1st International Conference on Management, Business and Economy (ICoMBEc 2025)
Vo. 1 No. 1 2025
e-ISSN : XXXX-XXX

THE INFLUENCE OF SOFT SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND PROBLEM SOLVING ABILITY ON WORK READINESS AT PAMULANG UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of soft skills development and problem-solving ability on the job readiness of students at Pamulang University. A quantitative research design was employed using a survey approach and multiple regression analysis. The sample was selected through purposive sampling, consisting of approximately 200 final-year students. The expected results indicate that both soft skills development and problem-solving ability have a positive and significant effect on job readiness, and jointly explain a substantial proportion of its variance. The findings will be recommended for the development of curriculum and training programs at the university.

Keywords: soft skills, problem solving, work preparation, students

Introduction

The development of the world of work in the era of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution demands that university graduates possess competencies that are not limited to hard skills but also non-technical abilities such as soft skills and problem-solving capabilities. Modern companies no longer seek graduates solely with strong academic performance but also individuals who can communicate effectively, work in teams, demonstrate leadership, manage time efficiently, and solve problems with creative and appropriate solutions.

The phenomenon shows that many university graduates, including students of Pamulang University, face difficulties in entering the workforce due to limitations in soft skills and problem-solving abilities. Findings from previous studies also indicate that students' employability readiness is not only determined by mastery of academic knowledge but also by the development of non-technical skills that support their performance in real work environments (Pamungkas, 2021; Ayaturrahman, 2023).

Several prior studies have shown that soft skills significantly contribute to students' job readiness, particularly in aspects such as communication, teamwork, and work ethics (Surabaya, 2022). Meanwhile, problem-solving ability has been proven to be

closely related to graduates' capacity to adapt, make decisions, and deal with complex problems in the workplace (M. Faisal, 2023). This demonstrates that both soft skills and problem-solving need to be developed in balance to improve students' job readiness.

Based on this explanation, this study is important to determine the extent to which the development of soft skills and problem-solving ability influence the job readiness of Pamulang University students. Therefore, the findings of this research are expected to provide recommendations for the university in designing curricula and training programs that are more oriented toward labor market needs**.**

The introduction must present the research background and objectives, as well as explain the significance and relevance of the article.

Theoretical Framework

In facing the era of globalization and increasingly competitive job markets, university graduates are required not only to possess academic abilities (hard skills), but also non-technical abilities (soft skills) and critical thinking or problem-solving skills. These aspects play a crucial role in determining the level of work readiness of students before entering the professional world.

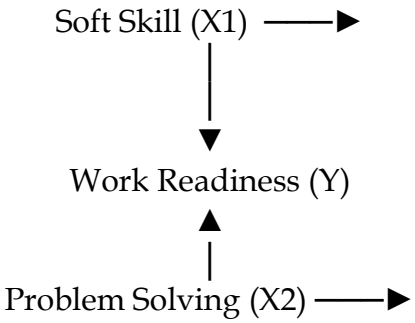
According to Robles (2012), soft skills refer to interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities that include communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and responsibility. Students with well-developed soft skills tend to adapt more easily to the work environment, collaborate effectively in teams, and demonstrate a strong work ethic. Therefore, the development of soft skills plays an important role in enhancing students' readiness to enter the workforce.

Meanwhile, problem-solving ability is also considered one of the essential competencies that must be possessed by future employees. According to Polya (1957), problem-solving is a thinking process that involves understanding the problem, planning a strategy, implementing the solution, and evaluating the result. In the workplace, individuals with good problem-solving skills are more prepared to face challenges, make wise decisions, and solve problems effectively and creatively. This indicates that the higher an individual's problem-solving ability, the higher their level of work readiness.

Work readiness itself is defined as the ability of individuals to obtain and maintain employment, as well as to adapt to changes in the work environment (Fugate et al., 2004). Work readiness encompasses three important aspects: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Students who possess these three aspects in soft skills and problem-solving will be more prepared to compete in the labor market.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the development of soft skills and problem-solving abilities has a positive influence on students' work readiness. Students who have good communication skills, can work effectively in teams, think critically, and solve problems efficiently tend to have higher levels of work readiness compared to those who have not mastered these abilities.

Conceptually, the relationship between the variables in this study can be illustrated as follows:



Based on the theoretical framework above, the hypotheses of this study are as follows:

1. There is a positive and significant influence between soft skills and the work readiness of Universitas Pamulang students.
2. There is a positive and significant influence between problem-solving ability and the work readiness of Universitas Pamulang students.
3. There is a positive and significant simultaneous influence between soft skills and problem-solving on the work readiness of Universitas Pamulang students

Method

This study employs a quantitative approach to examine the influence of soft skills development and problem-solving abilities on the job readiness of students at Pamulang University. The research design is descriptive and correlational, aiming to explore the relationships between the independent variables (soft skills development and problem-solving) and the dependent variable (job readiness).

The population of this study consists of university students currently enrolled at Pamulang University. A total sample of 105 respondents was selected using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, to ensure representation from students of various academic backgrounds.

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire consisting of three main sections: soft skills development, problem-solving ability, and job readiness.

1. The soft skills development section was adapted from previous research on communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and work ethics.
2. The problem-solving section included indicators measuring students' ability to identify issues, analyze alternatives, and implement effective solutions.
3. The job readiness section used standardized items focusing on competence, confidence, and preparedness to enter the professional workforce.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, while inferential statistics including correlation analysis and multiple regression were employed to test the relationships among variables. Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

(SPSS) software to ensure the reliability of findings and the robustness of hypothesis testing.

Results

The reliability test results show that the instrument used to measure Problem-Solving Ability (X2) has good reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.601, indicating adequate internal consistency. Meanwhile, the reliability for Job Readiness (Y) obtained a value of 0.512, which is still below the ideal standard. However, the Soft Skills Development (X1) variable shows a lower value of 0.460, indicating that the instrument has weak internal consistency.

Therefore, improvements to the Soft Skills Development (X1) instrument are needed to achieve higher reliability. Overall, the instrument for measuring Problem-Solving Ability is fairly reliable, but Soft Skills Development and Job Readiness require further refinement.

The normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests showed that all variables (Soft Skills Development, Problem-Solving Ability, and Job Readiness) had significant values in both normality tests (p-value < 0.05), indicating that the data distribution for the three variables was not normal. Therefore, the assumption of normality could not be fulfilled, and analyses using a normal distribution may need to be reconsidered. As an alternative, non-parametric tests may be more appropriate for this study.

The heteroscedasticity test results show that the data points are scattered randomly without a clear pattern, both above and below the zero line. This indicates that there are no heteroscedasticity problems in this regression model. In other words, the residual variance remains constant across the range of predicted values, fulfilling the assumption of homoscedasticity. Therefore, the regression model can be considered valid in relation to the heteroscedasticity assumption.

The multicollinearity test results show that the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values for both independent variables — Soft Skills Development (X1) and Problem-Solving Ability (X2) — are 1.098, which is well below the threshold value of 10. The Tolerance values are also high, at 0.910, indicating no multicollinearity between the independent variables. This suggests that the two independent variables do not have a strong correlation with each other, meaning that the regression model used is not affected by multicollinearity.

Table 1. Variable

No.	Variable	statistic
1	Soft skill Development (X1)	Results Valid, Significant correlation
2	Problem Solving(X2)	Valid, Significant correlation
3	Work Readiness (Y)	Vailid, Significant correlation

Simple Liniear Regression of AI Dependent Variabel (x1) on Work Readiness (Y)

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.251	1.356		1.660	.100
	X1_Soft Skill Development	.887	.062	.822	14.305	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y_Work Readiness

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	5.883	1.126		5.225	.000
	X2_Problem Solving	.739	.053	.817	14.040	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y_Work Readiness

This study shows that the development of soft skills (X1) and problem-solving ability (X2) have a significant influence on the job readiness of students at Pamulang University.

The t-test results indicate that the soft skill development variable (X1) has a positive effect on job readiness, with a t-value = 14.305 and p-value = 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This means that the better the development of students' soft skills, the higher their level of job readiness.

F-Test (ANOVA) Result for the Regression Model

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	870.269	2	435.135	135.122	.000[b]
	Residual	312.371	97	3.220		
	Total	1182.640	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Y_Work Readiness

b. Predictors: (Constant), X2_Problem Solving , X1_Soft Skill Development

Simple Linear Regreesion Table

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.251	1.356		1.660	.100
	X1_Soft Skill Development	.887	.062	.822	14.305	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y_Work Readiness

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.883	1.126		5.225	.000
	X2_Problem Solving	.739	.053	.817	14.040	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y_Work Readiness

Based on the simple linear regression analysis, the constant value (a) is 2.251, and the regression coefficient (b) for Soft Skill Development (X_1) is 0.887, with a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000 < 0.05.
This means that Soft Skill Development has a positive and significant influence on Work Readiness among university students.
The regression equation can be written as $Y = 2.251 + 0.887X_1$
The positive regression coefficient indicates that an increase in soft skill development will lead to an increase in students' work readiness. Specifically, every 1-unit increase in soft skill development will increase work readiness by 0.887 units, assuming other factors remain constant,Furthermore, the t-value of 14.305 is much greater than the critical value of t-table, confirming that the variable has a statistically significant effect. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.822) also shows that soft skill development contributes strongly to changes in work readiness.
Thus, the regression model can be interpreted as reliable and effective in explaining the influence of soft skills on students' readiness to enter the workforce.

The analysis results show that the constant value (a) is 5.883, while the regression coefficient (b) for Problem Solving (X_2) is 0.739, with a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05.This indicates that Problem Solving has a positive and significant influence on Work Readiness.The regression equation can be expressed as $Y = 5.883 + 0.739X_2$

The positive coefficient value means that better problem-solving skills lead to higher levels of work readiness. Every 1-unit increase in problem-solving ability raises work readiness by 0.739 units.
The t-value of 14.040 shows strong evidence that this effect is statistically significant. Moreover, the Beta value of 0.817 indicates a strong relationship between problem-solving skills and work readiness.
Therefore, it can be concluded that the higher the student's problem-solving ability, the more prepared they are to face the professional work environment.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	870.269	2	435.135	135.122	.000[b]
	Residual	312.371	97	3.220		
	Total	1182.640	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Y_Work Readiness

b. Predictors: (Constant), X2_Problem Solving , X1_Soft Skill Development

Multiple Regression table

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.363	1.231		1.919	.058
	X1_Soft Skill Development	.500	.100	.463	4.995	.000
	X2_Problem Solving	.392	.084	.434	4.682	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y_Work Readiness

Based on the multiple linear regression analysis, the regression equation is:
$Y = 2.363 + 0.500X_1 + 0.392X_2$
The coefficient of Soft Skill Development (X_1) is 0.500 with a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05), meaning it has a positive and significant effect on Work Readiness. Similarly, the coefficient of Problem Solving (X_2) is 0.392 with a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05), also showing a positive and significant effect,The t-values for X_1 (4.995) and X_2 (4.682) confirm that both variables significantly influence Work Readiness. Thus, improvements in soft skills and problem-solving abilities together increase students' readiness to enter the workforce

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that Soft Skill Development and Problem-Solving Ability have a significant influence on the Job Readiness of Universitas Pamulang students. These findings indicate that students who possess well-developed soft skills—such as communication, teamwork, and leadership—tend to be more prepared to face the demands of the professional world, which requires flexibility and strong interpersonal competence.

This result aligns with the Employability Skills theory proposed by Yorke and Knight (2006), which states that a person's job readiness is not only determined by academic ability but also by non-technical skills such as soft skills and problem-solving abilities. Problem-solving skills help students think critically, make sound decisions, and adapt quickly to changes in the work environment.

Furthermore, the findings also show that the development of soft skills and problem-solving abilities not only play individual roles but also complement each other in shaping optimal job readiness. Students who can solve problems creatively and communicate effectively are more likely to adapt to work challenges, thereby becoming more prepared to enter the professional world.

However, the effectiveness of developing these two aspects may vary depending on the learning environment and institutional support. Therefore, it is essential for universities to strengthen their curricula and learning activities that focus on 21st-century skill development, including soft skills and problem-solving, through training, collaborative projects, and internship experiences.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Soft Skill Development and Problem-Solving Ability have a positive and significant influence on the Job Readiness of Universitas Pamulang students. The results indicate that students who continuously improve their communication, teamwork, and adaptability skills, as well as their ability to analyze and solve problems effectively, tend to be more prepared to enter the professional workforce.

Soft skills help students enhance their interpersonal competence, while problem-solving abilities strengthen their critical and analytical thinking in handling challenges within the workplace. Together, these two variables significantly contribute to shaping well-prepared graduates who can adapt to various professional demands and responsibilities.

The findings of this research provide valuable insights for universities, especially Universitas Pamulang, to emphasize practical and skill-based learning. Strengthening students' employability through integrated training programs, workshops, and internship opportunities can further enhance their readiness for future careers.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who supported this research, especially the respondents who participated in data collection. Appreciation is also extended to Universitas Pamulang for providing the facilities and

administrative assistance throughout the research process. The author would also like to thank colleagues and advisors for their constructive feedback and valuable suggestions. This research would not have been possible without their guidance and support.

It is hoped that the results of this study will contribute to the development of educational policies and curriculum designs aimed at improving students' employability, particularly in strengthening soft skills and problem-solving abilities as essential components of job readiness.

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