

The Role of Hard Skills and Soft Skills In Work Readiness

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of hard skills and soft skills on work readiness. The respondents were employees of companies based in Semarang City. The total number of respondents in this study was 105. The analytical tool used was SPSS version 27. The tests conducted included instrument testing (validity and reliability), model testing (coefficient of determination and F-test), and the t-test. The data analysis results show that hard skills have a significant positive effect on work readiness. Soft skills also have a significant positive impact on work readiness. This study provides both theoretical and practical implications. It also has several limitations and offers directions for future research.

Keywords: Hard Skills, Soft Skills, Work Readiness, Employability, Workforce Development.

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, the world of work is undergoing significant changes. Job seekers face increasing competition as the number of new graduates continues to grow, while job opportunities are not rising as rapidly. As a result, many graduates experience underemployment, meaning they are working in fields that do not align with their education or skills (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). This situation indicates that a gap remains between job requirements and school instruction. Therefore, the term "work readiness" has become increasingly important. This term refers to an individual's ability to transition from higher education to the workforce quickly.

Many companies complain that many graduates are unprepared to meet industry demands (Boden & Nedeva, 2010). This suggests that in addition to academic abilities, additional skills influence job readiness. Two essential skills are often mentioned: soft skills and hard skills. In formal education, hard skills include technical capabilities such as analytical skills, technology utilization, and technical communication (Hevedanli, 2025). On the other hand, non-technical skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, leadership, and communication help people adapt and perform well in new environments (Siddique et al., 2022). Moreover, indicate that leaders who cultivate trust can promote enhanced collaboration and knowledge exchange. Furthermore, these studies indicate that non-technical factors such as communication, trust, and interpersonal impact are essential to an individual's performance and preparedness in the job (Suhana et al., 2024).

Studies have shown that both soft skills and hard skills play a crucial role in job readiness. As a result, some studies found that soft skills had no significant impact, while others found

that they did. These results suggest that additional research is needed on the relationship between these two skill types and job readiness. Therefore, this study aims to determine how soft skills and hard skills impact employee job readiness in Semarang City. Another objective of this study is to provide a clearer picture of how each skill helps someone start working.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work Readiness

Work readiness is defined as the extent to which individuals can be perceived as possessing attitudes and attributes that prepare them for success in the workplace (Caballero & Walker, 2010). Work readiness has three dimensions: career identity, adaptability, and social relationships (Fugate et al., 2004). Moreover, work readiness refers to the extent to which graduates exhibit a blend of qualities, including self-confidence, motivational drive, and interpersonal skills, that facilitate their effectiveness in the workplace (Caballero & Walker, 2010). Multiple markers of work preparation encompass personal attributes, organizational insight, professional skill, and social intelligence (Caballero et al., 2011). Two elements facilitate work preparation.

2.2 Hard Skill

The first factor is hard skills, which are essential since they provide a standard for organizations to evaluate the technical competencies of potential personnel. These skills are typically related to specific knowledge in a field or profession (Varenyk & Piskova, 2024).

2.3 Soft Skill

The second factor is soft skills, which derive from an individual's skills, abilities, and traits related to personality, attitudes, and behaviour (Jameson et al., 2016). The empirical foundations in the thesis showed that hard skills play an essential role in preparing individuals to enter the workforce. Studies by (Piopiunik et al., 2020; Seti et al., 2025; Sopa et al., 2020) confirm that technical abilities significantly improve work readiness.

Therefore, the higher an individual's mastery of hard skills, the greater their level of work readiness. H1 : Hard skills have a positive impact on work readiness. The thesis consistently shows that soft skills strongly influence work readiness. Studies by (Ingsih & Suhana, 2023; Schislyaeva & Saychenko, 2022; Teng et al., 2019) support this finding. Good soft skills help individuals build social relationships, collaborate, adapt, and communicate effectively, thereby significantly increasing their readiness for the workplace. H2 : Soft skills have a positive effect on work readiness.

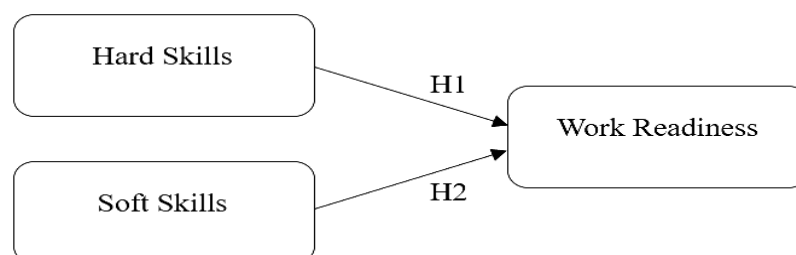


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Researcher 2025

3. Research Method

This study uses a quantitative method to examine the relationships among hard skills, soft skills, and work readiness. Respondents in this study were people working in Semarang City. Data were obtained through questionnaires administered to 105 individuals aged 20–40 years with a minimum work period of 1 year and a maximum of 5 years. This study used a purposive sampling technique. The information collected is primary data derived from respondents' responses to questions arranged according to the indicators of each research variable. Hard skills are measured through indicators of quantitative, technological, and communication skills, as well as qualitative skills (Strang, 2022). Soft skills are measured through indicators of problem-solving skills, learn throughout life skills, creativity, communication, teamwork, ethics, and leadership on working readiness (Ingsih & Suhana, 2023). Work readiness is measured through indicators of personal characteristics, organisational acumen, work competence, and social intelligence (Caballero et al., 2011).

4. Findings and Discussions

This section delineates research findings derived from data collected from 105 respondents now employed in Semarang City. The investigation aimed to delineate respondents' characteristics and assess correlations among hard skills, soft skills, and work preparedness.

4.1 Finding

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis

Respondent characteristics		Frequency	%
Gender			
	Male	46	43,8%
	Female	59	56,2%
	Total	105	100%
Age			
	20 – 30 Years old	54	51,4%
	30 – 40 Years old	51	48,6%
	Total	105	100%
Years of Service			
	1 – 2 Years	24	22,9%
	2 – 3 Years	55	52,4%
	>5 Years	26	24,8%
	Total	105	100%

Source: Data processed

The data reveal that 56.2% of respondents were female, whereas males comprised 43.8%. The predominant age group was 20–30 years, accounting for 51.4%. 52.4% of respondents in this study had been employed for 2 to 3 years.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Variable Analysis

Variabel	Indicator		Mean	Mode	Min
Hard skills	X1.1	Quantitative theories	4,16	4	1

		(analytics, models)			
	X1.2	Technology (Computer applications systems)	4,23	4	1
	X1.3	Communication (reading, writing, speaking)	4,29	4	1
	X1.4	Qualitative theories (human behavior)	4,20	4	1
Soft skills	X2.1	Problem solving skills	4,11	4	1
	X2.2	Learn throughout life skills	4,13	5	1
	X2.3	Creativity	4,09	4	1
	X2.4	Communication	4,22	4	1
	X2.5	Team work	4,16	4	1
	X2.6	Ethics	4,13	4	1
	X2.7	Leadership on working readiness	4,18	4	1
Work readiness	Y1.1	Personal karakteristik	4,14	5	1
	Y1.2	Organisational acumen	4,08	5	1
	Y1.3	Work competence	4,15	4	1
	Y1.4	Social intelligence	4,07	4	1

Source: Data processed using SPSS 27

The analysis results show that respondents agreed most strongly with the communication aspect, including the hard skills of reading, writing, and speaking. This indicator X1.3 had an average value of 4.29, indicating that communication skills are the most prominent technical competency. In the soft skills section, respondents agreed that intrapersonal communication skills had the highest value, with a mean of 4.22 on X2.4. In the final section, most respondents chose work competence as the highest value for work preparation, with an average value of 4.15 on Y1.3. Before conducting hypothesis testing, a validity test was carried out to ensure that each questionnaire item accurately represented the indicators of the variables being measured.

Table 3. Result of Validity Test

Variable	Item	KMO	Loading Factor	Information
Hard skills	X1.1	0,854	0,897	Valid
	X1.2	0,854	0,936	Valid
	X1.3	0,854	0,933	Valid
	X1.4	0,854	0,907	Valid
Soft skills	X2.1	0,921	0,898	Valid
	X2.2	0,921	0,897	Valid
	X2.3	0,921	0,895	Valid
	X2.4	0,921	0,896	Valid
	X2.5	0,921	0,914	Valid
	X2.6	0,921	0,913	Valid
	X2.7	0,921	0,915	Valid
Work readiness	Y1.1	0,864	0,920	Valid
	Y1.2	0,864	0,923	Valid

Y1.3	0,864	0,930	Valid
Y1.4	0,864	0,929	Valid

Source: Data processed using SPSS 27

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test findings demonstrate that all variables in the study satisfy the criteria for subsequent factor analysis, since the KMO value surpasses the advised minimum threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2022). The hard skills variable had a KMO value of 0.854, which falls within the valid range. Each item in this variable also has a loading factor value of 0.50. Furthermore, the soft skills variable had a KMO value of 0.921, indicating that the indicators are strongly and consistently related. The loading factor value is also above the minimum test limit. Therefore, all indicators are declared valid. Meanwhile, the work readiness variable has a KMO value of 0.864 and a loading factor that is above the minimum limit. Therefore, the variable is declared valid. Thus, all variables meet the eligibility requirements because the KMO value is above the minimum of 0.50 and the loading factor is in the adequate to perfect range.

Table 4. Reliability

Variable	Minimum Cronbach Alpha	Cronbach Alpha	Information
Hard skills	0,7	0,936	Reliable
Soft skills	0,7	0,962	Reliable
Work readiness	0,7	0,944	Reliable

Source: Data processed

The reliability test results above show that all variables have Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.9, indicating high reliability. The highest value was obtained by the soft skills variable at 0.944, followed by work readiness at 0.944, and hard skills at 0.936. These results indicate that all indicators exhibit high internal consistency. Thus, the research instrument is considered reliable for testing the regression model.

Table 5. Coefficient Determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjust R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0,964	0,930	0,929	0,27086

Predictors: (Constant), Avg_SoftSkill, Avg_HardSkill

Source: Data processed

The coefficient of determination, R, is 0.964, signifying that the hard skills and soft skills factors explain 92.9% of the variance in work readiness. The influence of hard skills and soft skills on work preparedness is deemed substantial, as the coefficient of determination approaches 1.

Table 6. Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	99,656	2	49,828	679.175	0,000
Residual	7,483	102	0,073		
Total	107,139	104			

Dependent Variable : Avg_WorkReadiness

Predictors : (Constant), Avg_SoftSkill, Avg_HardSkill

Source : Data processed using SPSS 27

The ANOVA results showed that the whole regression model was statistically significant, with $F(2, 102) = 679.175$ and $p < 0.001$. This indicates that a significant proportion of the variance in work preparedness is explained by the model's predictors, namely hard skills and soft skills.

Table 7. Hypothesis Result

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Information
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	-0,024	0,116		-0,205	0,839	
Hard skills	0,396	0,102	0,393	3,888	0,000	Accepted
Soft skills	0,597	0,104	0,579	0,5723	0,000	Accepted

Source : Data processed

The study's results indicate that both hard and soft skills have a positive and significant effect, with soft skills exerting greater influence than hard skills. The respective beta coefficients are 0.393 and 0.579 with a significance value of 0.000. These findings confirm that hard and soft skills drive success in Work readiness. Based on these results, H1 and H2 are declared accepted.

4.2 Discussions

The research findings indicate that hard skills have a positive and significant influence on work readiness, with a beta coefficient of 0.393 and a significance level of 0.000. This suggests that the stronger an individual's technical abilities, the higher their likelihood of achieving successful job placement. These findings are consistent with prior studies, which indirectly highlight that technical competencies function as fundamental indicators of work readiness in today's modern work environment (Strang, 2022). Furthermore, the study reveals that soft skills exert a greater influence than hard skills, demonstrated by a beta coefficient of 0.579 and a significance level of 0.000. This indicates that interpersonal abilities, such as communication, teamwork, creativity, ethics, problem-solving, and leadership are crucial determinants of an individual's readiness to enter the workforce. These results also emphasize that non-technical skills play a dominant role in enabling individuals to adapt, establish effective social interactions, and respond to job demands flexibly and dynamically. The high R-square value of 0.930 indicates that hard and soft skills together explain a substantial proportion of the variance in work readiness, demonstrating their strong combined predictive power for individuals' preparedness for employment. The findings of this study further reinforce previous research highlighting the importance of combining hard skills and soft skills in shaping work readiness. These results align with studies by (Caballero et al., 2011; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Strang, 2022) which demonstrate that both technical and non-technical competencies are significant predictors of work readiness. Additionally, the studies by (Ingsih & Suhana, 2023; Schislyaeva & Saychenko, 2022; Teng et al., 2019) emphasize that soft skills play a more dominant role than hard skills, particularly in modern work environments that demand strong adaptability, communication, collaboration, and

social intelligence. Research by (Piopiunik et al., 2020; Seti et al., 2025; Sopa et al., 2020) also found that hard skills contribute substantially to meeting technical job requirements. However, their influence tends to be relatively lower than that of soft skills. The results of the study indicate that soft skills have a more substantial influence on predicting job readiness than hard skills, consistent with previous research on workers in Semarang City. However, this study was limited to only two variables and did not consider other factors such as work experience, motivation, and the company environment. To obtain a more complete picture, future research is expected to include relevant variables and use mixed methods. Overall, job readiness is influenced by the balance of hard and soft skills. Hard skills increase confidence in meeting technical demands, while soft skills improve adaptability, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. Soft skills are more critical because they support an individual's mental and interpersonal readiness. Thus, soft skills play a greater role than hard skills.

This study underscores the significance of hard skills and soft skills as essential factors influencing employment readiness among the inhabitants of Semarang City. While this scope provides a clear and logical framework, other characteristics such as work experience, motivation, and organizational climate could further elucidate the concept of job readiness if analyzed more comprehensively. Consequently, subsequent research should expand the scope, incorporate additional variables, and utilize mixed-methods approaches to achieve a more thorough and nuanced comprehension of the factors affecting work preparedness.

5. Conclusion

Both hard talents and soft skills have been demonstrated to impact work readiness. Proficiency in pertinent hard skills enhances individuals' confidence and competence in fulfilling the technical requirements of their roles. Conversely, robust soft skills augment adaptability, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, allowing individuals to engage effectively in the workplace. These two skill kinds not only enhance job preparedness directly but also synergistically contribute to the development of comprehensive professional competence. Soft skills are increasingly significant, as interpersonal and adaptive qualities enhance an individual's confidence and mental readiness as they join the workforce. Consequently, while technical skills are crucial, non-technical competencies emerge as the primary factors in promoting sustainable preparedness. These findings underscore the importance of the equilibrium between hard abilities and soft skills in cultivating work preparedness. Elevated levels of preparedness indicate robust confidence, motivation, and social competence. Acquiring skills that encompass both technical proficiency and the cultivation of positive experiences, trust, and interpersonal relationships will be far more effective in equipping individuals for the workforce than methods that emphasize technical knowledge alone.

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