

## The Influence of Internship Experience and Soft Skills on Work Readiness Mediated by Self-Efficacy

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### Abstract

Generation Z is the young age group that dominates the number of Open Unemployment Rate (OUR) in 2024 in Indonesia. In this situation, students and graduates who are potential future employees must prepare themselves with good work readiness by the skills needed in the workplace. This research examines how in Indonesian Generation Z self-efficacy mediates internship experience and soft skills regarding work readiness. The research population is all Generation Z with status as final-year students and fresh graduates in Indonesia. Information was gathered using an online questionnaire via Google Forms, a sampling technique, and a purposive sampling approach. The results showed that internship experience positively and significantly affects work readiness and self-efficacy. Soft skills have been proven to positively and significantly impact work readiness and self-efficacy, while self-efficacy demonstrates a positive and significant impact regarding work readiness. Self-efficacy as mediation is proven to positively and significantly affect the connection of internship experience to work readiness, along with the between soft skills and work readiness.

**Keywords:** Internship Experience; Generation Z; Self-Efficacy; Soft Skills; Work Readiness.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has entered the era of globalization, which provides an overview of the increasingly intense competition in the job market to be more competitive and dynamic. In the increasingly fierce labor market competition, prospective workers must have great potential to adapt and compete against developments and changes in all fields of life, especially in the professional world that requires qualified Human Resources (HR) (Astuti et al., 2023). Education is one way to equip great human resources and Higher Education is essential in developing individuals who are ready to work (Orr et al., 2023). This is because the education sector is one of the sources of labor contributors and a driving factor in the quality of HR in Indonesia (Putri & Muizu, 2024). Higher education graduates must have competencies and skills to increase their chances of entering the job market (Peersia et al., 2024). In the literature, competencies are considered essential to support graduates' entry into the workforce and the term competency is often referred to as skills and attributes (Priksat et al., 2020).

According to a 2024 Central Statistics Agency report, the Open Unemployment Rate (OUR) in Indonesia in February 2024 was recorded at 4.82% of the population in Indonesia, with the majority dominated by people aged 15-24 years (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). In February 2024, the OUR of the young age group (15-24 years) was the highest group, reaching a population of 16.42%. The population in the 15-24 years old is a young population that includes Generation Z. Generation Z, which after Generation Y or the Millennium Generation, was born between 1997-2012 (Arum et al., 2023). Based on the level of education, Generation Z people aged 15-24 years are still students and those who have graduated from university or are called fresh graduates.

According to the OUR for the level of education completed in February 2024, it was recorded that the high unemployment rate of university graduates was 5.63%, which increased from the previous year by 0.11%. One of the reasons for the lack of absorption of college graduates in the labor market is the need for better work readiness, so the number of unemployed graduates is dominated by educated unemployment (Lestari & Ubaidillah, 2022). In this situation, students and graduates who will become prospective workers must be equipped with the skills employers require to be well prepared for entering the labor market. They will be ready to enter the workplace by having good work readiness. Based on this phenomenon, this problem can be raised as research so that students and graduates can prepare to enter the workplace maturely and compete for jobs by considering internship experience, soft skills, and self-efficacy for their job readiness. Work readiness refers to individuals equipping themselves with various skills and attributes necessary to enter the workforce. Mature work readiness can benefit individuals and the economy can produce a skilled and professional competitive workforce to meet the labor markets needs (Daud et al., 2024).

One of the factors that makes a person ready to enter the workplace after graduation is internship experience. The internship experience is an activity that can provide a unique experience for students to learn about the workplace, such as getting to know the natural work environment, increasing self-potential, and practicing discipline and responsibility (Puteri & Rozamuri, 2023). The internship experience provides direct job experience so that individuals can understand the dynamics and demands of the workforce and can develop skills. With better skills, individuals will have good work readiness and have a greater chance of being accepted in the job market. Another factor that can affect work readiness is soft skills. Soft skills are abilities that can influence academic ability and are required by everyone in any job (Paramitha & Jalinus, 2020). In a competitive job market, soft skills can be a key characteristic and differentiator between job candidates, as individuals with good soft skills have a greater chance of standing out to employers, thus increasing their work readiness.

Self-efficacy can also affect individual work readiness. One's degree of belief is known as self-efficacy in oneself or one's ability to achieve specific goals, so students who have high self-confidence can face various challenges to achieve their goals (Syandianingrum & Wahjudi, 2021). These beliefs can affect how individuals think, feel, behave, and motivate themselves when facing problems (Cheng et al., 2019). The level of self-efficacy also influences the amount of effort exerted and the duration a person will endure challenges (Sulistiowati & Komari, 2020). Individuals with high self-efficacy can control all life needs by applying positive thoughts (Nastasia et al., 2022). As an illustration, people who have significant self-efficacy will respond to negative feedback as motivation to try harder and better (Setiawan et al., 2023). Supported by previous research, this indicates that the mediating variable, self-efficacy, significantly and greatly influences the relationship among internship experience and work readiness (Pitaloka et al., 2022).

The author of this study distinguished it from earlier research analyses because the author was inspired by several previous research variables and combined these variables to see their influence on work readiness. Although previous research did not find a combination of internship experience, soft skills, self-efficacy, and work readiness variables, this research advanced contribution in testing the combination of these variables that can affect work readiness. This research focuses on Generation Z, who are still final-year students and fresh graduate (S1 graduates). The study's findings should add to the literature knowledge for Generation Z in

Indonesia related to aspects of internship experience, soft skills, self-efficacy, and work readiness.

## METHODS

This quantitative research is a category of associative casual research, and data is gathered through the distribution of an online questionnaire on social media through Google Forms and using a Likert scale as a measurement. This research uses a Likert scale with five categories: 1 strongly Disagree, 2 disagree, 3 undecided, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree. Variable indicators used in questionnaires based on previous research theory include the internship experience variable (X1), which consists of 4 indicators: clear goals, work environment support, university support, and general competence (Nogueira et al., 2021). The soft skills variable (X2) consists of 5 indicators: communication skills, emotional intelligence, thinking skills, ethics, and leadership skills (Nurbaiti & Putri, 2024). The mediating variable of self-efficacy (Z) consists of 3 indicators, including magnitude (level of task difficulty), strength (level of strength or self-esteem), and generality (breadth of the field of behavior) (Violinda, et al., 2023). The work readiness variable (Y) consists of 4 indicators: skills, knowledge, understanding, and personality attributes (Violinda, et al., 2023).

The research population included all Generation Z with the status as final year students and the fresh graduates in Indonesia, with the withdrawal of samples using a formula based on Hair et al. (2019), which involves multiplying the number of indicators by 10, so that 16 multiplied 10 resulting in a minimum of 160 participants. This study has a total of 392 participants, but after going through the screening of respondent data, there are only 292 people who fit the criteria for respondents. The research sample strategy employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique predicated on the following participant standards: 1) respondents are 19-27 years old; 2) respondents are final year students (minimum semester 7) and fresh graduates (maximum 2 years); 3) respondents come from public and private universities in Indonesia; 4) respondents have gained internship experience; 5) respondents know their self-efficacy; 6) respondents know their soft skills. The research measures and uses analytical tools using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), a approach for analyzing multivariate data that empirically examines the hypothesized correlations between research variables (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore the statistical analysis tool in the study used AMOS version 26. In addition, this research also employed the Sobel test to assess the influence of mediating variables.

### Internship Experience and Self-Efficacy

Previous research explains that the effect of internship experience on individual confidence in their abilities will strengthen the impact of work readiness, thus demonstrating that internship experience must be equipped with confidence and confidence that the individual can handle the job well so that individual work readiness increases (Pitaloka et al., 2022). In contrast to the results of other studies, there is an insignificant association between internship experience, specifically industrial work practices and self-efficacy, meaning whether or not the internship experience activities will not affect individual self-efficacy (Nurhayati & Kusmuriyanto, 2019). H1 = Internship experience has a positive and significant influence on self-efficacy.

### Soft Skills and Self-Efficacy

Based on research by Paais & Apituley (2023), this study describes how the relationship of self-efficacy to soft skills is significantly impacted. It explains that self-efficacy can help

students control themselves well so that they can carry out good work, such as achieving the desired results. There are not many previous studies that discuss the association of soft skills and self-efficacy factors, whereas earlier research indicates a significant positive relationship between them (Amat & Talhah, 2021).

H2 = Soft skills has a positive and significant influence on self-efficacy.

### **Internship Experience and Work Readiness**

Supriyanto et al. (2023) explained the research findings indicating that internship experience demonstrates a positive and significant influence regarding work readiness. Thus, individuals' work readiness will be higher with more internship experience. Other similar studies explain that internship experience exert a considerable influence on work readiness, hence it follows that better the internship experience of students, the better their work readiness (Fauzan et al., 2023). Other studies also explain the findings indicate a considerable effect of internship experience regarding work readiness (Febriyana et al., 2023; Putri Pambajeng et al., 2024; Suyanto et al., 2019).

H3 = Internship experience has a positive and significant effect on work readiness.

### **Soft Skills and Work Readiness**

Damayantie & Kustini (2022) research found that soft skills positively and significantly influence student work readiness. Thus, preparation in the workplace will increase if it is balanced with an increase in soft skills. However, this finding is inversely proportional to the results of other studies, namely, soft skills have an insignificant impact on work readiness (Ratuela et al., 2022). Other research findings explain soft skills demonstrate a positive considerable impact to work readiness (Deswarta et al., 2023; Fransiska & Aida, 2022; Sari & Manunggal, 2023).

H4 = Soft skills have a positive and significant influence on work readiness.

### **Self-Efficacy and Work Readiness**

Previous research studies by Fataron & Sijabat (2019), explained that self-efficacy positively and significantly effects student preparedness for the workforce. Thus, high self-efficacy can enhance student work readiness because confidence and self-confidence motivate students to do a better job in challenging situations to achieve success. The results of other studies explain that self-efficacy positively and significantly influences work readiness (Astuti et al., 2023; Nasution et al., 2022). Nevertheless, there are discrepancies with the results of research, which explain that self-efficacy does not impact student work readiness (Violinda, et al., 2023).

H5 = Self-efficacy has a positive and significant influence on work readiness.

### **Self-Efficacy Mediates the Connection Among Internship Experience and Work Readiness**

Previous studies by Pitaloka et al. (2022) explained how self-efficacy may function as a mediate in the connection of internship experience to work readiness. Thus, the impact of internship experience on work readiness will become more substantial if individuals have confidence in their abilities. In line with earlier researches conclusions, self-efficacy may function as an intermediary between internship experience and job readiness for the workforce (Rochmah et al., 2021). Nevertheless, there is little earlier research that addresses the connection between these variables. One research study that explains self-efficacy cannot mediate the association between internship experience and work readiness. This is due to individuals who

feel that their abilities do not match their fields of expertise with the place of internship, so these individuals feel insecure about their abilities (Nurhayati & Kusmuriyanto, 2019).

H6 = Self-efficacy mediates the connection among internship experience and work readiness.

**Self-Efficacy Mediates the Connection Among Soft Skills and Work Readiness**

Previous research regarding self-efficacy variable acting as mediator in the association of soft skills to work readiness is rarely found, so previous journals supporting this hypothesis still need to be explored. One of the previous journals that explained self-efficacy can partially and significantly mediate the association between soft skills and work readiness (Dian et al., 2023). Self-efficacy is an essential component of individuals related to work readiness because it is the basis for doing something well (Damayantie & Kustini, 2022). Other research findings explain that high levels of individual self-efficacy can impact increasing their work readiness (Fataron & Sijabat, 2019). Thus, self-efficacy serves as a mediator that can affect the association regarding soft skills and work readiness because high self-efficacy allows individuals to be more confident in applying their soft skills; it can increase their work readiness to enter the workplace.

H7 = Self-efficacy mediates the connection among soft skills and work readiness.

According to the explanation given, the research framework can be developed as follows

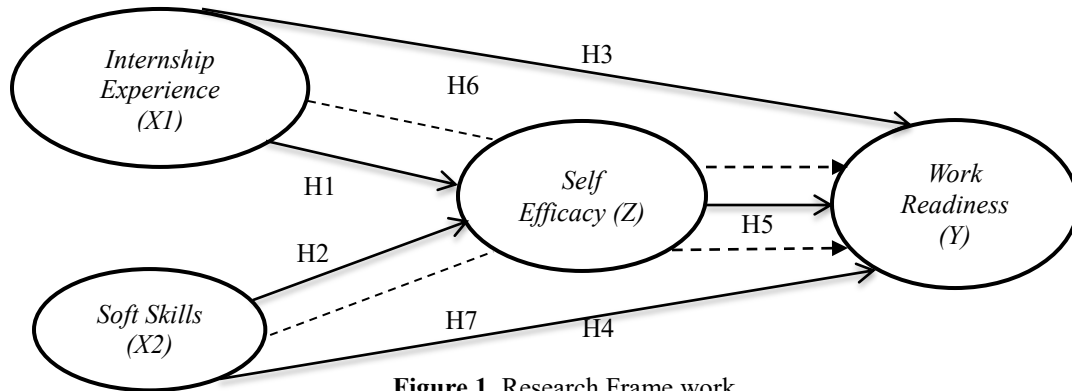


Figure 1. Research Frame work

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

**Respondent Characteristics**

The table below summarizes the profiles of 292 participants who fulfilled the research criteria.

Table 1. Respondents Characteristic

Category	Item	Total	%
Gender	Male	82	28%
	Female	210	72%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>100%</b>
Domicile	Bali	16	5,4%
	Java	97	33%
	Kalimantan	116	40%
	Maluku	11	3,8%
	Nusa Tenggara	18	6,2%



	Papua	6	2%
	Sulawesi	14	4,8%
	Sumatra	14	4,8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>100%</b>
Status	Final year students (minimum 7th semester)	216	74%
	Fresh Graduate S1 (maximum 2 years)	76	26%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>100%</b>
University Origin	State Universities	202	69%
	Private Universities	90	31%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Processed Data (2024)

### Measurement Models

Below are the findings from the suitability, validity, and reliability tests.

**Table 2.** Value for Standardized Loading Factor (SLF), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Construct Reliability (CR)

Variables	Indicators	Items	SLF	CR	AVE
Internship Experience	Clear Goals	I know roughly what I will be doing for my internship.	0,712	0,87	0,64
	Work Environment	My supervisor consistently inspires me to produce my best work.	0,753		
	University Support	My academic supervisor is very supportive of me.	0,745		
	General Competence	I can develop analytical skills in solving problems.	0,722		
Soft Skills	Communication Skills	I can communicate interactively with my coworkers.	0,721	0,91	0,67
	Emotional Intelligence	I can make good decisions in various working conditions.	0,789		
	Thinking Skills	I can quickly see the faults of objects and situations.	0,788		
	Ethics	I can accept suggestions or criticism from coworkers regarding work.	0,747		
	Leadership Skills	I can lead my coworkers in a team if needed.	0,747		
Self Efficacy	Magnitude	When I get a difficult job, I feel challenged to complete it.	0.652	0.80	0.57
	Strength	When I fail, I will try harder to do something or work.	0.708		
	generality	I can control negative thoughts that affect my ability to complete tasks.	0.685		
Work Readiness	Skills	I can come up with new ways to complete tasks.	0.627	0.88	0.64

Knowledge	I can explain my field to others well.	0.754
Understanding	I tend to carefully consider every decision I am about to make.	0.772
Personality Attributes	I wanted to know more about the workplace, so I was eager to find information on the right field.	0.697

Source: Processed Data (2024)

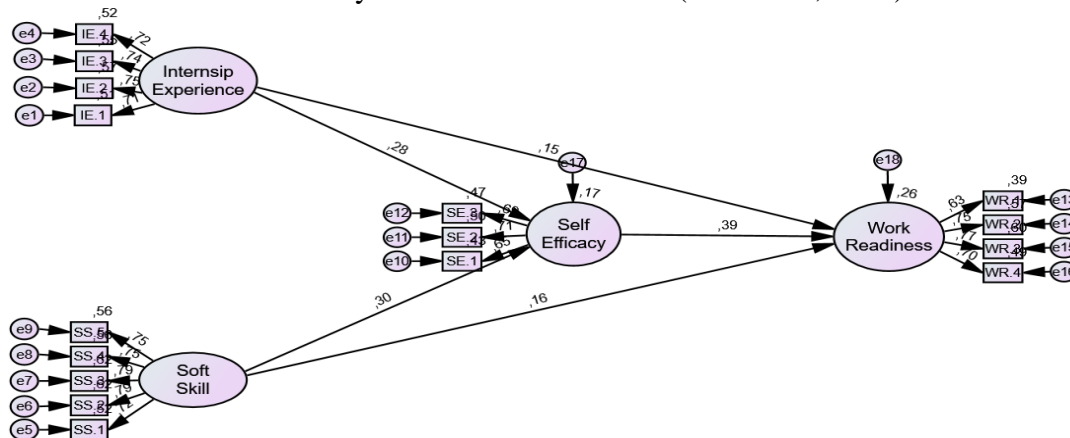
The indicator model’s validity and reliability test results satisfy the criteria for accuracy and reliability. As the preceding table indicates, all instruments have an SLF value  $\geq 0.50$ . In addition, each variable has a CR value  $\geq 0.70$ , indicating that all instruments are trustworthy and can measure any model construction that has been created. AVE value on each variable also meets the criteria at  $\geq 0.50$ .

**Table 3.** Goodness of Fit Index

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut Off Value	Result	Model Evaluation
Chi - Square (Df = 99)	Expected to be smaller	235.819	Bad Fit
Probability	$\leq 0,05$	0.000	Bad Fit
Cmin/DF	$\leq 3.00$	2.382	Good Fit
RMSEA	$\leq 0.08$	0.069	Good Fit
NFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.879	Marginal Fit
IFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.926	Good Fit
TLI	$\geq 0.90$	0.909	Good Fit
CFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.925	Good Fit

Source: Processed Data (2024)

The results of the model fit test indicate that the criteria are met and accepted, as shown in the above table, five metrics demonstrate fit. The research model can be configured if 4-5 measurements reveal a satisfactory fit or above the cut-off (Hair et al., 2019).



**Figure 2.** Full Model Testing

Source: SEM-AMOS 26 (2024)

**Hypothesis Testing**

**Table 4.** Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$	S.E	CR	Probability
H1	Internship Experience -> Self-Efficacy	0.273	0.080	3.401	0.000
H2	Soft Skill -> Self-Efficacy	0.283	0.077	3.688	0.000
H3	Internship Experience -> Work Readiness	0.143	0.073	1.975	0.048
H4	Soft Skills -> Work Readiness	0.145	0.070	2.063	0.039
H5	Self-Efficacy -> Work Readiness	0.378	0.090	4.198	0.000

Source: Processed Data (2024)

According to the findings in the table above, the first hypothesis that an internship experience positively and significantly affects self-efficacy is accepted. The internship experience variables t-value on self-efficacy is 3.401, indicating that the result p-value is  $\leq 0.05$  and the t-table value is greater than 1.96. The second hypothesis is also accepted: soft skills positively and significantly effect on self-efficacy. The findings show that the p-value of 0.000 is  $\leq 0.05$  and the t-value is greater than the t-table. Furthermore, the third conjecture is agreed; the findings indicate that the t-value of internship experience to work readiness shows a positively and significantly impact, with t-value 1.975 and probability value 0.048. And fourth hypothesis is also supported, which shows soft skills exhibit a positively and significantly impact on work readiness, with t-value 2.063 and probability 0.039. Moreover, the last hypothesis is confirmed, showing self-efficacy exerts a positively and significantly impact towards work readiness; the finding indicates that the p-value is less than 0.05 and the t-value is greater than the t-table (1.96). Furthermore, to verify the indirect effects of the mediating variables the researcher used the Sobel test to compare the exogenous and endogenous variables; the test outcomes are presented below.

**Table 5.** Sobel Test-Mediation Significance

Hypothesis	Path	Sobel Test	
		T-Stat	P Value
H6	Internship Experience -> Self-Efficacy -> Work Readiness	2,648	0,008
H7	Soft Skills -> Self-Efficacy -> Work Readiness	2,765	0,005

Source: Processed Data (2024)

The sixth hypothesis is accepted because the Sobel test table above indicates that the p-value is  $\leq 0.05$  and the t-value of 2.648 is greater than the t-table value. It follows that the association among internship experience and work readiness for the workforce can be mediated by self-efficacy. Furthermore, the seventh hypothesis is accepted, with the results showing that the t-value of 2.765 and the probability of 0.005. This suggests that the association between soft skills and work readiness for the workplace can be attributed self-efficacy.

**Discussion**

The researches’ first hypothesis is accepted, demonstrating that the findings indicate a positive and significant association between internship experience on self-efficacy, these findings are consistent with other studies, which also suggest self-efficacy is positively and significantly



influenced by internship experience (Cipta & Wahyuni, 2024). The influence of internship experience on work readiness become more considerable when combined with self-confidence in one's abilities, suggesting that an internship experience needs to be equipped with confidence and self-confidence for the individual to handle the job well and work readiness will increase (Pitaloka et al., 2022). Additionally, the second hypothesis is accepted. Soft skills positively and significantly impact self-efficacy. In line with earlier research, soft skills showed a positive and significant relationship with self-efficacy (Amat & Talhah, 2021). Self-efficacy can help students control themselves well to do a good job, such as getting the desired results (Paais & Apituley, 2023). The third hypothesis is accepted. Specifically, internship experience positively and significantly influences work readiness. This is consistent with prior research, it explains that individuals' work readiness will be higher if they have more internship experience (Fauzan et al., 2023; Febriyana et al., 2023; Kapareliotis et al., 2019; Supriyanto et al., 2023; Suyanto et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the fourth hypothesis of the research is accepted. The results reveal a positive and significant influence between soft skills and work readiness, supported by previous research that preparation confronting the workforce will increase in soft skills (Damayantie & Kustini, 2022). Previous research studies have shown that soft skills positively and significantly impact work readiness (Deswarta et al., 2023; Sari & Manunggal, 2023). The fifth hypothesis of the study is accepted, indicating self-efficacy positive and significant affects work readiness, it is backed by previous studies that indicates a positive and significant influence between the two variables (Astuti et al., 2023; Fataron & Sijabat, 2019). Furthermore, the sixth hypothesis in the research is accepted, indicating that self-efficacy mediates the connection between internship experience on work readiness and is backed by earlier research (Pitaloka et al., 2022; Rochmah et al., 2021). The seventh hypothesis is accepted. Other studies have supported the relationship of soft skills and work readiness as mediated by self-efficacy (Dian et al., 2023).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The research findings indicate that internship experience and soft skills impact Indonesian generations' work readiness and self-efficacy, including final-year students and the fresh graduates. The association of internship experience and work readiness, and the association of soft skills and work readiness, is positive and significantly mediated by self-efficacy. This shows that the more internship experience and soft skills individuals have, the higher their confidence in facing workplace challenges. In addition, Generation Z who are involved in internship programs and have soft skills show better readiness in entering the job market; this is because the internship experience can provide a direct understanding of the actual workplace, and the soft skills possessed can help individuals interact and adapt in the world of work. Regardless of the flaws in the research, researchers determined that it is vital for individuals to participate in internship programs and soft skills training to encourage the development of self-efficacy so that students and graduates have mental readiness and skills that align with the demands of the labor market. Thus, Indonesia's Generation Z will be more competitive and can reduce the number of educated unemployed. This research has limitations in terms of time and location in collecting respondents, resulting in the questionnaire only being dominated by one area and not evenly distributed. In addition, future researchers can develop research by adding unique and relevant variables and expanding the range of respondents. Through this study, researchers hope that

Indonesia's Generation Z can become a generation with good work readiness and reduce the unemployment rate.

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