.

Mastering soft skills is also crucial in efforts to improve job readiness. Soft skills are non-technical and intellectual skills related to interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities [8]. Interpersonal skills refer to a person's ability to communicate and interact with others, while intrapersonal skills refer to the ability to understand and manage oneself [21]. Soft skills are crucial for job readiness, as nearly all companies prioritize the soft skills of prospective employees [22]. Soft skills have a positive and significant effect on work readiness [9], [23]. However, this differs from the results of research conducted by [24], [25], shows that soft skills do not have a positive and significant effect on work readiness.

This study examines the role of self-actualization, internship experience, and soft skills as important factors in student job readiness. Given the varying findings, this research is expected to enrich the literature and serve as a reference for educational institutions in designing effective programs to prepare graduates for the workforce.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Self-Actualization

Self-actualization is the process of becoming the best version of yourself by achieving goals according to your capacity and potential. In its development, this process evolves from physiological to psychological [26]. The aim is for them to be able to make the best contribution to society and encourage innovation to improve the standard of living in society [27]. Maslow's theory emphasizes that humans tend to strive to fulfill basic needs first before achieving self-actualization. Self-actualization continues throughout a person's life and ends at death [13]. Self-actualization affects not only students but also the workplace. When the three basic psychological needs of self-actualization are met, this can help in the workplace [28]. With the fulfillment of self-actualization, individuals tend to have a strong drive to learn and develop actively. H1: Self-actualization has a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness.

2.2 Internship Experience

An internship is a form of experience-based learning that is carried out directly in the industrial world to shape students' behavior and work readiness [29]. Internships provide students with skills such as knowledge, work ethic, and the skills needed in the workplace [30]. Internships are recognized as part of the learning process and prepare students to be better prepared to enter the workforce after graduation. Internships connect classroom knowledge with on the job experience [31]. According to research's shows a positive and significant influence, both partially and simultaneously, between internship experience and students' work readiness [30], [17], [18], [19].

H2: Internship experience has a positive and significant impact on student work readiness.

2.3 Soft-Skills

Soft skills include communication skills, personal characteristics, inherent social intelligence, and good adaptability in daily life and the work environment [9]. Soft skills significantly influence job readiness the more soft skills a person possesses, the better prepared they are for work. Graduates without strong soft skills are generally unprepared for the workforce. Companies tend to prioritize soft skills when recruiting, demonstrating the role universities play in shaping graduates' professional preparation [32]. In the world of work, soft skills play a very important role in determining the development of a person's achievements and readiness [30]. This is supported soft skills simultaneously and partially influence work readiness [9]. In addition, research soft skills have a positive and significant influence on work readiness [33], [34].

H3: Soft-Skills has a positive and significant effect on Student Work Readiness.

2.4 Student Work Readiness

Work readiness is a condition in which a person has achieved sufficient mental and physical maturity and learning experience to carry out tasks optimally in the job he has chosen [35]. A person is considered work-ready when they can improve their skills through knowledge gained from activities at school and at home, and positive attitudes that are acceptable in the workplace [36], To meet the demands of the world of work, maturity or readiness is required across various cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, which are reflected in work behaviors to reduce unemployment. Therefore, work readiness must be structured and planned to produce optimal performance and effective collaboration in the workplace. internship experience and soft skills have a simultaneous influence on work readiness [30], [37].

H4: Self-Actualization, Internship Experience, and Soft Skills have a simultaneous influence on Student Work Readiness.

3 Research Model

Based on the theoretical review and previous research, the conceptual framework can be described as follows:

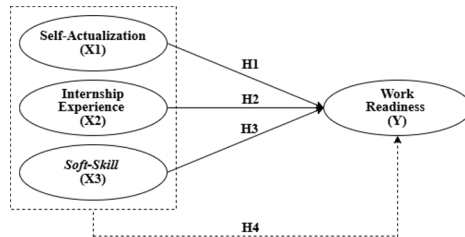


Figure. 1. Research Framework

4 Research Method

This study aimed to determine the influence of self-actualization, internship experience, and soft skills on the work readiness of 2020 students in Bantul Regency. Data were obtained through questionnaires distributed directly using Google Forms to

2020 students in Bantul Regency using an accidental sampling technique and analyzed using SPSS version 25. Of all distributed questionnaires, 96 were completely completed and worthy of further analysis.

5 Results & Discussion

5.1 Results

Respondent characteristics include gender, age, graduation status, and employment status. Based on gender, the majority of respondents were female (54.2%), while males (45.8%). Based on age, most respondents were in the 23-25 age range (55.2%), while 20-22 years old (44.8%). Based on graduation status, most respondents had graduated (59.4%), while 40.6% had not graduated. Based on employment status, the majority of respondents were employed (59.4%), while 40.6% were unemployed.

This study conducted classical assumption tests including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. The normality test using the Probability Plot (PP Plot) and the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, showed an Asymp. Sig. value of $0.068 > 0.05$, so the data was normally distributed. The multicollinearity test showed that all independent variables had a Tolerance value > 0.10 and VIF < 10 , so there were no symptoms of multicollinearity. The heteroscedasticity test showed that all independent variables had a significance value > 0.05 , so the regression model was declared feasible and free from symptoms of heteroscedasticity.

The multiple linear regression model obtained is: $Y = 1.582 + 0.439(X1) + 0.023(X2) + 0.004(X3)$. This means that self-actualization (X1), internship experience (X2), and soft skills (X3) have a positive effect on students' work readiness. The constant value of 1.582 means that if all independent variables are zero, then students' work readiness is 1.582. Self-actualization has the greatest influence with a coefficient value of 0.439, indicating that the higher the self-actualization, the higher the work readiness. Internship experience has a positive effect with a coefficient of 0.023, indicating that involvement in internships increases work readiness even though the effect is small. Meanwhile, soft skills have the smallest positive influence with a coefficient value of 0.004, but still play an important role in preparing students to face the world of work.

The t-test (partial test) is used to determine the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable by comparing the calculated t and table t values. The test results show that: Self-actualization has a calculated t of $7.108 > 1.661$ and a sig. value of $0.000 < 0.05$, so it has a positive and significant effect on student work readiness (H1 is accepted). Internship experience has a calculated t of $0.571 < 1.661$ and sig. $0.569 > 0.05$, so it has a positive but not significant effect (H2 is rejected). Soft skills have a calculated t of $0.078 < 1.661$ and sig. $0.938 > 0.05$, so it has a positive but not significant effect (H3 is rejected).

Table 1. T Test Results

		Coefficients ^a				
	Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.582	1.320		1.199	.234

Aktualisasi Diri	.439	.062	.845	7.108	.000
Pengalaman Magang	.023	.039	.049	.571	.569
Soft-Skill	.004	.054	.010	.078	.938

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

The F-test (simultaneous test) was conducted to determine whether all independent variables simultaneously influence the dependent variable. The analysis results showed an F-value of 121.776 with a significance value of 0.000. This indicates that the calculated F-value is greater than the F-table ($121.776 > 3.09$) and a sig. value of $0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that Hypothesis 4 has a simultaneous effect on student work readiness (H4 is accepted).

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to determine the extent of the contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable. The test results showed an R^2 value of 0.153, indicating that self-actualization (X1), internship experience (X2), and soft skills (X3) explain 15.3% of the variance in student work readiness (Y), with the remaining 84.7% explained by factors outside this study.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 *The Influence of Self-Actualization on Students' Work Readiness*

The results of this study indicate that self-actualization has a positive and significant influence on the work readiness of students in the 2020 intake in Bantul Regency. The average self-actualization score was 3.96, which is considered good. The higher a student's self-actualization, the higher their readiness to enter the workforce. Self-actualization occurs throughout life and plays a crucial role in preparing individuals for the workforce [14], which states that Lack of professional experience can lead to anxiety and feelings of inferiority in students; this can be addressed through clear career planning and informal education, such as courses and training, which can significantly enhance self-actualization [39]. By achieving self-actualization, students are better able to recognize their potential, build self-confidence, and establish a clear career path.

5.2.2 *The Influence of Internship Experience on Students' Work Readiness*

The results of the study indicate that internship experience has a positive but insignificant effect on the job readiness of students in the 2020 intake in Bantul Regency. The average internship experience score was 4.01, categorized as good. Despite their positive impact, internships do not fully enhance job readiness because students are often given administrative and repetitive tasks that do not support the development of skills such as problem-solving, effective communication, and teamwork. This is exacerbated by the uneven quality of internship experiences, minimal collaboration between universities and industry, and the low relevance of internships to current workplace competency standards. Internship experience has a positive but insignificant effect on job readiness [40], [41]. Therefore, it is important for internship partners to ensure that students are given relevant responsibilities that align with their areas of expertise to support a more optimal transition into the workforce.

5.2.3 *The Influence of Soft-Skills on Students' Work Readiness*

The results of the study indicate that soft skills have a positive but insignificant effect on the work readiness of students in the 2020 intake in Bantul Regency. The average soft skills score was 3.94, indicating good performance. This insignificant effect is due to limited opportunities for soft skills development and collaborative experience. Therefore, strengthening soft skills through practical training, workplace simulations, and active involvement in organizations is crucial to improving students' work readiness in this competitive era. This finding aligns with research [38], [39], indicating that soft skills have a positive but insignificant effect on work readiness. soft skills do not significantly influence work readiness.

5.2.4 *The Influence of Self-Actualization, Internship Experience, and Soft Skills on Students' Work Readiness*

The study's results indicate that self-actualization, internship experience, and soft skills simultaneously influence the work readiness of 2020 students in Bantul Regency. The calculated f value (121.776) is greater than the f table value (3.09); sig. is significant. value is $0.000 < 0.05$. Although individually not all variables have a significant effect. This indicates that work readiness is not determined by only one factor, but rather the result of a combination of various personal aspects and experiences during the study period.

6 **Conclusions and Suggestions**

6.1 **Conclusions**

Based on the research results, self-actualization has a positive and significant effect on student work readiness, while internship experience and soft skills have a positive but insignificant effect on student work readiness. Simultaneously, these three variables have a significant effect on student work readiness and contribute 15.3% to student work readiness (Y), while the remaining 84.7% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

6.2 **Suggestions**

Further researchers are recommended to expand the research by adding other variables, such as organizational support, perceived organizational support, teamwork, and emotional intelligence, and using more diverse indicators and theories to enrich their understanding of the factors influencing student work readiness.

Authors' Contributions

1. Annisa Hapsari as the first author: was responsible for collecting, processing, and analyzing respondent data using the SPSS application, as well as drafting and writing the research manuscript.
2. Kusuma Chandra Kirana as second author: provided direction, guidance, and feedback to the first author during the data processing and manuscript writing process.

3. Eko Yulianto as the third author: provided direction, guidance, and feedback to the first author during the data processing and manuscript writing process.

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