

The influence of soft skills on the work readiness of students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at Muhammadiyah University Makassar

Awal Syam

Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar

Email: awlsym29@gmail.com

Abstract: This study is a quantitative study that aims to determine the effect of soft skills on the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Muhammadiyah University Makassar. The data used is primary data collected through the distribution of questionnaires using a Likert scale as a measurement instrument. Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25, employing simple linear regression techniques to test the influence of independent variables on dependent variables. The results showed that soft skills had a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness, with a t-value of $2.502 > t\text{-table } 1.663$ and a significance value of $0.014 < 0.05$. These findings confirm that personality aspects play an important role in preparing students for the world of work. The implications of this study encourage higher education institutions to develop integrated coaching programs that strengthen soft skills as part of efforts to improve graduate work readiness.

Keywords : Soft skills, work readiness

Introduction

The transformation of the world of work triggered by globalization, technological advances, and digitalization has brought significant changes to the needs of the labor market. These changes present new challenges for college graduates, particularly in meeting increasingly stringent qualification requirements each year (Puspitasari & Fadhli, 2024). In facing the era of globalization, human resources are needed who not only have extensive knowledge but also possess competent skills in various fields.

Work readiness is essential for maintaining livelihoods. However, not all individuals are able to create job opportunities for themselves, let alone for others. Increasingly fierce market competition, both domestically and internationally, as well as limited business capital, are significant obstacles for many people in achieving economic independence. Dynamic changes in the business and industrial world require job seekers to continuously adapt and prepare themselves to compete in an increasingly competitive job market. The ever-changing job landscape presents new challenges that must be addressed with relevant skills and preparedness. In this context, education plays a strategic role as a means of developing creative, productive, and resilient human resources capable of coping with change.

Higher education institutions play an important role in producing competent graduates by equipping students not only with knowledge, but also with life skills and competitive values (Nurbaiti & Putri, 2024). Students, especially those in their final year, are expected to have adequate work readiness to face the complexities of the professional world. Work readiness encompasses physical and mental maturity, technical skills, and professional attitudes, all of which are important indicators in assessing a person's suitability for entering the workforce (Rika Widanita, 2023). Companies also view work readiness as a crucial aspect, as work-ready employees tend to have sustainable knowledge and skills (Damayantie & Kustini, 2022).

Student readiness for work is influenced by various internal factors, one of which is soft skills. Soft skills include communication skills, leadership, adaptability, problem solving, and the ability to build good social relationships in the workplace (Azky & Mulyana, 2024). Individuals with high soft skills tend to have personalities that are better prepared to face challenges in the workplace and in life in general (Damayantie & Kustini, 2022). In a professional context, soft skills influence behavior, interaction style, and effectiveness in managing responsibilities (Wulandari & Putri, 2024).

Observations of 2021 students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Muhammadiyah University Makassar, show that many of them do not yet have adequate work readiness. This can be seen from their weak communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills, as well as their low participation in self-development activities and lack of self-confidence. This situation highlights the gap between students' abilities and the demands of the job market, which now places greater emphasis on character, collaboration, and resilience. Two main factors identified as influencing work readiness are soft skills and self-confidence.

As a faculty with a large number of graduates, the Faculty of Economics and Business has a responsibility to prepare students to be able to compete in the world of work. Based on administrative data, the number of students in the 2021 cohort reached 751, making it important to analyze the factors that shape their work readiness. Based on the background description, this study departs from two main questions, namely whether soft skills affect the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Muhammadiyah University Makassar. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which soft skill variables affect students' work readiness in facing the challenges of the professional world. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions as a reference for further research and enrich the literature on work readiness. Practically, the results of this study can be used as input for students to become more aware of the importance of self-development, for faculties in designing training programs, and for workplaces in developing recruitment and training strategies for new employees that emphasize soft skills and self-confidence.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Soft Skills

Students who have mastered technical knowledge and skills will be more successful if they also possess good soft skills, which are non-technical abilities that reflect personality, work ethic, and the ability to interact in various social and professional situations (Parangin-Angin, 2022). Soft skills include interpersonal skills (relating to others) and intrapersonal skills (managing oneself), which are very important in supporting success in the workplace and daily life (Fauzan, 2020). Soft skills are hidden and only visible through their application in real behavior, but these skills are vital and can be developed (Podungge et al., 2023; Mamentu et al., 2023). In the era of globalization, soft skills are increasingly needed because they can improve work abilities, build confidence, and help individuals adapt to the complexities of the ever-evolving world of work (Hulu, 2020; Syifa et al., 2023). In fact, in the recruitment process, many companies prioritize soft skills over technical abilities (Syahrini' et al., 2023). Sharma (2011) identified five key indicators of soft skills, namely: communication skills to express ideas and feelings effectively; emotional intelligence to manage emotions at work; critical thinking and problem-solving skills; work ethic as a moral guide; and leadership to encourage the achievement of organizational goals (Syahrini' et al., 2023). Soft skills are not only important in the world of work, but also increase economic value and competitiveness in social and professional life.

1.2 Work Readiness

Work readiness is the ability of an individual, particularly students, to immediately enter the workforce after graduation without needing a long period of time to adapt to the professional environment. This is important given the fierce competition in the job market, which demands competence in the form of knowledge, skills, and mental and physical readiness (Mamentu et al., 2023; Parangin-Angin, 2022). Work-ready students have usually developed basic skills, are able to think logically, adapt to technological developments, and have a strong work ethic (Dewi, 2024). This readiness also includes responsibility, flexibility, work skills, communication skills, a positive self-image,

and awareness of occupational health and safety (Azky & Mulyana, 2024). A person is considered ready for work if they have mastered good work behavior, relevant knowledge, and a strong mentality to face challenges in the workplace (Rahmadani, 2022; Nurbaiti & Putri, 2024). Elshaer (in Hariyati et al., 2022) emphasizes that work readiness is not only technical readiness, but also physical, mental, and cognitive readiness to make a real contribution to the company.

2. Research Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach to determine the effect of soft skills on the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Muhammadiyah University Makassar. A quantitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze the relationship between variables that can be measured numerically, as well as to test hypotheses based on data collected from the population or sample through specific research instruments (Sugiyono, 2019). This research was conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Muhammadiyah University Makassar, located at Jln. Sultan Alauddin No. 259, Gunung Sari, Rappocini District, Makassar City, South Sulawesi. The research process lasted for two months, from April to June 2025, with the first month focused on distributing questionnaires and the second month on data analysis and interpretation.

The data used in this study consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from respondents through questionnaires distributed online using Google Forms, while secondary data was obtained from relevant literature such as books, scientific journals, articles, and previous research results. The population in this study was all 2021 students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Muhammadiyah University Makassar, totaling 751 people (Berlian, 2016). The sample was determined using the Slovin formula with a significance level of 10%, resulting in a sample size of 88 respondents.

The data collection instrument was a questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, which measured the respondents' level of agreement with certain statements from "Strongly Agree" (score 5) to "Strongly Disagree" (score 1) (Juliandi, 2018). The variables in this study are operationally defined as follows: soft skills refer to non-technical abilities in interacting and managing oneself, including communication, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, ethics, and leadership (Syahrini et al., 2023); while work readiness is a person's ability to immediately adapt and contribute in the world of work, including personality attributes, skills, knowledge, and understanding (Nurbaiti & Putri, 2024).

The data analysis method in this study includes several stages. First, descriptive statistics are used to describe the data concisely and clearly without making generalizations (Ashari et al., 2017). Next, a validity test is conducted to determine the extent to which the items in the questionnaire are able to measure the intended variables (Janna & Herianto, 2021), as well as a reliability test to examine the consistency of the research instrument (Al Hakim et al., 2021).

Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the effect of soft skills (X) on work readiness (Y) using the formula $Y = a + bx$. Hypothesis testing was performed using the t-test to see the partial effect of the variables, as well as the coefficient of determination (R^2) test to measure how much variation in the independent variables could explain the dependent variable. Significant test results show a strong statistical influence of soft skills on student work readiness (Ghozali, 2011; Setyorini & Noviandari, 2022).

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the research problem formulation, the data was divided into two parts: Soft Skills and Work Readiness of Students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Muhammadiyah University Makassar. The

following description shows the respondents' responses.

3.1 Research Results

Tabel 1: Distribution of Variables Based on Soft Skills

No	Indikator	SS	S	N	TS	STS	Total	Mean
1	X1.1	10	38	18	9	13	88	3.26
2	X1.2	12	34	20	9	13	88	3.26
3	X1.3	17	35	17	14	5	88	3.51
4	X1.4	20	22	20	16	10	88	3.30
5	X1.5	20	30	21	11	6	88	3.53
6	X1.6	19	30	23	8	8	88	3.50
7	X1.7	28	35	10	7	8	88	3.77
8	X1.8	28	33	15	5	7	88	3.80
9	X1.9	24	38	14	6	6	88	3.77
10	X1.10	32	31	11	7	7	88	3.84
Rata-Rata Keterampilan Soft Skill:								3.55

According to the table above, it is known that the average value (mean) of the soft skill variable is 3.55. The statement and the highest average value are in X1.10, with a value of 3.84, namely I can easily establish good relationships with others and work together in a team, and the statements with the lowest average values are in X1.1 and X1.2, with a value of 3.26, namely "I can give clear instructions to the team to achieve the set goals" and "I can motivate team members to work with enthusiasm and dedication."

Tabel 2: Distribution of Variables Based on Work Readiness

No	Indikator	SS	S	N	TS	STS	Total	Mean
1	Y.1	21	37	13	6	11	88	3.58
2	Y.2	23	33	15	11	6	88	3.64
3	Y.3	17	37	15	14	5	88	3.53
4	Y.4	23	32	15	12	6	88	3.61
5	Y.5	19	32	27	5	5	88	3.63
6	Y.6	21	36	17	10	4	88	3.68
7	Y.7	21	41	17	4	5	88	3.78
8	Y.8	19	41	17	6	5	88	3.72
Rata-Rata Kesiapan Kerja:								3.64

According to the table above, it is known that the average value (mean) of the work readiness variable is 3.64. The statement with the highest mean value is Y.7, with a value of 3.78, which is "I have a clear understanding of my responsibilities at work," and the statement with the lowest mean value is Y.3, with a value of 3.53, which is "I have sufficient skills to perform work in my field."

3.2 Research Discussion

The results of the study indicate that soft skills have a positive and significant impact on the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Muhammadiyah University Makassar. This is in line with the theory that soft skills, such as communication skills, leadership, emotional intelligence, thinking skills, work ethics, and leadership skills, are important elements of readiness to enter the world of work. Students with high soft skills tend to be better prepared to face challenges in the professional world because they are able to interact effectively, solve problems, and adapt quickly. The highest average score in soft skills was obtained in the indicators of relationship building and teamwork. This shows that respondents are quite confident in collaborative work, which is one of the main competencies sought by the world of work today.

The relatively high average scores generally confirm that most students have developed their

soft skills during their studies, both through academic activities and student organizations.

The results of this study are in line with the research conducted by Damayantie & Kustini (2022), which found that soft skills have a significant effect on work readiness. Similar results were also found by Selvina Parangin-Angin (2022), whose research found that there is a positive and significant effect and a simultaneous effect of soft skills variables on student work readiness. However, the results of this study differ from those of Nurbaiti & Putri (2024), who found that soft skills do not have a significant influence on work readiness, although self-efficacy still has a significant influence. This difference may be due to the different contexts of the respondents and educational institutions, as well as the analytical approach used. For example, the respondents in their study came from various universities in Bandar Lampung, while this study focused on one institution, namely Muhammadiyah University Makassar

4. Closing

4.1 Conclusion

The results of the study indicate that soft skills have a positive and significant effect on the work readiness of students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at Muhammadiyah University Makassar. This is indicated by the t-count value $>$ t-table ($2.502 > 1.663$), and the significance value of the soft skill variable (X_1) $0.014 <$ probability 0.05 . This means that soft skills have a significant positive effect on the work readiness of students.

4.2 Suggestion

Students are advised to not only focus on academic achievement, but also actively develop soft skills and build self-efficacy through organizational activities, training, and hands-on experience in the field. The Faculty of Economics and Business is expected to design a curriculum and coaching activities that are integrated with the strengthening of soft skills and self-efficacy, for example through job readiness training, public lectures with industry practitioners, or project-based learning methods. The world of work is also advised to pay more attention to personality and psychological readiness in the recruitment process, as well as providing orientation and initial coaching programs to strengthen the confidence and adaptability of new employees. For future researchers, it is recommended to examine other variables that may influence work readiness, such as internship experience, learning environment, or intrinsic motivation, and to expand the research sample to include students from various majors or different institutions in order to obtain more comprehensive results and stronger generalizations.

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