

# Bridging soft skills and work readiness: The strategic role of self-efficacy and organizational experience in final-year students

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## ABSTRACT

In today's increasingly dynamic labor market, final-year university students are required to possess more than just academic achievements to ensure a successful transition into the workforce. However, recent observations indicate that many students are inadequately prepared, with limited experience and underdeveloped soft skills. This study aims to examine the influence of soft skills and organizational experience on the work readiness of final-year students at the University of Palangka Raya, with self-efficacy as a mediating variable. Utilizing a quantitative explanatory approach, the study involved 100 final-year students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via closed-ended questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings reveal that both soft skills and organizational experience have a positive and significant effect on self-efficacy. However, neither of these variables has a direct significant effect on job readiness. Instead, self-efficacy plays a crucial mediating role, significantly linking soft skills and organizational experience to job readiness. This indicates that confidence in one's ability is a central factor in preparing students for employment. Based on these findings, it is recommended that universities strengthen experiential learning and soft skills development programs, with a particular emphasis on enhancing students' self-efficacy. Integrating training, mentoring, and real-world experiences into academic curricula can improve students' transition into professional environments and better align graduate competencies with labor market demands.

*Keywords: job readiness, organizational experience, self-efficacy, soft skills, university students*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in driving economic growth, especially in developing countries. At the same time, rapid technological advancement and

dynamic social change have significantly transformed the structure of the labor market. Rising economic pressures and the increasing cost of living compel young people, particularly university graduates, to secure stable employment soon after completing their education (Pratama and Kurniawan, 2021). In this context, higher education graduates are expected to demonstrate adequate work readiness to meet the challenges of today's workforce. However, many graduates face difficulties in transitioning from the academic world to professional life. This challenge arises largely from a mismatch between the competencies possessed by graduates and the skills demanded by industries. The gap highlights a low level of work readiness among students nearing graduation (Putri, 2022). These circumstances suggest that success in the job market is not solely determined by academic achievements, but also by non-academic abilities such as interpersonal skills, leadership experience, and the confidence to face real-world job challenges.

Higher education institutions hold the responsibility to equip students not only with theoretical knowledge but also with practical skills that align with labor market expectations. Yet, the growing number of graduates each year is not matched by a proportional increase in job opportunities, leading to rising unemployment among degree holders (Handayani, 2023). As a result, many students struggle to find employment that aligns with their field of study, reflecting inadequate preparation for the workforce. A preliminary observation conducted among final-year students at the University of Palangka Raya reveals that approximately sixty percent of students feel unfamiliar with current job market conditions, seventy percent believe they lack essential skills and experience, and seventy percent report no involvement in student organizations. These figures indicate a significant gap in students' preparation for employment, particularly in terms of soft skill development and experiential learning.

One of the most critical psychological factors contributing to work readiness is self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to perform tasks and achieve goals successfully. Students with strong self-efficacy are typically more confident, motivated, and resilient when pursuing career opportunities (Yuliana and Nugroho, 2024). Self-efficacy enables individuals to confront challenges with a proactive mindset and to persist through setbacks, both of which are essential for adapting to a professional environment. In addition to self-efficacy, soft skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving are becoming increasingly important in the modern workplace. Employers today prioritize these competencies alongside technical knowledge and academic qualifications (Astuti and Wulandari, 2023). Soft skills play a key role in helping individuals build strong relationships, collaborate effectively, and respond appropriately to organizational demands.

University level student organizations serve as a valuable platform for developing both soft skills and work readiness. Students who actively participate in organizations are more likely to develop leadership, time management, and public speaking skills, which are all crucial for employment success (Wijaya, 2023). Involvement in such activities also offers exposure to real-world responsibilities and decision-making experiences, which further enhance students' confidence and workplace adaptability. The development of work readiness is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include an individual's soft skills, motivation, talents, and self-efficacy, while external factors encompass family support, educational quality, and public policies related to employment (Nugraha, 2022). This study focuses on two internal factors—soft skills and organizational experience and investigates their effect on work readiness, with self-efficacy serving as a mediating variable.

According to Bandura's theoretical framework, self-efficacy consists of three dimensions: magnitude, which refers to the perceived difficulty level one can manage; strength, or the degree of confidence in one's ability; and generality, which describes how self-efficacy applies across different situations (Chotimah and Suryani, 2020). These dimensions enable individuals to stay committed, overcome obstacles, and recover from failures key attributes that support a smoother transition into employment. Simultaneously, soft skills are fundamental for enhancing employability in the twenty-first century. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture,

essential soft skills include emotional intelligence, critical thinking, teamwork, communication, and leadership (Kemdikbud, 2020). Students who master these abilities tend to exhibit greater confidence, initiative, and adaptability qualities that are increasingly valued by employers.

Organizational experience offers students practical opportunities to apply these soft skills in real-life contexts. By engaging in student organizations, students strengthen their interpersonal interactions, develop leadership potential, and enhance their sense of responsibility (Rahmawati and Idris, 2021). These experiences contribute significantly to self-efficacy and work readiness, making graduates better prepared to meet the expectations of professional environments. Based on these theoretical and empirical foundations, this study aims to examine the influence of soft skills and organizational experience on final-year students' work readiness, with self-efficacy functioning as a mediating variable. Understanding this relationship can inform the development of educational strategies that foster student preparedness and support successful transitions from university to the workforce.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Soft Skills and Work Readiness*

Soft skills refer to a broad set of non-technical competencies that include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, leadership, and emotional intelligence. These skills are increasingly recognized as critical determinants of success in the contemporary workplace. Unlike hard skills, which are task-specific and measurable, soft skills are more behavioral and interpersonal in nature. They enable individuals to interact effectively, manage challenges, and integrate into organizational cultures (Wahyuni & Hasanah, 2022). The contribution of soft skills to work readiness has been emphasized in recent educational and workforce development research.

According to Sari and Putra (2023), students who possess strong soft skills are more confident, better communicators, and more resilient when facing uncertainty in job settings. Moreover, in a study conducted among final-year students, mastery of soft skills significantly enhanced the ability to adapt to work environments, demonstrating that these competencies are essential in bridging the gap between education and employment (Nurhidayah, 2021). Employers increasingly prioritize soft skills during recruitment and selection processes. As noted by Widodo and Firmansyah (2022), many companies view these interpersonal qualities as equally important, if not more important, than academic qualifications. Therefore, integrating soft skill development into higher education curricula has become a strategic priority to ensure that graduates are not only knowledgeable but also employable.

### *Organizational Experience and Work Readiness*

Involvement in student organizations provides students with opportunities to develop practical leadership and teamwork abilities, which are directly applicable to workplace settings. Through organizing events, managing teams, and resolving conflicts, students acquire skills that complement academic learning and enhance work readiness (Indrayani & Nugroho, 2023). A study by Susanti and Lestari (2022) found that students who participated actively in campus organizations reported higher levels of self-confidence, discipline, and communication skills. These attributes played a significant role in their preparedness for internships, job interviews, and eventual integration into professional roles. Moreover, organizational experience fosters a sense of responsibility and decision-making ability traits highly valued in the workforce (Fitria & Ramdhan, 2024). The experiential learning gained through organizational involvement is not only beneficial for developing skills but also contributes to a stronger career identity and professional outlook. Students who engage in extracurricular activities often show a clearer understanding of their career goals and are more likely to seek opportunities aligned with their aspirations (Hasanah,

2023).

### *Self-Efficacy as a Mediating Variable*

Self-efficacy, as introduced by Bandura, refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to perform specific tasks successfully. This belief system influences motivation, persistence, and resilience when facing challenges. Within the context of education and employment, self-efficacy acts as a psychological resource that shapes students' confidence in their ability to enter and succeed in the workforce (Chotimah & Suryani, 2020). Recent research highlights the role of self-efficacy as a mediating factor in the relationship between various developmental experiences and career outcomes. For example, Dewi and Astuti (2022) demonstrated that students who engage in structured soft skill training develop higher levels of self-efficacy, which in turn enhances their work readiness. Similarly, organizational involvement strengthens a student's belief in their professional competencies, which leads to greater enthusiasm and persistence in job-seeking efforts (Maulana, 2024). Self-efficacy also mediates the transformation of experience into confidence. When students face complex tasks in organizational settings and successfully accomplish them, they build a stronger belief in their abilities. This, according to Wulandari and Hidayat (2023), encourages a more proactive and optimistic approach to career challenges, thereby increasing employability.

### *The Interrelationship of Soft Skills, Organizational Experience, and Self-Efficacy*

There is a growing body of literature supporting the integrated relationship among soft skills, organizational experience, self-efficacy, and work readiness. According to Prasetyo and Fadilah (2023), students with higher soft skills and extensive organizational backgrounds tend to exhibit greater self-efficacy, which subsequently leads to enhanced preparedness for employment. This mediating role of self-efficacy is crucial because it explains the psychological mechanism through which experiences and competencies are internalized and translated into job-seeking behaviors. Furthermore, research by Yusuf and Hartati (2024) confirms that self-efficacy not only influences the ability to perform tasks but also determines how persistently individuals pursue career goals. Students with strong soft skills and organizational experience are more likely to develop positive self-perceptions, resulting in higher levels of career motivation, initiative, and adaptability.

## **3. METHOD**

This study adopts a quantitative research approach due to its structured, objective, and systematic characteristics, which allow for measurable data collection and statistical analysis. Quantitative research is rooted in the positivist paradigm and emphasizes empirical, objective, and replicable methods to study observable phenomena (Rahman & Utami, 2021). The research is categorized as explanatory, aiming to investigate causal relationships between variables and test hypotheses related to the influence of soft skills and organizational experience on work readiness through self-efficacy (Setiawan & Kurniawati, 2022). The sample consists of 100 final-year students at Universitas Palangka Raya, determined using the rule of thumb proposed by Hair et al., which suggests a sample size of at least 25 times the number of variables for robust analysis in SEM (Hair et al., 2021). The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, based on criteria including final-year status, experience in soft skills training, participation in organizational activities, and willingness to complete the research questionnaire.

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire, a method widely accepted for its efficiency in capturing structured responses related to attitudes, behaviors, and competencies. This technique is particularly effective for quantitative studies due to its practicality and ease of analysis (Hidayah, 2022). The study uses Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with

SmartPLS 4.0 software to assess relationships between latent variables, which are measured through indicators rather than direct observation (Ghozali & Latan, 2021). The analysis consists of two stages: the outer model, which tests validity and reliability using factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), cross-loadings, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha; and the inner model, which examines the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), path coefficients, and the significance of hypothesized relationships through bootstrapping (Wulandari & Yuliana, 2023).

This study examines four variables. The independent variables include soft skills, referring to non-technical abilities such as communication, collaboration, time management, and leadership that support effective social and professional functioning, and organizational experience, defined as students' involvement in structured on- or off-campus activities that develop teamwork and adaptability (Nugroho & Prasetya, 2023). The mediating variable is self-efficacy, described as the belief in one's capability to perform specific tasks and manage challenges in work-related contexts (Dewi & Astuti, 2022). The dependent variable is work readiness, encompassing confidence, professional competence, adaptability to workplace settings, and the ability to solve problems (Yusuf & Hartati, 2024). Through this methodological framework, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how soft skills and organizational experience contribute to students' preparedness for entering the workforce, with self-efficacy playing a central mediating role. The findings are expected to inform educational institutions about the significance of experiential learning in improving graduate employability. Moreover, this research contributes to the development of effective strategies that enhance student outcomes in higher education.

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### *Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)*

The outer measurement model is employed to assess latent constructs in research by utilizing observed indicators or measurement variables. This model links latent variables with their indicators through factor loadings, which illustrate the strength of the relationship between the latent variable and its corresponding indicators. In evaluating the reflectance index measurement model, several key statistical measures are applied, including factor loading, composite reliability, rho\_A, Cronbach's alpha, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), the Fornell-Lacker criterion, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). These metrics assess the validity and reliability of items, indicators, and constructs (latent variables) used in the research.

##### *Factor Loadings (Outer Loadings)*

Factor loading or outer loading measures the correlation between each measurement item and its associated variable, indicating the extent to which an item represents the variable it measures. A higher factor loading suggests that a larger proportion of variance in a measurement item is explained by the construct. According to Hair et al. (2017), a commonly used standard for assessing convergent validity is an outer loading value greater than 0.70.

**Table 1.** Outer Model Test Results

	Job Readiness	Soft Skills Training	Organizational Experience	Self Efficacy
KK1	0,887			
KK2	0,858			
KK3	0,907			
KK4	0,905			

PO1		0,890	
PO2		0,929	
PO3		0,887	
SE1			0,913
SE2			0,929
SE3			0,752
SS1	0,801		
SS2	0,761		
SS3	0,761		
SS4	0,710		

From the table above, all indicator variables exhibit outer loadings greater than 0.70, fulfilling the criteria for convergent validity. This result confirms that all indicators are valid and can be utilized for further analysis.

### *Reliability and Convergent Validity Testing*

Reliability and validity tests ensure that the research instrument meets the required standards in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). These assessments include key indicators such as Cronbach's Alpha, rho\_A, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which evaluate the internal consistency and convergent validity of each construct.

**Table 2.** Construct Reliability and Validity Results

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Job Readiness	0,912	0,915	0,938	0,791
Soft Skills Training	0,777	0,801	0,844	0,576
Organizational Experience	0,886	0,888	0,929	0,814
Self Efficacy	0,833	0,855	0,901	0,754

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, rho\_A, and Composite Reliability. A Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70 indicates strong internal consistency (Hair et al., 2017). Similarly, rho\_A and Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.70 demonstrate high construct reliability. The results indicate that all constructs in this study exhibit good reliability. The highest reliability is observed in the job readiness variable, with a Cronbach's

Alpha of 0.912 and Composite Reliability of 0.938, signifying a high level of internal consistency among its indicators. Conversely, the soft skills variable has the lowest reliability at 0.777, though it still meets the minimum threshold required for reliability assessment. Regarding validity, all constructs have an AVE value above 0.50, confirming good convergent validity. The highest AVE is found in the organizational experience variable (0.814), suggesting that its indicators effectively explain the latent variable. These findings confirm that the research instrument meets the required standards of reliability and validity, ensuring its suitability for further statistical analysis.

### *Discriminant Validity*

Discriminant validity assesses the extent to which indicators measuring different constructs exhibit significant differences in their contributions to the latent variables. This analysis involves examining the correlation matrix of the indicators. At the construct level, discriminant validity is evaluated using the Fornell-Lacker Criterion, which compares the square root of AVE (Average Variance Extracted) with the correlations between constructs. According to Fornell and Lacker's criteria, a model possesses good discriminant validity if the square root of AVE for a construct is greater than



its correlation with other constructs. This ensures that the construct contributes more to explaining its own indicators than to explaining indicators of other constructs.

Additionally, Henseler and Sarstedt introduced the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) as an alternative measure of discriminant validity. The recommended threshold for HTMT is less than 0.90. HTMT represents the ratio of heterotrait correlations (correlations between items measuring different constructs) to monotrait correlations (correlations between items measuring the same construct). An HTMT value greater than 0.90 suggests inadequate discriminant validity. Ensuring strong discriminant validity is essential to confirm that each construct in the model is empirically distinct. Without sufficient discriminant validity, the reliability of conclusions drawn from the structural model may be compromised.

**Table 3.** Fornell-Lacker Criterion Results

Variable	Job Readiness	Soft Skills Training	Organizational Experience	Self Efficacy
Job Readiness	0,889			
Soft Skills Training	0,515	0,759		
Organizational Experience	0,625	0,660	0,902	
Self Efficacy	0,754	0,551	0,633	0,868

The results from the Fornell-Lacker Criterion indicate that each construct has a square root of AVE higher than its correlations with other variables. This is evident from the diagonal values, which exceed the correlation values in the respective columns and rows. For example, the job readiness variable has a value of 0.889, which is greater than its correlation with other variables such as organizational experience (0.625) and self-efficacy (0.754). This confirms that all variables demonstrate good discriminant validity, indicating that each construct uniquely measures its intended concept without significant overlap with other constructs.

**Table 4.** Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio Results

Variable	Job Readiness	Soft Skills Training	Organizational Experience	Self Efficacy
Job Readiness				
Soft Skills Training	0,536			
Organizational Experience	0,691	0,694		
Self Efficacy	0,857	0,612	0,735	

Furthermore, the HTMT results reveal that all values are below the 0.90 threshold, confirming no significant issues with discriminant validity. The highest HTMT value is observed between job readiness and self-efficacy (0.857), but it remains within the acceptable range. This suggests that while these two variables are strongly correlated, they can still be distinguished as separate constructs. Overall, the findings confirm that the research instrument satisfies the criteria for discriminant validity, allowing each construct to be analyzed independently within the research model.

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

The evaluation of the structural model involves hypothesis testing to determine the influence of the research variables. The first step in this process is examining the relationships between variables using t-statistics and p-values. A t-statistic greater than 1.96 or a p-value lower than 0.05 indicates a statistically significant effect between variables.

**Table 5.** Hypothesis Testing for Direct and Indirect Effects

	<i>Original Sample</i>	<i>Sample Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>T Statistics</i>	<i>P Values</i>
Soft Skill Training -> Job Readiness	0,044	0,037	0,086	0,514	0,607
Soft Skill Training -> Self Efficacy	0,235	0,245	0,082	2,853	0,005
Organizational Experience -> Job Readiness	0,222	0,242	0,145	1,533	0,126
Organizational Experience -> Self Efficacy	0,478	0,468	0,090	5,330	0,000
Self Efficacy -> Job Readiness	0,589	0,582	0,095	6,208	0,000
Soft Skill Training -> Self Efficacy -> Job Readiness	0,138	0,143	0,057	2,430	0,015
Organizational Experience -> Self Efficacy -> Job Readiness	0,282	0,272	0,068	4,150	0,000

The influence of soft skills on self-efficacy is statistically significant, with a t-statistic of 2.853 and a p-value of 0.005. The original sample value of 0.235 indicates a moderate positive effect, suggesting that improved soft skills enhance students' self-efficacy. Likewise, organizational experience significantly affects self-efficacy, supported by a high t-statistic of 5.330 and p-value of 0.000. The original sample value of 0.478 reflects a strong positive relationship, implying that active organizational involvement boosts students' confidence in handling challenges. In contrast, soft skills have no significant direct effect on job readiness ( $t = 0.514$ ;  $p = 0.607$ ; original sample = 0.044), indicating a weak and non-significant influence. Similarly, organizational experience does not significantly influence job readiness directly ( $t = 1.533$ ;  $p = 0.126$ ; original sample = 0.222).

However, self-efficacy strongly and significantly influences job readiness, with a t-statistic of 6.208 and a p-value of 0.000. The original sample value of 0.589 confirms that higher self-efficacy enhances students' work readiness. Additionally, self-efficacy significantly mediates the effect of soft skills on job readiness ( $t = 2.430$ ;  $p = 0.015$ ; original sample = 0.138), indicating an indirect pathway of influence. The mediating role of self-efficacy in the link between organizational experience and job readiness is also highly significant ( $t = 4.150$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ; original sample = 0.282), suggesting that organizational involvement enhances readiness through improved self-efficacy.

### *R-Square Analysis*

The R-Square ( $R^2$ ) analysis measures how well the independent variables in the research model explain the dependent variables. The  $R^2$  value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating that a greater proportion of variability in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables. In this study, R-Square analysis assesses how well soft skills, organizational experience, and self-efficacy explain job readiness among final-year students at Universitas Palangka Raya. It also evaluates the extent to which soft skills and organizational experience contribute to self-efficacy as a mediating variable.

**Table 6.** R-Square Analysis Results

Variable	<i>R Square</i>	<i>R Square Adjusted</i>	Description
Work Readiness	0,606	0,594	Strong
Self Efficacy	0,432	0,421	Moderate

The results indicate that while soft skills and organizational experience significantly influence self-efficacy, 56.8% of self-efficacy variability is still influenced by external factors. Key influences may include social support, such as encouragement from family, peers, lecturers, or mentors, as



well as prior work experience or internships. Additionally, intrinsic motivation plays a role, where students driven by personal ambition may exhibit higher self-efficacy.

For job readiness, 39.4% of the variability remains unexplained by the model. Other contributing factors may include the quality of education, access to industry-based learning experiences, and socioeconomic background. Students from financially stable families may have greater access to training and resources that enhance job readiness. Additionally, the rapidly changing job market and evolving industry trends influence students' preparedness, requiring adaptability and up-to-date skills.

### *Q-Square Analysis*

The Q-Square analysis measures the predictive relevance of the research model, assessing how well it predicts the dependent variables. Unlike R-Square, which evaluates the proportion of explained variance, Q-Square determines the model's predictive quality using blindfolding techniques in PLS-SEM.

**Table 7.** Q-Square Analysis Results

Independent Variable	Q <sup>2</sup> (= 1-SSE/SSO)
Work Readiness	0,452
Soft Skill Training	0,316

The results show that job readiness has a high predictive relevance with a Q<sup>2</sup> value of 0.452, while soft skills have moderate predictive relevance at 0.316. This confirms that the model effectively predicts job readiness but has room for improvement in explaining soft skills.

### *Goodness-of-Fit Index*

The Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) index evaluates the overall suitability of the model by combining the quality of both the measurement and structural components. In this study, the GoF value was calculated using the average values of AVE and R-Square, resulting in a score of 0.617. According to the classification proposed by Henseler et al. (2009), a GoF value above 0.36 is considered strong, indicating that the model has a high degree of explanatory power and validity. This strong GoF result confirms that the proposed model adequately captures the relationships among the examined constructs. It suggests that the independent variables soft skills, organizational experience, and self-efficacy—collectively make a substantial contribution to explaining students' job readiness. Moreover, the high GoF score reinforces the model's predictive accuracy and supports its overall reliability in the context of final-year students' transition to the workforce.

### *F-Square Analysis*

F-Square (f<sup>2</sup>) analysis assesses the effect size of each independent variable on the dependent variable within the research model. It determines how much each independent variable contributes to explaining variance in the dependent variable.

**Table 8.** F-Square Analysis Results

Relationship Between Variables	F-Square (f <sup>2</sup> )	Effect Strength Criteria
Soft Skill Training → Job Readiness	0,003	Very Weak (Negligible Effect)
Soft Skill Training → Self Efficacy	0,055	Weak (Weak Effect)
Organizational Experience → Job Readiness	0,058	Weak (Weak Effect)
Organizational Experience → Self Efficacy	0,228	Moderate (Moderate Effect)

The results indicate that the effect of soft skills on job readiness is negligible ( $f^2 = 0.003$ ), suggesting that soft skills alone do not significantly enhance job readiness. Soft skills' effect on self-efficacy is weak ( $f^2 = 0.055$ ), indicating that although soft skills contribute to self-efficacy, other factors play a more significant role. The influence of organizational experience on job readiness is also weak ( $f^2 = 0.058$ ), implying that the extent of involvement in organizations alone does not directly translate into job readiness.

However, the effect of organizational experience on self-efficacy is moderate ( $f^2 = 0.228$ ), confirming that active participation in organizations significantly improves self-efficacy. The most substantial effect is observed in the relationship between self-efficacy and job readiness ( $f^2 = 0.500$ ), demonstrating that self-efficacy is the strongest determinant of job readiness. Students with high self-efficacy exhibit greater confidence, adaptability, and preparedness for the job market. Therefore, strategies to enhance job readiness should prioritize interventions that strengthen self-efficacy, such as practical experiences, mentorship, and project-based learning.

## Discussion

### *The Influence of Soft Skills on the Self-Efficacy of Final-Year Students at Universitas Palangka Raya*

The analysis results indicate that soft skills training has a positive and significant influence on the self-efficacy of final-year students at Universitas Palangka Raya. This finding suggests that students with well-developed soft skills exhibit greater confidence in completing academic tasks and overcoming professional challenges. According to Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1997), an individual's belief in their ability to achieve specific goals can be strengthened through direct experience, observing others, and receiving social and emotional support. Soft skills such as communication, leadership, and time management play a crucial role in shaping these experiences, thereby enhancing students' confidence in various situations, including the workplace.

Supporting this finding, a study by Sembiring et al. (2021) revealed that strengthening soft skills significantly contributes to increasing students' self-efficacy in Indonesia. Their research indicated that students who actively develop interpersonal and social adaptation skills tend to exhibit higher self-efficacy, enhancing their preparedness for academic and professional challenges. Additionally, Lestari and Widyastuti (2020) found that soft skills training programs at vocational schools contribute to increased self-efficacy, highlighting the importance of soft skills not only for final-year students but also for those preparing to enter the workforce at an earlier stage.

From a broader perspective, high self-efficacy is a crucial factor in job readiness. Students who believe in their abilities are more likely to take initiative, adapt easily to dynamic work environments, and exhibit greater psychological resilience when facing pressure. Robbins and Judge (2020) assert that individuals with high self-efficacy are more persistent in completing tasks and more adept at overcoming workplace obstacles. Consequently, developing soft skills not only enhances students' technical competencies but also strengthens their confidence in transitioning from education to the professional world.

This phenomenon underscores the critical role of soft skills in human resource development. Amidst increasingly competitive job markets, employers seek individuals who possess not only technical expertise but also confidence, strong communication skills, and teamwork capabilities. Therefore, universities must strengthen curricula that support soft skills development through coursework, training programs, and extracurricular activities. By doing so, students can cultivate higher self-efficacy and improve their job readiness when entering the professional sphere.

*The Influence of Organizational Experience on the Self-Efficacy of Final-Year Students at Universitas Palangka Raya*

The analysis results indicate that organizational experience has a positive and significant influence on the self-efficacy of final-year students at Universitas Palangka Raya. This finding suggests that students with extensive organizational experience tend to exhibit greater confidence in completing academic tasks and facing professional challenges. Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1997) states that individuals who frequently encounter challenges and gain direct experience in task completion develop stronger confidence in their abilities. Participation in organizations provides students with opportunities to develop leadership, communication, and decision-making skills, which contribute to increased self-efficacy.

Supporting this finding, Putri and Sari (2021) found that active participation in student organizations significantly enhances self-efficacy. Their research revealed that students involved in committees, social activities, and student organizations exhibit higher confidence levels in task completion and social interactions. This occurs because organizational experience fosters interpersonal and professional skills, ultimately reinforcing individuals' confidence in their abilities. Furthermore, Ramadhani and Nugroho (2022) found that students who held leadership positions in organizations had higher self-efficacy levels than those without organizational experience. Leadership roles expose students to various challenges and develop mental resilience in solving complex problems.

In terms of job readiness, students with organizational experience tend to be more prepared for professional environments, as they have been accustomed to teamwork, conflict resolution, and decision-making in challenging situations. Robbins and Judge (2020) state that individuals with leadership experience in organizations exhibit higher confidence levels in handling complex work tasks. Additionally, students actively involved in organizations develop better adaptability skills, which are crucial for career success in an era of globalization. Therefore, organizational experience not only enhances self-efficacy but also equips students with the confidence needed to navigate competitive job markets.

This phenomenon is increasingly relevant as employers seek graduates with more than just academic excellence. Companies today prioritize candidates who demonstrate confidence, leadership capabilities, and strong communication skills. Thus, universities should encourage students to engage in organizations as part of their self-development strategy. By strengthening organizational experience, students can cultivate higher self-efficacy, ultimately improving their job readiness in an increasingly competitive workforce.

*The Influence of Soft Skills on Job Readiness of Final-Year Students at Universitas Palangka Raya*

The analysis results indicate that soft skills have a positive but not significant influence on job readiness among final-year students at Universitas Palangka Raya. This finding suggests that while students with well-developed soft skills tend to be more prepared for entering the workforce, their impact is not strong enough to explain overall job readiness. Employability skills theory emphasizes that soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and time management are critical for enhancing job readiness (Robbins & Judge, 2020). However, within the context of this study, other factors such as work experience, education level, and mental preparedness also play crucial roles in determining students' job readiness.

Research by Hidayat and Prasetyo (2021) found that students with high soft skills levels exhibited greater confidence in facing the job market, but aspects such as internships and professional networks played a more significant role in job readiness. This finding aligns with the current study's results, suggesting that while soft skills contribute to job readiness, they are not sufficient compared to other influential factors. Additionally, a study by Sari and Wibowo (2023) found that soft skills combined with work experience had a greater impact on job readiness than

soft skills alone. This highlights that soft skills, although essential, cannot solely determine job readiness without direct exposure to professional environments. In an increasingly competitive job market, university graduates must possess both technical competencies and strong interpersonal skills. However, employers often prioritize candidates with prior work experience gained through internships or on-the-job training programs. Therefore, soft skills alone are insufficient to ensure job readiness; they must be complemented with relevant practical experience. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of combining soft skills with professional experience to enhance graduates' competitiveness in the job market (Goleman, 2019).

This phenomenon highlights the necessity for students to acquire direct experience in order to refine and apply their soft skills in professional settings. Universities can play a crucial role in enhancing students' job readiness by integrating soft skills training into curricula and expanding internship and work placement opportunities. By doing so, students can develop not only strong interpersonal skills but also sufficient experience to compete in a rapidly evolving and dynamic job market.

#### *The Influence of Organizational Experience on Job Readiness of Final-Year Students at Universitas Palangka Raya*

The analysis results indicate that organizational experience has a positive but not significant influence on job readiness among final-year students at Universitas Palangka Raya. This suggests that while students actively involved in organizations tend to have better job readiness, organizational experience alone is insufficient to directly enhance job readiness. Career readiness theory posits that organizational experience helps students develop leadership, communication, and teamwork skills, which are crucial in professional settings (Savickas, 2013). However, the findings of this study suggest that other factors also contribute to determining students' job readiness.

Research by Rahmawati and Setiawan (2021) found that organizational experience contributes to job readiness but has a stronger impact when combined with internships or part-time work experience. This suggests that while organizational experience helps students understand workplace dynamics, their readiness may not be optimal without actual exposure to professional environments. Furthermore, research by Wahyuni and Pratama (2022) revealed that students active in organizations exhibit higher confidence in facing the job market, but their job readiness is also influenced by other factors such as work experience and career expectations. These studies support the findings that organizational experience plays a role, but it is not the sole determinant of students' job readiness.

Employers increasingly seek candidates with both organizational experience and technical skills acquired through real-world work experiences. This aligns with the concept of experiential learning, which emphasizes that direct exposure to professional environments often has a greater impact on job readiness than academic organizational experience alone (Kolb, 1984). Consequently, students relying solely on organizational experience without practical work experience may still encounter challenges in adapting to the professional world.

#### *The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Job Readiness Among Final-Year Students at Universitas Palangka Raya*

The analysis results indicate that self-efficacy has a positive and significant influence on job readiness among final-year students at Universitas Palangka Raya. This implies that the higher a student's level of self-efficacy, the more prepared they are to enter the workforce. According to Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's belief in their ability to achieve specific goals, including overcoming employment-related challenges. Students with high self-efficacy tend to be more confident, highly motivated, and capable of overcoming obstacles

during the transition from academia to professional life.

A study conducted by Putri and Santoso (2021) found that students with high self-efficacy are more proactive in seeking job opportunities and are better equipped to handle challenges in the professional world. This finding suggests that confidence in one's own abilities encourages students to actively develop their skills and expand their professional networks. Similarly, research by Yusuf and Hidayat (2022) revealed that students with high self-efficacy demonstrate greater job readiness due to their resilience in handling workplace pressures and their ability to adapt quickly to dynamic work environments. These studies align with the present findings, reinforcing the importance of self-efficacy in determining job readiness among students.

In an increasingly competitive job market, students with high self-efficacy are more adept at navigating job selection processes, executing their tasks confidently, and developing their careers independently. This is because they possess not only technical skills but also the confidence to apply these skills effectively in real-world work settings. This concept is consistent with career adaptability theory, which underscores the importance of self-belief in managing transitions and challenges in professional life (Savickas, 2013). Thus, the findings confirm that self-efficacy is a key determinant of job readiness among students. Confidence in handling tasks and challenges in the workplace allows students to adapt more easily and be better prepared for their careers post-graduation.

#### *The Influence of Soft Skills on Job Readiness Among Final-Year Students at Universitas Palangka Raya Through Self-Efficacy*

The study findings indicate that soft skills have a positive and significant influence on job readiness among final-year students at Universitas Palangka Raya through self-efficacy. This suggests that students with well-developed soft skills tend to have higher levels of self-efficacy, which in turn enhances their job readiness. Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory explains that individuals with high self-efficacy are better able to regulate their behaviors in achieving specific goals, including preparing for employment. As such, students with strong interpersonal skills, communication abilities, and time management competencies are more confident in performing professional roles, making them more prepared to enter the workforce.

Research by Rahman and Prasetyo (2021) found that soft skills contribute to job readiness through increased self-efficacy, as students who are more confident in their abilities are better prepared for workplace challenges. Additionally, a study by Fadilah and Sari (2022) identified self-efficacy as a mediating factor that strengthens the relationship between soft skills and job readiness. This suggests that the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills enhances students' confidence, which subsequently improves their job readiness. These studies support the notion that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in linking soft skills to job readiness.

In an increasingly competitive labor market, students must possess not only technical expertise but also the confidence to apply their skills in professional settings. Students with strong soft skills are more adept at building relationships, solving problems efficiently, and handling workplace pressures with greater confidence. Therefore, self-efficacy is an essential factor in explaining the connection between soft skills and job readiness, as students with strong interpersonal skills and self-confidence are more likely to adapt and succeed in their careers after graduation.

#### *The Influence of Organizational Experience on Job Readiness Among Final-Year Students at Universitas Palangka Raya Through Self-Efficacy*

The study findings reveal that organizational experience has a positive and significant influence on job readiness among final-year students at Universitas Palangka Raya through self-efficacy. Students actively involved in organizations tend to have higher confidence levels in facing academic and non-academic challenges, which ultimately enhances their readiness for the workforce. This aligns with

Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which posits that experiences in navigating social situations and challenges can strengthen an individual's belief in their abilities. Through organizational participation, students develop decision-making skills, teamwork capabilities, and resilience, all of which contribute to higher self-efficacy and job readiness.

Research by Sari and Wibowo (2021) found that organizational experience has an indirect effect on job readiness through self-efficacy, where students engaged in various organizational activities exhibit greater confidence in handling professional responsibilities. Similarly, a study by Lestari and Pratama (2023) noted that involvement in organizations fosters leadership and interpersonal skills, which enhance students' self-efficacy and ultimately improve their job preparedness. These studies reaffirm that organizational experience provides broader benefits beyond technical knowledge, as it shapes students' mindset and confidence in professional settings.

This phenomenon is increasingly relevant in a competitive job market, where graduates with organizational experience tend to be more advantageous than those relying solely on academic achievements. Participation in organizations provides students with opportunities to solve problems, negotiate, and establish professional networks that are valuable in the workforce. Therefore, self-efficacy serves as a crucial mediator in the relationship between organizational experience and job readiness, as the confidence gained from organizational involvement allows students to be better prepared for various demands and dynamics in the workplace.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that there are complex interrelationships among soft skills, organizational experience, self-efficacy, and the work readiness of final-year students at the University of Palangka Raya. Soft skills and organizational experience both have a positive and significant effect on self-efficacy, indicating that students who possess strong interpersonal competencies and actively engage in organizational activities tend to exhibit higher confidence in their abilities. However, neither soft skills nor organizational experience show a significant direct effect on work readiness, suggesting that these factors alone are insufficient to prepare students for the workforce. In contrast, self-efficacy demonstrates a strong and significant positive influence on work readiness, highlighting its central role in shaping students' readiness to enter professional environments. Furthermore, self-efficacy significantly mediates the effects of both soft skills and organizational experience on work readiness, implying that while these variables may not directly influence work readiness, they contribute indirectly by enhancing students' self-belief and confidence, which are critical for successful career entry.

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