

Research Article

# The Influence of Hard Skills and Soft Skills on Work Readiness Through Self-Efficacy as an Intervening Variable in Students

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the influence of hard skills and soft skills on job readiness through self-efficacy as a mediating variable in students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Yogyakarta State University. The background of the study is rooted in the increasing demands of the job market, which emphasize not only technical competence but also interpersonal skills and individual confidence in their own capabilities. As the world of work becomes increasingly competitive, the ability to balance technical skills with psychological readiness becomes a crucial factor. This study employed a quantitative approach with descriptive analysis and path analysis. A total of 229 respondents were selected using a two-stage random sampling method to ensure adequate representation. The data were analyzed using SmartPLS to test the validity, reliability, and fit of the structural model. The results revealed that hard skills had a significant but negative effect on job readiness, while soft skills showed a positive but statistically insignificant effect. Both hard and soft skills were shown to have a positive and significant effect on self-efficacy, with self-efficacy having a significant effect on job readiness. Further findings indicate that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between hard skills and job readiness, but not the relationship between soft skills and job readiness. Overall, this research emphasizes the importance of integrating hard skills, soft skills, and self-efficacy in building student job readiness. The implication is that universities need to design curricula and student development programs that not only strengthen technical competencies but also foster interpersonal skills and self-confidence so that graduates can compete in a dynamic job market.

**Keywords:** Employability, Hard Skill, Job Readiness, Self-Efficacy, Soft Skill.

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## 1. Introduction

In the current era of globalization, competition in the job market has become increasingly intense. Companies are not only seeking employees with strong hard skills but also those who possess well-developed soft skills[1]. Soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and creativity, are critical factors in determining success in the workplace. The professional landscape is undergoing a significant transformation, with automation and artificial intelligence increasingly replacing human roles in various jobs

Every higher education institution aspires for its graduates to succeed in the workforce. However, universities have not yet been fully able to supply the labor force that meets the demands of industry [2]. There are several challenges frequently faced by students when entering the workforce. One of the most common issues is the lack of job readiness. The set of skills an individual must possess in order to enter employment without requiring a prolonged adjustment period is referred to as job readiness[3]. An individual who is physically, mentally, academically, and technically prepared to contribute in the workplace while further developing their current abilities is considered job-ready. Such individuals are also capable of fulfilling their responsibilities effectively[4].

From February 2021 to February 2024, the unemployment rate in Indonesia reached 4.82%, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS). This unemployment data has an impact on the working population, which experienced an increase from 64.20% to 65.50%. A high unemployment rate can adversely affect competitiveness in the labor market. The three main factors influencing students' job readiness are hard skills competence, soft skills competence, and self-efficacy. Soft skills play a crucial role in enhancing communication abilities, social skills, teamwork, and effective problem-solving. Although work experience and professional networking also have an impact, these three primary factors serve as the foundation that can be developed during the academic period. A lack of experience, insufficient mastery of knowledge, and limited technological skills remain the main obstacles to students' job readiness[5]. A deficiency in hard skills, often driven by technological advancements, reduces graduates' competitiveness in the labor market. Hard skills encompass the mastery of knowledge, technology, and technical abilities relevant to one's field of expertise [4].

Soft skills refer to the abilities related to an individual's capacity to manage oneself (intrapersonal skills) and to interact effectively with others (interpersonal skills) in order to perform optimally in the workplace [6]. Soft skills are essential attributes that support students' formal competencies or hard skills, and they can be further developed as complementary capabilities to other skill sets [7]. In addition, self-efficacy plays a vital role in supporting job readiness, as it is closely related to an individual's work maturity. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to remain focused, set clear goals, and face challenges with confidence in their abilities. Conversely, students with low self-efficacy are likely to struggle in making career decisions, which ultimately leads to lower job readiness [8],[9].

Hard skills, soft skills, and self-efficacy constitute the primary capital for final-year students in facing the competitive job market[10]. Hard skills encompass the mastery of relevant knowledge, technology, and technical abilities, while soft skills include communication, teamwork, and problem-solving capabilities. Amid rapid technological advancements, high-quality human resources remain essential, as they possess creative thinking abilities and can generate innovative ideas that cannot be fully replaced by machines. Strong job readiness enables students to understand workplace expectations, set realistic goals, and work efficiently, having been equipped with relevant knowledge and skills. Overall, job readiness not only involves technical competencies but also a positive attitude, physical and mental well-being, and adequate self-confidence[11].

Field observations indicate that some students still lack optimal job readiness. Observations of the 2021 cohort of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Yogyakarta State University (FEB UNY) revealed deficiencies in soft skills, such as foreign language proficiency, technological competence, and the ability to build professional networks. These findings are supported by interviews conducted on December 4, 2024, which revealed that a portion of FEB UNY 2021 students have limited understanding of labor market competition and lack relevant experience in the fields for which they apply. In today's era of dynamic technological development, companies and institutions demand prospective employees with appropriate competencies who are ready to adapt to change.

Based on this background, the present study aims to examine the influence of hard skills and soft skills competence on job readiness, with self-efficacy as an intervening variable, among university students. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educational institutions in designing more effective learning and personal development programs to better prepare students for the challenges of a competitive labor market.

### 3. Proposed Method

This research employs a descriptive analysis with a quantitative approach. The population in this study consists of 775 students from the 2021 cohort of the Faculty of Economics and Business. The sampling technique used is two-stage random sampling, with the sample size determined using the Slovin formula. The Slovin formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{775}{1+775(0,5)} = \frac{775}{1+775(0,5)} = \frac{775}{338,5}$$

n = 229

Based on the calculation results, the minimum sample size for this study is 229 students from the 2021 cohort of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Yogyakarta State University.

### 3.1. Algorithm/Pseudocode

The analytical techniques employed in this study consist of Descriptive Statistical Analysis and Path Analysis to examine the influence of hard skills and soft skills competence on job readiness through self-efficacy as an intervening variable. Descriptive Statistical Analysis is used to describe the characteristics of the data, such as distribution, mean, and percentage, thereby enabling a clear understanding of the respondents' profiles and the research variables. Path Analysis is applied to test causal relationships—both direct and indirect—between hard skills, soft skills, self-efficacy, and job readiness. This approach allows the researcher to identify the extent to which each variable contributes to overall job readiness. Consequently, the findings provide a comprehensive overview of the role of competencies and self-efficacy in shaping job readiness. The path coefficient model, as illustrated in the figure, represents the design for analyzing relationships among latent variables using Path Analysis based on Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

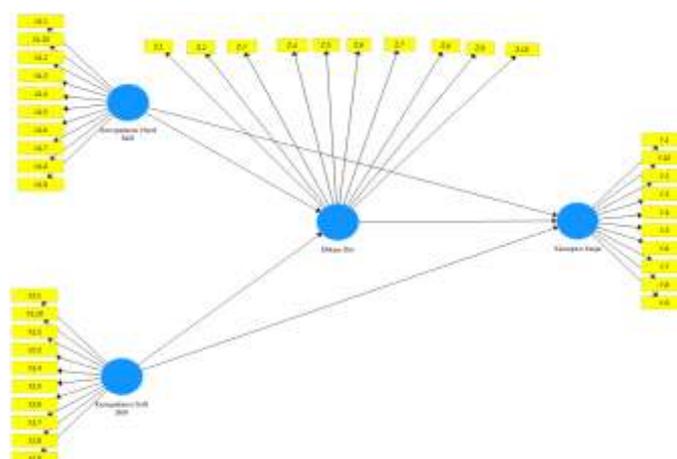


Figure 1. Path Coefficient Model Diagram

## 4. Results and Discussion

### Descriptive Statistical Analysis

#### Respondent Profile

Respondent Profile by Department and Study Program, Class of 2022

Table 1. Based on Respondent Profile

No	Study Program	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Office Administration Education	32	13,97 %
2.	Accounting Education	30	13.10 %
3.	Economics Education	45	19.65 %
4.	Management	75	32.75 %
5.	Accounting	47	20.52 %
Total		229	100 %

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Based on the data, the Management study program has the highest number of respondents, totaling 75 individuals or 32.75% of all respondents. The study program with the lowest number of respondents is Accounting Education, with 30 individuals or 13.10%. Overall, the distribution of respondents varies across study programs, with a predominance in the fields of management and accounting

### Descriptive statistical analysis test

**Descriptive analysis aims to provide an overview of the research results. The data from the descriptive analysis are presented in Table 2 below:**

**Table 1.** Analisis deskriptif

Description	Variable			
	Hard Skill	Soft Skill	Self-efficacy	Work Readiness
N Valid	229	229	229	229
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	38.24	38.15	37.26	39.07
Std. Error of Mean	.376	.392	.359	.375
Median	39.00	39.00	37.00	40.00
Mode	40	40	40	40
Std. Deviation	5.688	5.9331	5.427	5.680
Variance	32.348	35.180	29.455	32.262
Range	31	31	30	36
Minimum	19	19	20	14
Maximum	50	50	50	50
Sum	8756	8736	8532	8948

*Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)*

Based on the descriptive analysis of 229 student respondents from the Faculty of Economics and Business, Yogyakarta State University, the Hard Skills variable recorded a minimum score of 19 and a maximum of 50, with a mean of 38.24, a median of 39, and a mode of 40, indicating a generally good level of ability with moderate variation (SD = 5.688). The Soft Skills variable showed a similar pattern, with a minimum score of 19, a maximum of 50, a mean of 38.15, a median of 39, and a mode of 40, suggesting good soft skills competence despite relatively high variation (SD = 5.931). For the Self-Efficacy variable, the analysis revealed a minimum score of 20, a maximum of 50, a mean of 37.26, a median of 37, and a mode of 40, reflecting a relatively high level of student confidence with moderate variation (SD = 5.427). The Job Readiness variable recorded a minimum score of 14, a maximum of 50, a mean of 39.07, a median of 40, and a mode of 40, indicating that the majority of students have high job readiness with moderate variation (SD = 5.680). Overall, all four variables demonstrate generally positive conditions among most students, although a small group still requires further development to achieve optimal competence.

### Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model Evaluation).

#### Convergence Validation Test

Convergent testing is a measurement of the validity of reflective indicators as instruments for measuring variables, assessed from the outer loading value of each indicator. The ideal standard for the loading factor is  $> 0.7$ ; however, indicators with values between 0.5 and 0.7 are still acceptable, while those with values  $< 0.5$  should be removed from the model (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). Convergent evaluation is also conducted using the Average Variance

Extracted (AVE), where a construct is considered valid if the AVE value is > 0.5, indicating that the construct can explain more than half of the variance of each indicator. Thus, the higher the AVE value, the better the construct’s ability to represent its indicators.

Based on the results of the second validity test, after eliminating instruments that were not valid for each variable, the remaining instruments were found to be valid for all variables. These instruments met the validity criteria, with values greater than 0.5—or ideally greater than 0.7—therefore, all data were declared valid

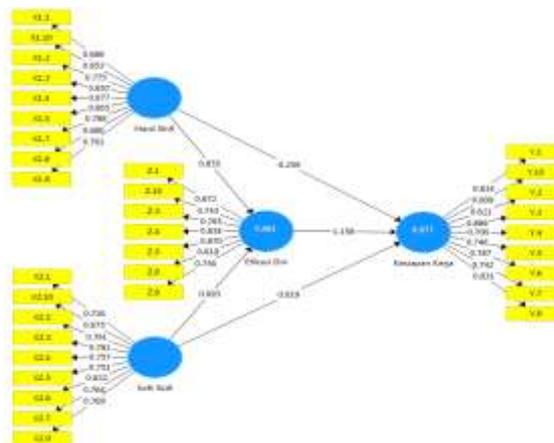


Figure 2. Outer Model

An Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of at least 0.5 indicates good convergent validity, meaning that the latent variable is able to explain more than half of the variance of its indicators. The AVE value should also exceed the cross-loading correlations; if it is less than 0.5, this indicates a significant inaccuracy. The following table presents the AVE values to identify this condition

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Konstruk	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Self-efficacy (Z)	0.612
Hard Skill ( X1)	0.635
Work Readiness (Y)	0.598
Soft Skill (X2)	0.575

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Based on the table above, each construct has an AVE value greater than 0.5, thereby meeting the standard requirements for AVE

**Discriminant Validity Test**

Discriminant validity ensures that reflective indicators measure only the intended construct, as evidenced by stronger correlations with their own construct than with other constructs. This evaluation can be conducted using the Fornell–Larcker Criterion, which compares the correlation between a construct and its indicators to the correlation with other constructs. Discriminant validity is considered satisfactory when the correlation value exceeds 0.7. The complete Fornell–Larcker Criterion values are presented in the following table

**Table 3.** Uji Validitas Diskriminan (Fornell-Larcker Criteria)

	Efikasi Diri	Hard Skill	Kesiapan Kerja	Soft Skill
Self-efficacy (Z)	0.782			
Hard Skill (X1)	0.926	0.797		
Work Readiness (Y)	0.931	0.827	0.773	
Soft Skill (X2)	0.748	0.766	0.686	0.758

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Based on the analysis results, self-efficacy has a very strong relationship with hard skills and job readiness, with correlations of 0.926 and 0.931, respectively, indicating that individuals with high self-efficacy tend to possess strong technical abilities and are better prepared to enter the workforce. Self-efficacy also shows a positive correlation with soft skills at 0.748, demonstrating its influence on interpersonal abilities. Hard skills contribute significantly to job readiness and soft skills, with correlations of 0.827 and 0.766, respectively. The square roots of AVE for self-efficacy, hard skills, job readiness, and soft skills are 0.782, 0.797, 0.773, and 0.758, respectively all higher than the inter-construct correlations indicating good discriminant validity. Therefore, each construct in the model can be empirically distinguished, despite the relatively high correlations among certain variables.

#### Reliability Test

Reliability testing was conducted to evaluate the consistency of measurement results across various indicators of the research variables, in order to determine whether the indicators used to measure latent variables are dependable. In this study, the reliability test was carried out using the SmartPLS application, referring to two criteria: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. A variable is considered reliable if it has a Composite Reliability value greater than 0.7 and a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.6. The detailed results of the reliability testing in this study are presented in the following table.

**Table 5.** Uji reliabilitas

Konstruk	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Signifikansi
Self-efficacy	0.893	0.916	Reliabel
Hard Skill	0.927	0.940	Reliabel
Work Readiness	0.915	0.930	Reliabel
Soft Skill	0.908	0.924	Reliabel

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Based on the reliability analysis results, all constructs in this study had Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.7. This indicates that the instruments used had excellent internal consistency and could be categorized as reliable. Thus, the instruments were suitable for further measurement in this study.

#### Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model Evaluation)

The evaluation of the inner model or structural model aims to determine the R Square ( $R^2$ ) value as the coefficient of determination, path coefficient, model fit, and predictive relevance of the model. These steps must be carried out carefully to ensure that the results obtained are reliable and provide relevant information. Inner model testing is carried out using the following steps:

### Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

The R-square value is a coefficient of determination used to assess the extent of the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables in a study. This value ranges from 0 to 1. If the R-square value is greater than 0.75, the model is categorized as strong or substantial. If the R-square value is between 0.50 and 0.74, the model is considered moderate. Meanwhile, if the R-square value is between 0.25 and 0.49, the model is considered weak [12]. The R-square results are shown in the following table:

**Table 4.** R-Square

	<b>R Square</b>	<b>R Square Adjusted</b>
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	<b>0.861</b>	<b>0.860</b>
<b>Work Readiness</b>	<b>0.877</b>	<b>0.875</b>

*Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)*

Based on Table 6, the R-Square value for the self-efficacy variable is 0.861, indicating that 86.1% of the variability in the self-efficacy construct can be explained by hard skills and soft skills, while the remaining 13.9% is attributed to other variables outside the scope of this study. The R-Square value for the work readiness variable is 0.877, suggesting that 87.7% of its variability can be explained by hard skills, soft skills, and self-efficacy, while the remaining 12.3% is explained by other variables not included in the model. A higher R-Square value reflects the strong explanatory power of the independent variables toward the dependent variables. The larger this value, the better the quality of the structural model. Therefore, the research model demonstrates strong predictive capability, indicating that the variables used can explain the majority of the variation in the studied constructs.

### Path Coefficients

To determine whether the relationship is positive or negative, refer to the Path Coefficient values in the following table:

**Table 5.** Path Coefficient Results

Konstruk	Self-efficacy	Work Readiness
Self-efficacy		1.158
Hard Skill	0.855	-0.259
Soft Skill	0.093	0.019

*Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)*

Based on Table 7 above, Self-Efficacy has a significant positive effect on Work Readiness, with a coefficient value of 1.158. Hard Skills are strongly associated with Self-Efficacy (coefficient 0.855), but their effect on Work Readiness is negative (-0.259). Soft Skills have a very weak effect on Self-Efficacy (0.093) and are not significant with respect to Work Readiness (0.019). Meanwhile, Self-Efficacy has a very strong effect on Work Readiness, amounting to 1.158, indicating that Self-Efficacy serves as a highly significant intervening variable in mediating the influence of Hard Skills and Soft Skills on students' Work Readiness. Furthermore, the path results can also be observed in the following figure:

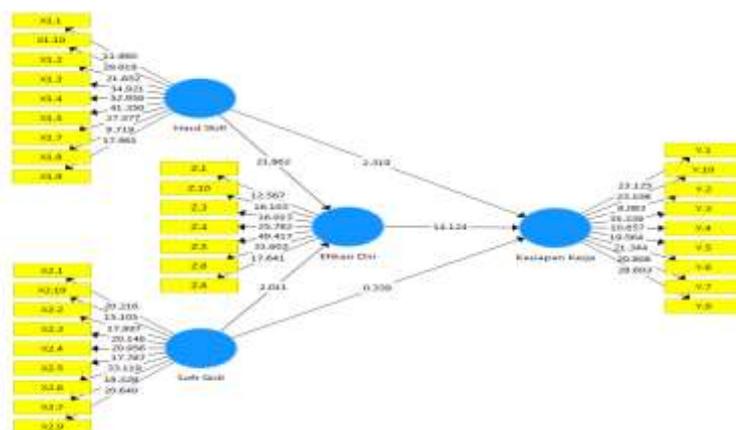


Figure 3. path analysis model.

T-Statistic

The significance level of the relationship between variables can be determined by examining the T-statistic value and the parameter coefficient obtained through the bootstrapping method. This study employed a two-tailed test, where a variable is considered to have a significant relationship if the T-statistic value exceeds 1.96 at the 5% significance level and the p-value is less than 0.05 [13]. The bootstrapping test results obtained in this study yielded the following Path Coefficient values:

Table 6. Hasil Uji t oleh Path Coefficient

Hipotesis	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Self-efficacy -> Work Readiness	1.158	1.157	0.082	14.124	0.000
Hard Skill -> Self-efficacy	0.855	0.847	0.039	21.862	0.000
Hard Skill -> Work Readiness	-0.259	-0.272	0.112	2.319	0.021
Soft Skill -> Self-efficacy	0.093	0.101	0.046	2.011	0.045
Soft Skill -> Work Readiness	0.019	0.032	0.056	0.339	0.735

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 8, the results show that self-efficacy has a significant effect on job readiness, with an original sample value of 1.158, a T-statistic of 14.124, and a p-value of 0.000. Furthermore, hard skills also have a significant effect on self-efficacy, with a coefficient value of 0.855, a T-statistic of 21.862, and a p-value of 0.000. However, the effect of hard skills on job readiness is negative but significant, with a coefficient value of -0.259, a T-statistic of 2.319, and a p-value of 0.021.

For the soft skills variable, the results indicate a positive and significant effect on self-efficacy, with a coefficient of 0.093, a T-statistic of 2.111, and a p-value of 0.045. However, the effect of soft skills on job readiness is not significant, with a coefficient value of only 0.019, a T-statistic of 0.339, and a p-value of 0.735.

Overall, these findings confirm that self-efficacy serves as a highly important intervening variable and acts as the main pathway bridging the effects of hard skills and soft skills on students' job readiness. To test the intervening hypothesis, it is necessary to compare the data from the path coefficients with the specific indirect effects. The data from the Specific Indirect Effects can be observed in the following table.

**Table 7.** Specific Indirects Effects

Hipotesis	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Hard Skill -> Self-efficacy ->Work Readiness	0.989	0.980	0.076	12.971	0.000
Soft Skill -> Self-efficacy -> Work Readiness	0.108	0.117	0.056	2.071	0.053

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Based on the results above, it was found that the indirect effect of Hard Skills on Job Readiness through Self-Efficacy has a coefficient value of 0.989, with a T-statistic of 12.971 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that the path is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), leading to the conclusion that an improvement in hard skills substantially enhances self-efficacy, which in turn has a strong and positive impact on individual job readiness.

Meanwhile, the path from Soft Skills to Job Readiness through Self-Efficacy shows a coefficient value of 0.108, with a T-statistic of 2.071 and a p-value of 0.053. Although the T-value greater than 1.96 suggests a potential effect, the p-value slightly exceeds the 0.05 significance threshold, rendering the effect statistically insignificant. Therefore, it can be concluded that self-efficacy significantly mediates the relationship between hard skills and job readiness, but does not convincingly mediate the relationship between soft skills and job readiness.

**Q-Square (Predictive Relevance)**

Predictive Relevance(Q<sup>2</sup>) bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi kemampuan prediksi model. Nilai Q yang didapatkan jika lebih besar dari 0, menunjukkan bahwa variabel endogen dan mengindikasikan relevansi prediktif yang tinggi[14]. Penguji blindfolding menghasilkan nilai Q-Square yang terlampir dalam tabel berikut :

**Table 8.** Q-Square Results

	SSO	SSE	Q <sup>2</sup> (=1-SSE/SSO)
Self-efficacy	1603.000	773.463	0.517
Work Readiness	2061.000	1011.113	0.509

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Based on the table above, the Q-Square value indicates that this study has strong observational values with a model that produces relevant predictive capacity of 50.9% for the work readiness variable and 51.7% for the self-efficacy variable.

**Model Fit: NFI value**

**The Fit Model is obtained by clicking Fit Model after the PLS Algorithm process, resulting in the following data:**

**Table 9.** Model Fit: NFI value Result

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.090	0.090

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

The research model was declared fit based on an SRMR value of 0.090, which is still below the maximum limit of 0.10. This indicates that the model has adequate fit.

## **Discussion**

### **The Influence of Hard Skills on Work Readiness Among Students**

The first hypothesis states that there is an influence of hard skills on students' work readiness. The test results show a significant but negative influence, which means that an increase in hard skills does not always increase work readiness. Under certain conditions, an increase in hard skills can actually reduce work readiness if not balanced by other factors. This indicates that technical skills alone are insufficient, as work readiness also requires support from soft skills and self-efficacy. Thus, a balance between technical, psychological, and interpersonal skills is key to optimal work readiness.

These results are in line with the findings of Dhea et al. (2023), which show the influence of hard skills on the work readiness of final-year students. The alignment between job positions and competencies is a crucial factor in preparing graduates to enter the workforce. High levels of hard skills enable individuals to complete tasks effectively, thereby supporting the achievement of organizational goals. Graduates with strong hard skills are more likely to be prepared to compete in a competitive job market. This competition demands specific qualifications and certifications as primary prerequisites for recruitment.

The career development theory developed by Donald Super (1953) explains that proper career planning requires a deep understanding of one's abilities. Each individual needs to recognize their potential, interests, and skills as a basis for designing an appropriate career path.[15]. This theory asserts that effective career planning depends not only on external opportunities, but also on the ability to recognize and evaluate oneself.

### **The Influence of Soft Skills Competence on Work Readiness Among Students**

The second hypothesis states that there is a positive relationship between soft skills and work readiness among students, but this relationship is not significant. The test results actually show a negative relationship between soft skills and work readiness. This finding leads to the rejection of the hypothesis, even though theoretically soft skills are expected to have a positive effect on work readiness. Statistically, soft skills do not show a significant effect on students' work readiness. This indicates that mastery of soft skills alone is not sufficient to determine optimal work readiness.

The results of this study are in line with Ratuela et al., (2022), showing that the results of the testing in that study indicate that soft skills have a positive but insignificant effect on work readiness.[16]. The second hypothesis proves that soft skills do not greatly influence students' readiness for work. This is contrary to what Lubis (2021) said: students who have soft skills will be better prepared to face competition in the future. Therefore, every college graduate must be equipped with character development that is integrated into the lecture process[17].

### **The Influence of Hard Skills Competence on Self-Efficacy in Students**

The third hypothesis states that there is a positive and significant relationship between hard skills and self-efficacy among students. The test results show that the better the mastery of hard skills, the higher the level of self-efficacy among students. These findings indicate that technical skills contribute significantly to students' confidence in completing academic tasks and preparing themselves for the world of work. Thus, hard skills have been proven to have a positive and significant effect on self-efficacy.

In line with the research conducted by Sinaga (2024), the results of the study show that hard skills have a positive and significant influence on self-efficacy [18]. So when hard skills are high, self-efficacy will also be high. This finding is consistent with previous research, which shows that hard skills and self-efficacy have a positive and significant effect on self-efficacy. Utama (2022) states that students with high self-efficacy have a better understanding of their potential and their role in the world of work.[19]. In addition, according to the Self-Efficacy Theory proposed by Albert Bandura (1997), a cognitive psychologist, self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their ability to organize and carry out the actions necessary to complete a task. [20].

### **The Influence of Soft Skills Competence on Self-Efficacy in Students**

The fourth hypothesis states that there is a positive and significant relationship between soft skills and self-efficacy among students. The test results prove that the better the mastery of soft skills, the higher the level of self-efficacy among students. Non-technical skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and time management contribute significantly to students' confidence in academic tasks and in facing the challenges of the working world. This finding aligns with Sinaga's (2024) research, which shows that soft skills have a positive and significant impact on self-efficacy. Soft skills include the ability to express ideas, self-motivation, emotional management, understanding norms and moral values, and leadership potential[18]. All of these aspects contribute to self-efficacy, which is reflected in self-confidence, readiness to face challenges, adaptability, and the courage to try new things.

### **The influence of self-efficacy on work readiness among university students**

The fifth hypothesis states that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and work readiness among students. The test results show that the higher the students' self-efficacy, the higher their readiness to face the world of work. This finding is not in line with the research by Sumampouw et al. (2024), which found a positive but insignificant influence between self-efficacy and work readiness.[21]. Conversely, these results are consistent with the research by Siallagan et al. (2022), which proves a significant relationship with a high correlation level and positive direction. [22]. This means that increased self-efficacy directly contributes to increased work readiness. Thus, self-efficacy is an important factor in preparing students to enter the professional world.

### **The Influence of Soft Skills Competence on Work Readiness Through Self-Efficacy as an Intervening Variable**

The sixth hypothesis states that there is a positive and significant influence between soft skills and work readiness through self-efficacy as an intervening variable among students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Yogyakarta State University. The test results show that this indirect path is not yet statistically significant, even though the direction of the influence is positive. This finding indicates that self-efficacy is not yet able to be a significant mediator between soft skills and work readiness. These results are inconsistent with Sinaga's (2024) study, which found a positive and significant influence of soft skills on work readiness through self-efficacy.[18]. In line with Wulandari & Waskito (2024), soft skills have a significant effect on self-efficacy but not on work readiness[23]. Dengan demikian, hubungan ini masih memerlukan kajian lebih lanjut dengan mempertimbangkan konteks, latar belakang mahasiswa, serta faktor eksternal yang memengaruhi.

### **The Influence of Hard Skills Competence on Work Readiness Through Self-Efficacy as an Intervening Variable**

The seventh hypothesis states that there is a positive and significant influence between hard skills and work readiness through self-efficacy as an intervening variable in students. The test results show that the indirect path is positive and significant, so that self-efficacy acts as an effective mediator in strengthening the relationship between hard skills and work readiness. This finding indicates that improving hard skills not only directly impacts work readiness but also indirectly enhances self-efficacy, which ultimately strengthens readiness to enter the workforce. These results align with Sinaga's (2024) research, which concluded that better hard skills lead to higher self-efficacy, and in turn, higher work readiness among students [18]. Self-efficacy acts as an important bridge connecting technical abilities with work readiness. The confidence that comes from mastering hard skills encourages students to be more prepared to adapt and contribute in a professional environment.

### **5. Comparison**

Compared to previous studies, this research provides new insights by revealing that hard skills, while essential, may negatively affect job readiness if not accompanied by strong soft skills and self-efficacy. Prior studies, such as Dhea et al. (2023) and Sinaga (2024), generally found positive and significant effects of both hard and soft skills on job readiness. However, this study's finding of a negative direct effect of hard skills challenges the prevailing assumption, highlighting the need for balance between technical abilities and non-technical competencies. Additionally, consistent with Wulandari & Waskito (2024), the mediating role of self-efficacy between soft skills and job readiness was found to be statistically insignificant, suggesting that soft skills alone may not be sufficient to enhance readiness without other supporting factors. The strong mediating effect of self-efficacy in the hard skill–job readiness relationship further reinforces the relevance of Bandura's self-efficacy theory in employability research. This combination of findings enriches the state-of-the-art by clarifying the nuanced interactions between competencies and psychological factors in determining graduate employability.

### **6. Conclusions**

Based on the discussion presented, this study yields several key findings. First, hard skills have a significant but negative effect on job readiness, indicating that an increase in technical abilities does not necessarily enhance job readiness if not accompanied by soft skills and self-efficacy. Second, soft skills have a positive but insignificant relationship with job readiness, although they still play an important role in developing students' non-technical capabilities. Third, both hard skills and soft skills are proven to have a positive and significant effect on self-efficacy, which in turn plays a crucial role in shaping students' confidence. Fourth, self-efficacy has a positive and significant effect on job readiness and serves as an effective mediator in the relationship between hard skills and job readiness, but not as a significant mediator between soft skills and job readiness. These findings underscore that students' job readiness requires a balance between technical abilities, non-technical skills, and a high level of self-efficacy. Therefore, curriculum and learning development in higher education should integrate training that strengthens these three aspects in a balanced manner to better prepare graduates for the workforce.

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