

# THE EFFECT OF INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE, SELF-EFFICACY AND SOFT SKILLS ON JOB READINESS GENERATION Z IN JABODETABEK

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Submitted: 24-01-2025, Revised: 11-03-2025, Accepted: 28-04-2025

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## ABSTRACT

Generation Z, as the age group with the highest unemployment rate, faces challenges in meeting the required job qualifications. This study aims to analyze the influence of internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills on job readiness in Jabodetabek. The study uses a descriptive method with a sample of 150 respondents selected through non-probability sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS). The results show that internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills have a positive and significant impact on job readiness. This research was conducted due to the observation that many Generation Z graduates or students are still unprepared to enter the workforce, indicated by a lack of basic professional competence and soft skills. This study provides new insights for companies and readers regarding the importance of these factors in improving Generation Z's job readiness and reducing the unemployment rate among them.

**Keywords:** *Intership experience, self-efficacy, soft skill, job readiness*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study on work readiness in the era of globalization has led to very significant economic growth and development for job seekers. Pambajeng et al. (2024) argue that tight industrial development forces Indonesia to prepare quality workforce sources in order to compete. However, this is in contrast to the main economic problem today, namely unemployment. Quoting from Kompas.com (2024), the central statistics agency revealed that almost 10 million Indonesians who are unemployed are generation Z. Generation Z, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, face unique challenges in getting stable jobs, even though the national unemployment rate is decreasing. The main reason for this challenge is the mismatch between the skills possessed by graduates and the requirements of the labor market (Kompas.id, 2024).

This unemployment phenomenon among generation Z is a serious demographic threat towards Indonesia Emas 2045. One of the main reasons for this skills gap is the misalignment between the Indonesian education system and the needs of the ever-growing labor market. Pratiwi et al. (2024) showed that many Generation Z graduates are inadequately prepared in key areas such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability—critical nontechnical skills that are highly valued by modern employers. Additionally, graduates' self-efficacy, or Generation Z's belief in their ability to succeed in the workplace, is another important factor influencing employability. Graduates with high self-efficacy tend to have greater confidence in their abilities, allowing them to navigate workplace challenges more effectively and make a smoother transition to full-time employment (Summapouw, Mandey, & Trang, 2024). Therefore, developing self-efficacy, alongside technical and nontechnical skills, should be a priority for education systems in preparing students for the workforce.

Internships are a key strategy to address the skills gap by offering students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience and develop real-world competencies. Internships provide students with hands-on experience in the workplace, allowing them to apply what they have learned in a practical setting and develop skills that are highly valued by employers. A study by Sahir et al. (2023) showed that internships are one of the most effective ways to improve employability, as they offer skills development and networking opportunities that can lead to full-time employment. For Generation Z, who value hands-on experience and prefer a more practical approach to learning, internships have become an essential tool for developing the skills needed to succeed in the workplace. By gaining real-world exposure, students not only improve their technical skills but also their non-technical skills, such as communication and teamwork, which are critical for job success.

This study aims to explore the relationship between internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills in shaping work readiness among Generation Z graduates in Indonesia. Previous studies have shown mixed results regarding the impact of internships and soft skills on work readiness (Sari & Nurhidayati, 2022; Suyanti, Subiyanto, & Chandra, 2024), and this study seeks to clarify the specific roles of these factors in preparing young people to enter the workforce. This study will focus on how the combination of practical internship experience, strong self-efficacy, and the development of important soft skills contribute to the work readiness of young graduates. Understanding how internships, self-efficacy, and soft skills influence work readiness will provide valuable insights for educators, organizations, and policymakers seeking to address youth unemployment in Indonesia. The findings of this study are expected to provide significant practical recommendations to address youth unemployment in Indonesia.

One of the key recommendations is to improve the curriculum by integrating non-technical skills training into technical education, ensuring that graduates are equipped not only with specialized knowledge but also with the communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills needed to succeed in the workplace. In addition, increasing the availability of internships and enhancing collaboration between academic institutions and industry will provide students with important workplace experiences. This will allow students to gain relevant work experience during their studies, so that they are more competitive in the job market after graduation. Furthermore, fostering self-efficacy through career guidance and coaching programs can help students build self-confidence, thereby increasing their chances of success in the job market.

This study aims to contribute to developing a comprehensive framework for improving work readiness among generation Z graduates in Indonesia. By focusing on the interaction between technical skills, non-technical skills, and self-efficacy, this study seeks to identify how educational institutions, organizations, and policymakers can work together to better prepare young people to enter the workforce. These findings are expected to provide countries with the right strategies to ensure that their young people are not only prepared to face the challenges of a rapidly changing global economy but also positioned to drive the nation's future growth and development.

### **Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses**

A study on work readiness, internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills has a relevant theoretical foundation in organizational theory and human resource management. One of the basic theories that explains work readiness is Super's Career Development Theory (1953), which states that work readiness is influenced by two interacting factors: internal factors,

such as skills and knowledge, and external factors, such as work experience and social environment. Therefore, Super's Career Development Theory emphasizes that to fulfill or support work readiness in a career, not only internal factors are important, but external factors must also be present.

The framework for the other variable, which is self-efficacy, in Super's Career Development Theory (1953) stresses that individuals who have high self-confidence and self-efficacy can manage social interactions and face challenges well, thus increasing work readiness. This theory also emphasizes the importance of soft skills in career development. Soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, are essential for success in the workplace.

In addition, internship experience, which is an external factor with a significant influence, serves as a bridge to connect formal education to the world of work, providing students the opportunity to apply what they know theoretically and develop practical skills. From this internship experience, individuals not only enhance their work readiness but also gain a competitive advantage in the job market, along with abilities that can be added when they enter the workforce. Based on this theory and evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:  
**H1:** Internship experience has a positive effect on the work readiness of Generation Z in Jabodetabek.

Self-efficacy is the belief a person has in their own ability, which provides self-confidence in a job so that goals can be achieved optimally. It is defined as the belief in one's ability to organize and carry out a series of actions required to achieve desired goals, with self-efficacy meaning belief in oneself to succeed Fitriana et al. (2021). With self-efficacy and confidence, students or individuals can face challenges and job demands in the workplace, thus improving work readiness. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H2:** Self-efficacy has a positive effect on the work readiness of Generation Z in Jabodetabek.

Soft skills play an important role in work readiness, as they act as internal driving factors that enhance an individual's work readiness in facing the workplace with their capabilities. Soft skills, according to Podungge et al. (2023), are implicit skills that an individual possesses and can develop, which are very useful and serve as a complement to other hard skills, so that they can have a maximal impact. Soft skills act as a companion that connects internship experience and self-efficacy into work readiness, because with soft skills, individuals receive feedback and recognition for the abilities they have learned, so they become more motivated to prepare for the workforce. Thus, leading to the hypothesis:

**H3:** Soft skills have a positive effect on the work readiness of Generation Z in Jabodetabek.

These variables are interconnected, and previous studies support the relationship between each variable. This study shows that students who have internship experience have gone through the process of performing actual work in the real world, even with the designated time period (Pambajeng, Sumantik & Sari, 2024). Similarly, self-efficacy has been proven to have a positive impact on work readiness because a high level of self-efficacy can influence an individual to be ready to face work and complete tasks with confidence in their abilities and commitment to the work being done (Rahmawati & Ahmad, 2021). Soft skills play an important role as a companion, where a person with good soft skills is believed to be able to adapt to their environment, make a positive impression, and be easily accepted by those around them (Podungge, Bokingo, Hilala, 2023).

For empirical analysis, these variables are operationalized through certain indicators. Work readiness is generally measured by evaluating work readiness in terms of logical and objective consideration, critical attitude, environmental adaptation, following areas of expertise, and the ability to collaborate (Fauzan, Triyono, Hardiyanta, Daryono, Arifah, 2023). Internship experience is assessed based on indicators such as the duration of the internship, education and HR development, solidification and maturation of learning outcomes, skills during work, and attitude formation during work (Pambajeng & Sumartik, 2019). Self-efficacy is evaluated from indicators such as the ability to complete tasks, appreciation for the level of task difficulty, confidence in learning, confidence in facing problems, and mastery of several areas of tasks (Yulanto, Iskandar, Atika, 2024), while soft skills are evaluated based on indicators such as leadership skills, communication ability, thinking skills, ethics or courtesy, and emotional intelligence (Nurbaiti & Putri, 2024).

This study aims to contribute to previous or future research that investigates work readiness variables. By discussing these relationships, this study not only validates the hypotheses but also provides a better understanding of the factors that influence work readiness among Generation Z students.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive design aimed at testing the effect of internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills on work readiness among Generation Z in Jabodetabek. The population targeted in this study is Generation Z students who have participated in an internship, aged 18 to 27 years. To collect data, this study uses non-probability sampling with a convenience sampling method, which allows for quicker and more efficient data collection. The total sample consists of 150 respondents, as determined by the established sampling guidelines and adjusted to the scope of this research.

Data collection was conducted through Google Forms or a structured questionnaire using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing respondents to indicate their level of agreement with statements regarding internship experience, self-efficacy, soft skills, and work readiness. The questionnaire was distributed both online and offline to reach a diverse Generation Z population in Jabodetabek.

Each variable in this study has been operationalized with specific indicators. Internship experience includes indicators such as the practical experience gained by students during internships, which reflects skills and knowledge relevant to the world of work (Pambajeng & Sumartik, 2019). Self-efficacy is assessed through individuals' belief in their ability to achieve goals and overcome challenges (Yulanto, Iskandar, Atika, 2024). Soft skills are measured based on indicators that include interpersonal and communication skills (Nurbaiti & Putri, 2024). Work readiness is measured by how ready and capable an individual feels to enter the workforce, including aspects of skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Fauzan, Triyono, Hardiyanta, Daryono, Arifah, 2023).

Data analysis in this study uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS4 software, which allows for simultaneous evaluation of multiple relationships between factor variables. This analysis includes testing validity and reliability through convergent and discriminant validity, as well as testing reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE (Average Variance Extracted). After the validation process, internal model analysis is conducted to evaluate the hypotheses through path coefficients and significance testing.

The research hypothesis, proposing significant relationships between internship experience, self-efficacy, soft skills, and work readiness, was tested at a significance level of 54.6%. The SEM approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the direct relationships between variables.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on data collected from the provided documents, the majority of respondents in this study are Generation Z individuals in Jabodetabek, aged between 18 - 27 years. With varying educational levels among the respondents, many have already completed internships, both independent internships and mandatory university internships. Furthermore, most respondents are still not ready to work in an organization. The factors influencing work readiness for these respondents include internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills, with work readiness as the demographic factor.

The measurement model analysis shows strong validity and reliability across all variable constructs. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.5, indicating convergent validity. The Cronbach's Alpha value for each variable construct must also exceed 0.7, indicating high consistency and internal reliability (**Table 1**). The Fornell-Larcker results show that the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than its correlation with other constructs, confirming discriminant validity (**Table 2**). Furthermore, the factor loadings for each construct indicator are well above 0.7, with indicators for internship experience, self-efficacy, soft skills, and work readiness showing strong loadings, confirming that the variables are a valid representation of each construct (**Table 3**). Overall, these results validate the measurement model, ensuring that each variable construct is accurately and validly measured by its indicators.

Table 1. Average Variance Extracted Analysis

Variables	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-efficacy	0.599	0.777
Work Readiness	0.594	0.772
Internship Experience	0.593	0.772
Soft Skill	0.671	0.755

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker Analysis

	Self-efficacy	Work Readiness	Internship Experience	Soft Skill
Self-efficacy	0.774			
Work Readiness	0.653	0.771		
Internship Experience	0.693	0.689	0.770	
Soft Skill	0.604	0.597	0.632	0.819

Table 3. Loading Factor Analysis

	Self-efficacy	Work Readiness	Internship Experience	Soft Skill
SE1	0.762			
SE3	0.768			
SE4	0.809			
SE5	0.756			
WR1		0.758		
WR2		0.756		
WR4		0.758		
WR5		0.810		
IE1			0.785	
IE2			0.762	

IE3	0.778	
IE4	0.756	
SS1		0.807
SS2		0.800
SS3		0.850

Furthermore, the inner- model measurement analysis is conducted using R-Square ( $R^2$ ) test, effect size ( $f^2$ ) test, Goodness of Fit (GoF) test, path coefficient analysis, and hypothesis testing.

**Table 4.** shows the R-Square ( $R^2$ ) value for work readiness as 0.555, indicating that 55.5% of the variability in work readiness among Generation Z in Jabodetabek is explained by the combined effects of internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills. This suggests a fairly strong model, as less than half of the variability in work readiness can be attributed to these predictor variables. The adjusted R-Square value of 0.546 further confirms this strength, by adjusting for the number of predictors to provide a conservative estimate of the model's explanatory power. These values indicate that while the model explains a significant portion of work readiness, other factors not included in this study may play an important role in influencing work readiness within this demographic.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Work Readiness	0.555	0.546

The analysis of effect size  $f^2$  (**Table 5**) provides insights into the individual contributions of each predictor variable—Internship Experience, Self-efficacy, and Soft Skills—toward Work Readiness. Internship Experience has an  $f^2$  value of 0.143, indicating a small effect size, meaning that Internship Experience makes a small contribution to explaining variation in Work Readiness. Self-efficacy has an  $f^2$  value of 0.081, which is a small effect size, indicating a small influence on work readiness. Soft skills have an  $f^2$  value of 0.046, showing that Soft Skills have a small influence on Work Readiness among Generation Z in Jabodetabek. These results suggest that, within the demographic of this study, Internship Experience, Self-efficacy, and Soft Skills play a substantial role in determining Work Readiness, although with small effects.

Table 5. Effect Size Analysis

	f square	Result
Self-efficacy → Work Readiness	0.081	Small effect
Internship Experience → Work Readiness	0.143	Small effect
Soft Skill → Work Readiness	0.046	Small effect

Furthermore, the Goodness of Fit (GOF) is assessed at 0.5837. This value is derived from the combined values of average variance extracted (AVE) and R-Square ( $R^2$ ) of the dependent variable, work readiness. The GOF value of 0.5937, which is above the generally accepted threshold of 0.5, indicates that the model has a high level of fit and successfully explains the data. This suggests that the construct variables used in this study—internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills—adequately explain the variability in work readiness among Generation Z. Therefore, the GOF score reinforces the robustness and validity of the model in explaining the factors contributing to work readiness.

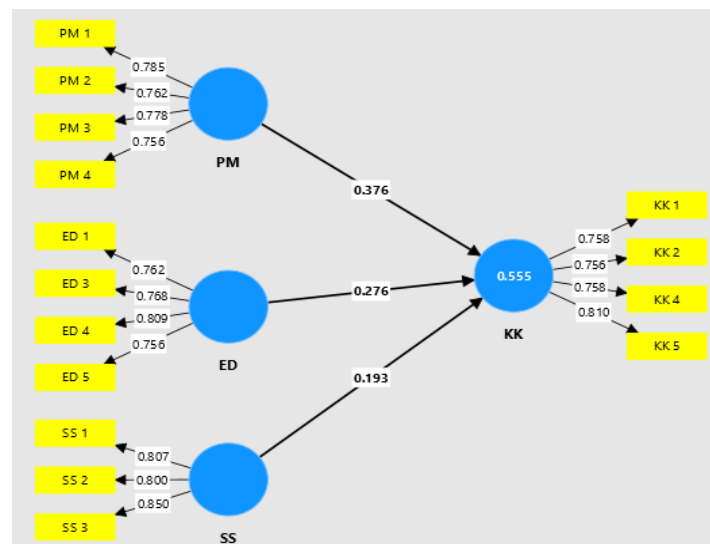


Figure 1. Path Coefficient

Table 6. Hypotheses Testing

	Original Sample	t-statistics	p-values
Self-efficacy → Work Readiness	0.276	2.597	0.005
Internship Experience → Work Readiness	0.376	3.803	0.000
Soft Skill → Work Readiness	0.193	2.188	0.014

From Figure 1 and Table 6, the path coefficients and hypothesis testing results show varying levels of influence among the variables on work readiness. The path coefficient for internship experience on work readiness is 0.376, with a t-statistic of 3.803 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a statistically significant positive effect of internship experience on work readiness. This supports the hypothesis that higher internship experience leads to greater work readiness. Next, the path coefficient for self-efficacy on work readiness is 0.276, with a t-statistic of 2.597 and a p-value of 0.005, indicating a statistically significant positive effect of self-efficacy on work readiness.

Finally, the path coefficient for soft skills on work readiness is 0.193, with a t-statistic of 2.188 and a p-value of 0.014, indicating a statistically significant positive effect of soft skills on work readiness. These findings highlight that, statistically, internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills significantly contribute to work readiness.

This study investigates the influence of internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills on work readiness among Generation Z in Jabodetabek. The results show that internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills have a significant positive effect on work readiness. These findings provide insights into what Generation Z needs to prepare for the workforce.

The significant positive impact of internship experience on work readiness aligns with previous literature that identifies field internship experience as crucial for students to develop relevant skills. This study is consistent with Sari and Nurhidayati (2022), which found that internship experience positively predicts work readiness. Internship experience not only provides technical knowledge but also helps individuals understand the dynamics of the real work environment. This is particularly important for Generation Z, who often face difficulties adapting to the ever-changing demands of the workforce.

Furthermore, self-efficacy was found to be positively and significantly related to work readiness. For Generation Z, who are often under pressure to meet high expectations, having confidence in their abilities is crucial. This study aligns with Yulanto et al. (2024), which shows that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to cope with stress and challenges in the workplace. Strong self-efficacy enables individuals to be more proactive in seeking opportunities and developing the necessary skills for success, thereby increasing their readiness to enter the workforce.

Lastly, soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership play an essential role in work readiness. This study proves that soft skills have a significant positive impact on work readiness. This research is consistent with Pambajeng et al. (2024), who emphasize that the development of soft skills through various activities, such as organizations and training, is critical in preparing Generation Z to face the increasingly complex demands of the workforce. Soft skills have become one of the key factors sought by organizations when hiring new employees. Therefore, Generation Z needs to hone various skills to enhance their competitiveness in the job market.

Work readiness among Generation Z is also influenced by the educational environment and institutional support. Educational institutions need to create more opportunities for students to gain experience, such as internship programs and skill training. According to research by Mustari (2021), institutions that are active in providing internship programs and skill training can help students develop the competencies needed in the workforce. By giving students access to relevant activities, institutions can help Generation Z develop the skills necessary for success in the workplace.

In this study, it is important for Generation Z to take the initiative in their self-development. They should be proactive in seeking relevant experiences, whether through internships, organizational projects, or training. This research is supported by Yulanto et al. (2024), which shows that students who actively seek internship experiences tend to be more prepared to enter the workforce. By developing skills and building networks, Generation Z can increase their work readiness and prepare themselves to face the challenges of a competitive job market.

Positive behavior and the willingness to learn from experiences will also help Generation Z in the workforce. This study is supported by Andina et al. (2023), which shows that individuals who have a positive attitude toward challenges are more likely to overcome challenges and achieve their career goals. Therefore, Generation Z needs to develop an open attitude towards feedback and learning from both positive and negative experiences.

These findings show that the three variables—internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills—have a significant and positive impact on work readiness. The findings also provide insights that Generation Z should be active in gaining experiences, such as participating in university organizations, computer training, and others.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGESTIONS**

This study reveals that internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills significantly influence work readiness among Generation Z in Jabodetabek. The research shows that internship experience not only serves as a means to apply the theory learned but also as a bridge to understand the dynamics of the real work environment. Self-efficacy reflects an individual's belief in their abilities and skills, which has proven to be an important factor in



improving work readiness, as individuals with self-confidence tend to be more active and better able to face challenges. Additionally, mastery of soft skills, such as communication and teamwork, has become increasingly crucial in today's highly competitive work environment. Therefore, Generation Z must prepare themselves for the workforce, with more attention needed toward developing experience, increasing self-confidence, and mastering soft skills.

However, this study has limitations that need to be considered. The geographical focus is only on the Jabodetabek area, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or cultural contexts. Additionally, this study only examines three variables—internship experience, self-efficacy, and soft skills—without considering other variables that may affect work readiness. Future research is recommended to involve a more diverse sample from various regions in Indonesia, so the results obtained can be more representative and reflect a broader context. Researchers may also consider other factors, such as motivation, family support, and economic conditions, which influence work readiness. For organizations and educational institutions, they can develop training or experiences that involve real-world projects that can be learned by Generation Z.

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