

## INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE, MOTIVATION, AND SOFT SKILLS IN SHAPING GEN Z JOB READINESS

Vivi Asa Dina<sup>1</sup>, M. Elfan Kaukab<sup>2</sup>, Muhamad Asif Maulana Akbar<sup>3\*</sup>, Muhammad Gilang Maulana Azka<sup>4</sup>, Muhamad Agoeng Pamoengkas<sup>5</sup>

1,2,3,4,5 Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Sains Al Qur'an Wonosobo, Indonesia

\*Email corresponding author: [asif@unsiq.ac.id](mailto:asif@unsiq.ac.id)

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Generation Z in Mojotengah District, Wonosobo Regency, is prepared for the workforce in relation to internship experience, motivation, and soft skills. One hundred respondents, primarily those who have taken part in internship programs, were chosen for the study using purposive sampling. Descriptive statistics, validity and reliability tests, multiple linear regression analysis, and traditional assumption tests were used to analyze the data. The t-test, F-test, and coefficient of determination were used to evaluate the hypotheses using SPSS 26. The findings show that internship experience significantly and favorably impacts job preparedness. In a similar vein, job readiness is positively and significantly impacted by motivation. However, job readiness is not much impacted by soft skills. These results imply that while motivation and internship experience are important factors in improving Generation Z's work preparedness, soft skills do not play a major role in this regard. This emphasizes how crucial real-world experience and inner motivation are in preparing youth for the workforce.

**Keywords:** *Internship Experience, Motivation, Soft Skills, Job Readiness.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The fast expansion of the economy and labor market in the modern industrial age necessitates that young people, particularly those in Generation Z, possess excellent work readiness competencies. Many Gen Zers in Indonesia, particularly those in Mojotengah District, Wonosobo, struggle to make a seamless transition into the workforce while being technologically savvy and flexible. The lack of job readiness is reflected in both local and national unemployment rates, and is caused by problems including low motivation, a lack of soft skills, and internship experiences that are not relevant to the job. Therefore, it is now essential to comprehend the aspects influencing Gen Z's job readiness, especially in areas with sizable adolescent populations.

The purpose of this study is to examine how motivation, soft skills, and internship experience affect Generation Z's preparedness for the workforce in Mojotengah District. The study specifically examines whether these three factors, used separately or in combination, have a significant impact on work readiness. Undergraduate students who have participated in internship programs and final-year vocational high school students are included in the scope.

By combining behavioral (soft skills), experiential (internship), and psychological (motivation) aspects into a single model, this study theoretically enhances the body of research on adolescent employability. In practice, the results can help politicians, academic institutions, and schools create curricula that better prepare students for the workforce. This entails making the most of internship arrangements and encouraging the growth of motivation through focused instruction.

This study's originality comes from its contextual approach, which examines Gen Z's work readiness determinants in a rural Indonesian district a setting that is frequently overlooked in employability research. The study also draws attention to the discrepancy between perceived and

real preparedness, demonstrating that even with internship experience, job readiness may be hampered by a misalignment of program relevance with professional objectives.

The findings suggest that while soft skills do not have a statistically significant impact on work preparedness, internship experience and motivation do. This implies that when it comes to training Gen Z for the workforce, motivation and relevant practical experience are more important than soft skills alone. As a result, educational institutions ought to give industry-related internships top priority and encourage students' natural drive.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

This study investigates the impact of soft skills, motivation, and internship experience on work preparation in Wonosobo's Generation Z. The ability of a person to combine knowledge, skills, and work attitudes with physical and mental maturity is known as job readiness (Utami, 2016; Semiawan in Munfaqih, 2013). According to Slameto (2010), a number of important elements influence job preparation, including motivation, experience, comprehension, and physical and mental health. Brady (2010) highlights six qualities of job readiness: self-perception, communication, skills, flexibility, responsibility, and health and safety.

According to UU No. 13 (2003), internship experience is regarded as a crucial component of workforce training since it provides practical experience under supervision. Students gain technical proficiency, problem-solving skills, and professional conduct through internships. According to research by Sari & Nurhidayati (2022) and Pambajeng et al. (2024), internship experience has a major and favorable impact on work preparation. These results lend credence to the idea that internships offer a solid basis for adjusting to the demands of the workplace.

Motivation is defined as an internal drive that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior toward achieving goals (Uno, 2017; Hasibuan, 2016). It encompasses environmental pressure, physiological demands, hope, and desire. Previous research by Deswarta et al. (2023) and Maulidiyah & Ubaidillah (2024) showed that motivation has a beneficial impact on job readiness. When it comes to getting ready for work, students who are more motivated are more excited and proactive. These findings imply that a key psychological factor in improving young graduates' readiness for the workforce is motivation.

Communication, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, ethics, and leadership are examples of interpersonal and intrapersonal competences that are referred to as soft skills (Sharma, 2011). Soft skills are essential for success in the job and are a complement to hard talents. According to research by Sari & Manunggal (2023) and Deswarta et al. (2024), soft skills have a big impact on work readiness. These results demonstrate how crucial it is for Generation Z to acquire soft skills in order to satisfy the expectations of a workplace that is becoming more dynamic and interpersonal.

The Hypotheses of this research is:

***H1: Internship experience has a positive influence on job readiness among Generation Z in Wonosobo.***

***H2: Motivation has a positive influence on job readiness among Generation Z in Wonosobo.***

***H3: Soft skills have a positive influence on job readiness among Generation Z in Wonosobo.***

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative methodology to investigate the ways in which three elements internship experience, motivation, and soft skills affect preparedness for the workforce. In order to find potential cause-and-effect relationships between the variables, the study used an associative design. Members of Generation Z in Mojotengah, Wonosobo, who had previously participated in internship programs were the specific focus of the study.

There were 874 high school and college students from three different institutions that made up the population. The researcher employed purposive sampling to select participants, which means they chose individuals who fulfilled specific requirements in this case, having finished internships.

The study chose to survey 100 respondents, which is marginally above the minimum criteria to guarantee greater representation, using a common formula (Slovin) to estimate sample size.

The researcher used a Google Forms-distributed questionnaire to collect data. Participants were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with each statement on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The variables were well-defined and backed up by multiple indications to ensure the data was reliable and significant.

The researcher utilized SPSS software (version 26) to examine the data. Basic statistics were checked, important assumptions were tested, and multiple linear regression was performed to determine the effect of each variable. To make sure the questions were consistent and made sense, they also employed validity and reliability assessments. All things considered, the analysis demonstrated the effectiveness of the model and the degree to which the independent variables affected job readiness.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Generation Z's work readiness in Mojotengah District, Wonosobo Regency, is impacted by their internship experience, motivation, and soft skills. The results indicate that two of the three factors examined motivation and internship experience have a noteworthy beneficial influence on work preparedness. However, although being often regarded as crucial in the workplace, soft skills did not have a statistically significant impact in this particular situation.

According to the respondents' demographic profile, the majority of participants are female (65%) and mostly enrolled in undergraduate programs (53%), with vocational high school students making up the remaining 47%. A varied range of young people who are currently entering the workforce are represented in this composition.

### Internship Experience and Work Readiness

Research has shown that internship experience significantly improves students' preparedness for the workforce. Higher degrees of readiness were reported by respondents who had more hands-on internship experience. This supports the notion that exposure to the actual world helps people improve their job-related abilities, handle challenges in a professional environment, and acquire important knowledge about expectations in the workplace. These results corroborate those of Pambajeng et al. (2024), who similarly discovered that internships have a major impact on students' preparation for the workforce.

Theoretically, this supports the idea of experiential learning, which holds that learning occurs best when people actively participate in real-world tasks. In order to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical expectations, education systems should promote and incorporate structured internship programs, particularly for Generation Z.

### Motivation and Work Readiness

Work preparedness was significantly improved by motivation as well. Driven by objectives, professional ambitions, environmental support, or personal interests, highly motivated people typically exhibit greater readiness for entering the labor. According to the research, Generation Z is more willing to take proactive measures like enhancing their credentials, looking for training opportunities, or becoming familiar with workplace conventions when they have specific goals or incentives.

The findings of Maulidiyah and Ubaidillah (2024), who emphasized the close relationship between internal motivation and job readiness among Generation Z in the digital age, are consistent with this outcome. Additionally, it is in line with self-determination theory, which highlights how crucial internal motivation is in influencing behavior, judgment, and performance results.

### **Soft Skills and Work Readiness**

Soft skills had no discernible impact on work preparedness in this study, which was unexpected. Descriptive statistics showed that respondents possessed comparatively good soft skills, particularly in ethics and emotional intelligence, but these abilities did not correspond to increased levels of work preparedness. This could point to a contextual discrepancy between having soft skills and how they are viewed as being applicable or relevant in professional settings. This finding runs counter to earlier research by Sari and Manunggal (2023), which indicated that work readiness and soft skills were positively correlated. This disparity could be caused by a number of things, such as students' ignorance of the ways in which soft skills affect their employability or a lack of genuine opportunity to use them in contexts that are relevant to their lives. This starts a conversation about how educational institutions and internship programs need to reevaluate how soft skills are acquired and measured.

### **Overall Contribution and Theoretical Implications**

The study offers insightful information about the factors influencing Generation Z's employment readiness in rural Indonesia. It demonstrates that intrinsic motivation and real-world experience, rather than just possessing abstract skills, are better indicators of preparedness. These results highlight the value of motivational and experiential elements in job readiness and imply that, in addition to more focused soft skill training, initiatives to increase employability should place a higher priority on internship quality and individual goal-setting.

Theoretically, this study challenges the notion that soft skills by themselves are always reliable predictors of readiness while supporting aspects of experiential learning and self-determination. Offering a hybrid framework that integrates experience, motivation, and behavioral skills into a more dynamic, context-sensitive model of employability ready could be a theoretical contribution.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that internship experience and motivation significantly and positively influence job readiness among Generation Z in Mojotengah District, Wonosobo Regency, while soft skills do not demonstrate a statistically significant impact. Internship experience provides practical exposure that enhances students' abilities to adapt to professional environments, apply technical knowledge, and build workplace confidence. Motivation, as an internal drive fueled by personal goals and aspirations, plays a critical role in encouraging proactive behaviors such as self-improvement and career planning. These findings align with experiential learning theory and self-determination theory, emphasizing the importance of real-world engagement and intrinsic motivation in workforce preparation. However, the lack of significance found in the soft skills variable challenges prevailing assumptions in human capital theory, suggesting that the mere possession of soft skills does not automatically translate into perceived job readiness, especially when those skills are not sufficiently contextualized or practiced in real-life scenarios.

The practical implications of this research suggest that schools and universities should prioritize the development of structured, industry-relevant internship programs and foster internal motivation through career development initiatives and personal goal-setting workshops. Policymakers and education stakeholders are encouraged to support programs that bridge the gap between academic learning and job market expectations. For students, the findings highlight the importance of actively engaging in internships and cultivating motivation to enhance employability. Although soft skills were not found to significantly impact readiness in this context, they remain essential for long-term professional success and should continue to be developed through extracurricular activities and community involvement.

This study is not without limitations. The use of self-reported questionnaires may lead to biases in the responses due to differences in understanding, honesty, and interpretation among

participants. Additionally, the research was geographically and demographically limited to students in Mojotengah District, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the study only examined three independent variables, despite the likelihood that other factors such as hard skills, digital competencies, family support, or socio-economic background could also significantly influence job readiness.

Future research should consider expanding the sample to include broader regions and diverse educational backgrounds, allowing for more comprehensive and generalizable results. Additional variables should be explored to capture the full range of influences on job readiness, such as hard skills, adaptability, and career orientation. Employing mixed methods combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews could provide deeper insights into how various factors interact and influence youth employability. Furthermore, distributing questionnaires in person with prior explanation could help improve respondent understanding and data accuracy. By addressing these aspects, future studies can offer richer, more nuanced contributions to the field of youth employability and workforce readiness.

### Equation

1.  $S = \frac{P}{(p.e^2)+1}$
2.  $Y = a_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$

### Figures and Tables

Table 1. Validity Test Results

Variable	Correlation Range	Sig.	Conclusion
Internship Experience	0,709**-0,845**	0,000	Valid
Motivation	0,564**-0,866**	0,000	Valid
Soft Skill	0,793**-0,887**	0,000	Valid
Job Readiness	0,735**-0,855**	0,000	Valid

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's alpha based on standardized	Limit	Conclusion
Internship Experience	0,707	0,7	Reliable
Motivation	0,750	0,7	Reliable
Soft Skill	0,882	0,7	Reliable
Job Readiness	0,885	0,7	Reliable

Table 3. Goodness of Fit Test

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1566.393	3	522.131	76.902	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	651.797	96	6.790		
	Total	2218.190	99			

Table 4. Hypothesis Test Results

Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.943	1.379		2.134	.035
	TPM	.734	.206	.358	3.574	.001
	TM	.572	.149	.398	3.829	.000

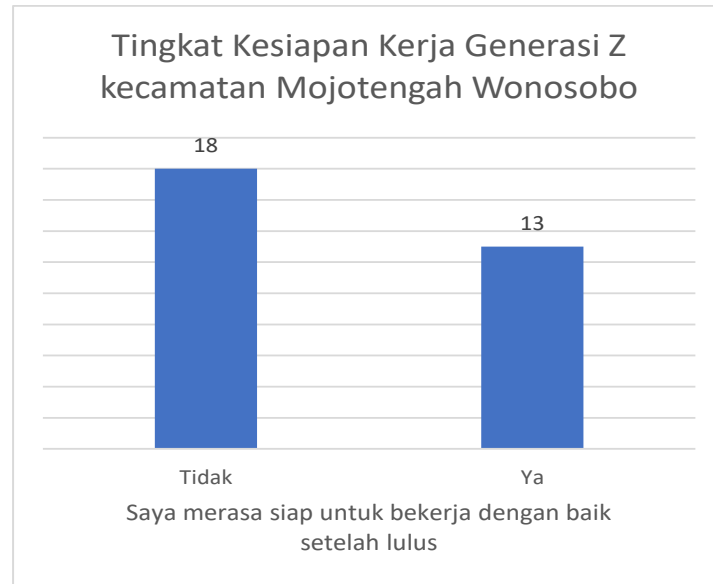


Figure 1. Pre Survei Results

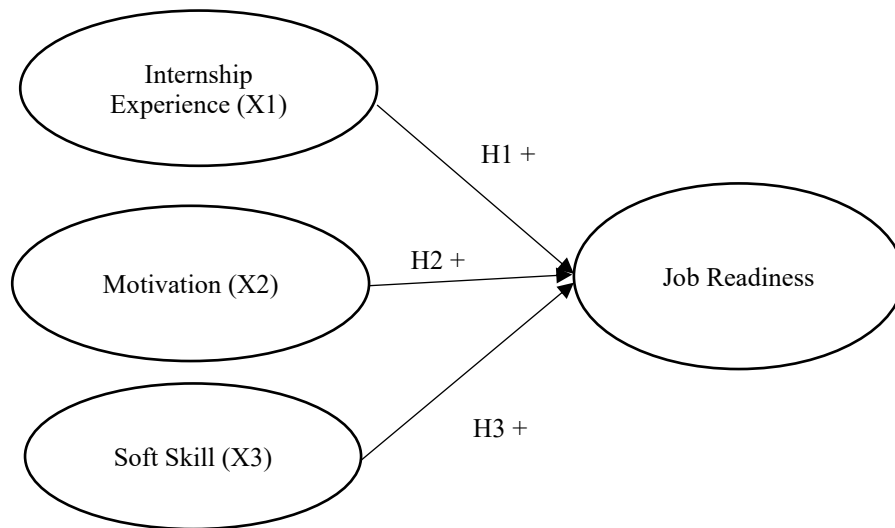


Figure 2. Research Model

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